

The believer's growth in grace is not automatic – and we could easily add “grow in all the fruit of the Spirit, “love, Joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” Gal 5:22-23).

How do you grow a plant? By watering and feeding it. And you make sure you put the plant in the light.

Live in the light of God's truth, feed on His word, allow the Holy Spirit to fill and direct you and you will surely grow up to what Paul called, “attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13).

TALK ABOUT 1. Peter wrote to remind the Christians of two things (3:1–2)? 2. Why does Christ delay His coming again (3:9, 15; Matt 24:14)? 3. Name some of the things that will happen on “the Day of the Lord” (3:10–13)? 4. Peter said, “Grow in grace and a knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). How do Christians do this? 5. Is “growing in grace” the same as yielding the “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal 5:22–23)?

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Unit Studies

1 & 2 Peter

*27 Studies written
in everyday English*

By Fred Morris

To the Reader:

To the Reader: Read the Bible verses first. Then study these notes. Study one section at a time. Ask a friend to join you and talk over the questions. If you cannot answer a question, read that section of the Bible again.

INTRODUCTION

👉 **Read: 1 Peter 1:1–12**

Unit 1. GOD'S PROPHETS SPOKE GOD'S WORDS

The prophets spoke God's words. Prophecy joins the Old and the New Testaments. These are not two separate events of the Bible. One theme runs through all the sixty six books. The Bible holds the story of redemption, of God in love reaching down to save lost mankind.

What God said in the Old Testament, He gathered up and completed in the New Covenant. Jesus Christ fulfilled all that God had promised and all that the prophets had said about His coming (Luke 22:19–22; 24:27).

Much of what the prophets said was “concerning this salvation” (1 Peter 1:10). God made a way to redeem man from sin. This is the central theme of the Bible. Man is a sinner and God worked to save him. God sent the Son, Jesus Christ, to “seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10). Peter called this “the grace that was to come to you...” by Jesus Christ.

God commissioned the Son and gave Him all authority to do this work. The work was not in heaven, so the Son had to leave heaven. He laid aside His crown and His royal throne and came to earth. Jesus Christ had to come to earth and be born as a man and become one of us to do this work of God.

CHRIST IN CREATION

God gave Jesus Christ, the Son, the work of creation (Psa 8;3; 92:5; 107:24). He also gave the Son the work of redeeming lost man. Finally, God has appointed Him to be head over everything for the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way” (Eph 1:22). On that final day of reckoning He will be Judge and victor over all evil (Matt 28:18).

The prophets saw Jesus Christ's great work in the distance. Like the ridges of a mountain range; the closer events were seen more clearly, the distant ones less clearly. So the prophets strained their spiritual eyes – “they searched intently and with the greatest care trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing...” (1 Peter 1:10–11).

In the Old Testament God spoke to men and women of faith. He showed them, by symbol and type, how He would redeem men and women from sin. Paul said these symbols were “shadows of the things that were to come, the reality, however, is to be found in Christ” (Col 2:17).

Over and over again, God delivered His people from bondage and showed, in historical events, what He would do through the work of Jesus Christ. a) He

to these believers: “to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by the Lord and Savior through your apostles” (2 Peter 3:1–2).

False teachers were making light of God's truth. They scoffed at Christ's promise to come again. Both prophets and apostles were moved by the Holy Spirit to write the Scriptures. The Scriptures have all the authority of God behind them. We must obey God's commands and hold to the truth.

The scoffers said the world would go on just as it was then. They said that nothing had changed since Abraham lived. They said, “Where is ‘coming’ that He (Christ) promised” (3:4; John 14:2–3)?

Peter pointed to the truth of God's word. God does not change and His word is sure. He spoke and the heavens came into being, “the earth formed out of the water” (3:5). At God's word, the same waters destroyed all living things, but saved Noah and his family.

“By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved...for the day of judgment...” (3:7–10). God will burn up this earth and all that is in it. And he will judge the spirits of all men. There will be a great separation – the saved of all generations will be gathered into heaven and the ungodly will be judged and shut out of God's Kingdom. Jesus said, “Be always on the watch, and pray...” Matt 24:42; Luke 21:36).

Unit 27. THE DAY OF THE LORD CONTINUED

👉 **Read: 2 Peter 3:10–18**

Peter tells us that certain things will happen in the future:

- a) The world will get worse (Matt 24:37).
- b) Jesus Christ will come again (3:4).
- c) Judgment comes to all mankind (3:7).
- d) The world and all that is in it will be burned with fire (3:10–12).
- e) The city of God, the New Jerusalem will appear (3:13).
- f) God's patience waits for the last person to be saved (3:15).

The Bible does not teach two resurrections, at different times in God's calendar, or several judgments. When Jesus comes again, this age of grace will be over. No more people will be saved. Believe on Jesus now.

Jesus Christ used the Greek word ‘parousia’ for His second coming. He will come again “and every eye will see Him” (Rev 1:7; 1 Thess 4:16–18). There will not be a ‘silent rapture’ as some teach.

Jesus delays His parousia so that more people can be saved. God said, “He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish...” (3:9, 15). Jesus also said, “And this gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, then the end will come” (Matt 24:14).

GROW IN GRACE, KNOWLEDGE AND HOLINESS

Don't be idle while you are waiting and watching for Christ's return, “But grow in grace and a knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

God sent a plague to punish the men of Israel for their sin and many died. The Scriptures warn us not to follow “the way of Balaam” which led Israel into sin (Rev 2:14; Jude 11).

TALK ABOUT 1. Why do people break the law? 2. Do you live under an ungodly government? What should you do? 3. Who was Balaam? 4. What did he fail to do? 5. What sin is called “the way of Balaam” (Rev 2:14)?

Unit 26. THE SINFUL NATURE OF MAN

 **Read: 2 Peter 2:17–22**

The false teachers are called “springs without water” (2 Peter 2:17). They promised refreshing water, but when we go to them we find them empty and dry. They “appeal to the lustful desires of our sinful human nature” (2:18), and “entice people (new believers) who are just escaping...from error.” They do not trouble those older in the Christian faith, but on the new believers. “They offer them freedom” to live as they please. But God’s word does not say we can live as we please. If we do, it will lead us to death (Prov 14:12). The Bible says, “live a life worthy of the calling you have received” in Christ (Eph 4:1). Live as Jesus lived while He was here on the earth.

Just because you are a believer, you don’t lose your sinful nature. God does not take it away. He gives you His Spirit who brings “His divine nature” to live in you. As you yield to the Holy Spirit’s control, the old nature will have less and less influence in your life (Gal 5:17).

Paul said, “the acts of the sinful nature are obvious...” and he listed sins of the old life. He said, “Those who belong to Christ...have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires...” (Gal 5:24; 2:20).

The Holy Spirit gives us the strength to say no to the sins of our old life and to live a new life in Christ. Paul listed the fruit of the holy Spirit’ (Gal 5:22–23).

The false teachers had not fully trusted Christ to save them. They heard God’s call, but refused to believe. They had “turned their back on the sacred command” to repent. Peter said, “It would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness...” (2:20–21). Knowing the way places a responsibility on us to share the gospel with others.

Peter used a proverb of a dog and a pig, both unclean animals to the Jew. You cannot change their nature. The false teachers had tasted the grace of God, but rejected it and went back to their old ways. They were like the pigs and the dogs that roamed the streets!

TALK ABOUT 1. Do we keep our sinful nature after we become Christians (Gal 5:17–19)? 2. What is the new nature we receive from God (John 3:5,8)?

THE DAY OF THE LORD

 **Read: 2 Peter 3:1–7**

Peter seems to begin his letter with a new greeting. He tells why he is writing

delivered His people from Egypt. b) He restored Elimelech’s inheritance to Ruth at the city gate. c) He delivered Israel from the Amalekites (Ex 18). d) Every time a priest offered a blood sacrifice, God showed how He would use the death and resurrection of Jesus to redeem men and women from sin.

In every sacrifice, in every battle with their enemies, in every provision and blessing, God was showing the people of Israel the same truth: That He cared for them and wanted them to worship Him only (Deut 6:5). He wanted them to be different to the heathen peoples around them Ex 8:23). He chose them to be His ‘priests’ to bring the nations to true worship of God (Ex 19:6).

TALK ABOUT 1. What did the prophets do? 2. God has revealed Himself inpersons, yet He is One God. Name the three persons of the trinity. 3. God revealed His purpose, to r.....mankind? 4. God sent His only Son to bring us a final revelation of Himself __ True __ False (Heb 1:1)? 5. Has God given us everything we need to know Him personally?

Unit 2. THE PROPHETS WANTED TO KNOW MORE

The prophets dimly understood the breadth and scope of the words they spoke. They wanted to know how and when Christ’s great work would appear. It was like looking at a 1,000 piece jigsaw puzzle. “How did these strange-looking pieces fit together?”

Peter said, “Even the angels long to look into these things.” Why? Because the angels do not know the eternal counsels of Almighty God. They are “Christ’s ministers” (Heb 1:14). To them, also, Christ’s lowly birth and suffering was a great mystery. So, too, was His work of redeeming men and women from sin (Luke 19:10).

THE PROPHETS SERVED US

“It was revealed to them (the prophets) that they were not serving themselves but you...” who are reading these verses (1 Peter 1:12). The prophets preached the good news of God’s love. They preached Christ to their own generation, but their message was meant for us also. God allowed His prophets to serve their own generation, and all future generations. They were able to do this because God’s word is eternal and is never out of date.

All prophecy pointed to Jesus Christ; just as the gospels focus on Christ. The prophets wanted to know more; we already know all that we need to know to be saved! (Matt 13:17). And we have a long history to support what the prophets said. The Christian faith is the only world religion built on recorded history. The prophets told what would happen and what they said actually happened! More than 300 prophecies concerning Jesus Christ came to pass. This in and of itself is a miracle!

THE SUFFERING SERVANT

Perhaps the thing that puzzled the prophets most was the sufferings of the Messiah. He who would come would suffer and die at the hands of wicked

men. How could this great One, born to be King, be the lowly servant of men (Isa 50:6; 53:2–12; John 13:15)?

As they told of the Messiah's sufferings, they saw "the glories that would follow" (1 Peter 1:11). In Christ God became one with man. He identified Himself as "A man of sorrows and familiar with suffering..." (Isa 53:3–5). He became part of our frail human existence, yet apart from it

We live in a fallen world. There is no part of our world that has not been touched by man's sinfulness and rebellion. Even creation (all nature) groans waiting for God's redemption to come (Rom 8:20–22). The world is full of injustice and unimaginable heartache, which touches every person – believer and unbeliever alike (Eccl 4:1–3).

The prophet gave us this picture of Jesus our substitute. God tells us this was His purpose in sending His Son, Jesus Christ to earth (Isa 53:10–12).

We are called to follow in Christ's foot steps (Phil 1:29; 1 Pet 2:21).

- Resisting the devil and evil will bring suffering (1 Pet 5:9). The Apostles followed Christ, and resisted Satan (Act 5:41:9:16).
- Christians suffer for the sake of the gospel and for Christ (2 Tim 1:8,12). Suffering for the Kingdom of God (2 Thess 1:5). Suffering with others who suffer (Gal 6:2).

Praise God He enables us to be "more than conquerors" in this evil world by the Spirit He has given us (Rom 8:37).

TALK ABOUT 1. Why did God's prophets search to know more (1 Peter 1:10)? 2. All prophecy pointed to J.....C.....? 3. Does God's word ever go out of date? 4. What did Jesus say about His words (Matt 24:35)? 5. How did the prophets serve us? 6. We are called to follow in C..... steps and do as He did. How well are you following Christ's example?

Unit 3. VICTORY DEMANDS THAT WE A LIFE OF SACRIFICE

Victory demands living as a life of sacrifice (Rom 12:1–2). We must give ourselves up to His will and to His victory every day (Rom 6:13–19). This means a total surrender of our lives to Christ! As we do His will, God gives us the victory through the Holy Spirit and our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:57).

Paul said this sacrifice of ourselves is good, perfect, and pleasing to God and it is His will for us. We confront evil. We enter into the sufferings of those we help. We love them; we suffer with them; we overcome evil with good! We act to support our brothers in their suffering. We those who suffer before the Lord – we shoulder their suffering with them. How will being a 'Living Sacrifice' affect your life? It will turn it upside down. It will make you expendable. It will demand everything you have. The sacrifice, to be a sacrifice, must be consumed by God.

We get involved with those who suffer unjustly by economic oppression, social oppression, religious oppression (1 Peter 2:19– 23; 3:14).

The challenge, wherever we live, is to overcome evil with good! (Isa 58:6–13; Col 1:24; Rev 1:9).

Unit 25. THEY DESPISE THOSE OVER THEM

 **Read: 2 Peter 2:10–14**

Lawlessness is the mark of our time. The false teachers said that men and women could do anything they wished to do. Such evil men hate authority and those God has put over them (2 Peter 2:10).

They are "bold and arrogant," and even go so far as to "slander celestial beings." They slander God and His Christ. They refuse to submit to church leaders and do not respect angels.

Peter spoke of angels often, because a false cult known as Gnostics, spoke much of angels and the spirit world. Angels are "more powerful" than any evil spirit, yet they obey God's commands. They "do not accuse" evil men who preach heresy (2 Peter 2:11). They live in the presence of the Lord and minister as He directs them (Heb 1:14).

Evil men blaspheme God. They do not understand what they are doing! Anyone who rejects God's love and grace is condemned already (John 3:36). "And like the beasts (who know not God or self-control) they too will perish" (2:12; Rom 3:23).

"They revel in their pleasures while they feast with you" (2:13). They carry out their sins "in broad daylight" and eat at church 'love feasts.' They were "blots and blemishes" on the Christian Church and should not be given a place at the Lord's table. Paul said anyone who "eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner" is guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor 11:27–30). He said some had died because of this sin and others were "weak and sick."

For this reason, Christians must "examine themselves" before they "eat the bread and drink the cup." We must first confess any sin in our lives. Then the Lord's table will be a blessing to us.

THE WAY OF BALAAM SON OF BEOR

 **Read: 2 Peter 2:15–16**

We read of Balaam in Numbers chapters 22–24. He was a false prophet who "loved the wages of wickedness" (215). Ancient peoples used diviners and witch doctors to tell them what would happen to them and to put curses on their enemies.

Satan moved Balaam to curse God's people, but he could not. Every time Balaam opened his mouth, God put words of blessing in his mouth.

Balaam saw that he could not curse God's people, so he thought of another way to make them sin. He told King Balak to send Midianite women into the Israeli camp. The women invited the men to join them in their festivals and idol worship. They did this, the Israeli men had sex with the Midianite women and many died.

FALSE TEACHERS AND THEIR DOOM

👉 Read: 2 Peter 2:1–3

In every age Satan has sent deceiving spirits to test God's people. False teachers had come into the early Christian churches. They taught "destructive heresies" (2:1). They "even denied the Sovereign Lord" who He said He was, even Jesus Christ the Son of God. Their wrong teaching spread an evil report about the faith.

Because of false teachers, the new believers began to doubt the truth of God's word. Many followed the false teaching. False teachers called themselves 'prophets,' but Jesus said that John the Baptist was the last prophet (Matt 11:7–19). He had come and taught them, but they had refused to believe John's message of Christ and Herod had killed him (Matt 14:1–12).

Just as they do today, the false teachers made up "stories" which were not true. They were greedy always asking people for money. They "exploited" the Christians because God's grace made them generous.

We should pray for false teachers. "Their condemnation is hanging over them" (2:3). God's judgments are sure and more harsh on those who lead others away from the truth (Mark 9:42).

Jesus said we can know who is a false teacher by the way they live (Matt 7:15–21). They do not live holy lives or help others (1 Tim 6:3–5).

EXAMPLES FROM THE PROPHETS

👉 Read: 2 Peter 2:4–8

Peter gave three examples of how God punishes sinners and saves the righteous from calamity. 1. When Satan rebelled against God, some of the angels joined with him. God threw Satan out of heaven and the wicked angels with him. God did not spare them, "but put them in gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment" (2:4). We don't know where these angels are, but we do know that God will judge them for their sin. 2. God did not spare the wicked world of Noah's time. He swept them all away in a flood. He saved a remnant – righteous Noah and his wife and his three sons and their wives (2:5). 3. He condemned the cities of the plain, of which Sodom and Gomorrah were the chief. God sent fire and brimstone to destroy them, but He saved Lot and his family. It is said that Lot was "a righteous man who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men" (2:7). Lot did not go with the crowd and the way the people of Sodom lived troubled him. God knows those who are His (1 Tim 2:20), and he delivered Lot, the only righteous man in the five cities (2:9).

TALK ABOUT 1. Do you know any false teachers? Do you pray for them? 2. What does false teaching do to new believers? 3. What examples did Peter give of God's judgments (2:4–9)? 4. Jesus said J.....the B..... was the last prophet (Matt 11:7–19)?

Suffering to overcome evil with good should be joyous! Believers suffer for Christ and the gospel. Their sufferings continue Christ's suffering for the salvation of the world. So our suffering becomes glorious. Christ's sufferings lead to glory for His followers (Act 5:41; 1 Pet 4:12–19).

SCATTERED CHRISTIANS

👉 Read: 1 Peter 1:1–2

After Jesus ascended to Heaven, the believers in Jerusalem were persecuted under the Emperors Nero (AD 54–68), then Domitian (AD 81–96). These Roman Emperors were very cruel. Most Christians left the city and scattered all over the provinces of Asia Minor (Acts 8:1). Some of the apostles stayed in Jerusalem. Peter stayed to help the believers.

The believers who scattered into the provinces lost everything. They had no work and no one wanted them. Peter wrote two letters to encourage them in their faith. First he explained who was writing to them:

Peter called himself "An apostle of Jesus Christ" and he called his readers "elect...strangers in the world, scattered..." He named some of the Roman provinces where they were living – Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia and Asia Minor (1 Peter 1:1).

God had allowed persecution to scatter them. Those who scattered throughout the provinces preached the "good news" about Jesus Christ wherever they went (Acts 8:4). They were nobodies, strangers in an evil world, but not strangers to God. God knew each of them and loved each of them from eternity, even before they were conceived in their mother's womb (Eph 1:4; Psa 139:13–16). How wonderful God is!

God knows everything about you and me, even to the number of hairs on our heads (Matt 10:30). And He had you and me in His heart before time began.

Because these believers had left all to follow Jesus Christ they were different. Paul called them "peculiar people" (Titus 2:14). Christians who live and witness for Christ soon become misfits in society. And they are made to feel like strangers.

TALK ABOUT 1. How do the prophets' words speak to us? What do they say? 2. Who was the Suffering Servant that Isaiah spoke of (Isa 53:3–5)? 3. Are Christians called upon to suffer for Jesus Christ? 4. What did Paul mean when he wrote of a "living sacrifice" (Rom 12:1–2)? 5. Can there be any glory for the believer without suffering?

Unit 4. GOD HAD ALREADY PROVIDED

From God's point of view, these people were already saved, sealed and delivered to heaven (Eph 1:13). That is how God sees every true believer. Peter said they were chosen by God. God knew they would be His long before they responded to His call.

They were chosen by the preaching of the gospel message. When God calls

us, He starts with nothing. There is no faith in the pagan heart. There is nothing in us that would make us want to listen to God's voice or respond to His call. He creates in our hearts a yearning for something more, for a better way. He takes the first step toward us. That is the grace of God which flows from His loving heart.

God calls men and women by the preaching of the gospel. "The word (of the gospel) is near you," Paul told the Christians in Rome "that is the word of faith we are proclaiming. That if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom 10:8–9).

Read: 1 Peter 1:2–5 A NEW BIRTH

The moment we say 'Yes' to Jesus Christ, God's Spirit gives us a new birth. The Holy Spirit brings the life of Christ to us and we are "born again" in our spirits (John 3:5,8).

God calls men and women to Himself for a purpose – to make them holy and like His Son Jesus Christ (Eph 1:4). Paul said God chose us "to be holy and blameless." That does not mean we can be perfect, but it is the Holy Spirit's purpose. Only God's Spirit can sanctify us and make us more like Jesus (2 Cor 3:18). This is the Spirit's sanctifying work. He sets us apart "for obedience to Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:2). We live in this world as He wants us to live, to honor Him. He said to Abraham, "I am God Almighty, walk before Me and be blameless."

CHRIST'S SACRIFICE WAS MADE FOR US

The "blood of sprinkling" speaks of the death of a sacrifice. Jesus obeyed the will of His Father and shed His own sinless blood to save us from our sins. When we repent, His blood cleanses us.

The people of Israel obeyed God's law and sacrificed an animal (Lev 1). The blood of sacrifice covered their sins of ignorance and error, so that God could forgive them and fellowship with them.

God said, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission" of sins (Heb 9:22). We must receive the blood of Jesus Christ for our cleansing. The blood goes on cleansing us each day, as we repent and ask (1 John 1:9).

Note the three persons of the Trinity: Our salvation begins with God the Father. It is His eternal will and purpose to grant faith to those who believe. This will of God takes place by the working of the Holy Spirit. God's Spirit sanctifies men and women and sets them apart for life in heaven. No person can reach this high goal without the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus (Heb 9:13–14). Our calling is to obey the Lord, but when we fail the blood sprinkles us again and makes us clean (1 John 1:9). The hymn writer said, "His blood avails for me..."

TALK ABOUT 1. Why did the Christians who lived in Jerusalem leave the city (Acts 8:1)? 2. Where did they go to? 3. What caused the gospel to spread in Asia Minor? 4. Which great missionary preached in these Gentile cities (Acts 9:15)? 5. When suffering comes to us because of our faith, what

"He (Jesus Christ) received honour and glory from God the Father..." This happened when Jesus was transfigured (changed) on the mountain. Peter heard God's voice from heaven say, "This is My Son, whom I love, with Him I am well pleased" (1:17; Mark 9:7).

The Christian faith rests on the great truth that Jesus Christ was God. That He came to earth as the Son of God, died on the cross and was raised to life again. He will come again and gather all who love Him to be with Him forever (John 14:2–3; 1 Cor 15:1–3).

Peter said, "We have the word of the prophets...you will do well to pay attention to it..." (1:19). The prophets wrote of Jesus, of His coming and His Kingdom. When Jesus came, lived and died more than 300 Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled. No other person who ever lived had the events of their life announced before they were born. This was because the prophets received their words from God, and all of God's words came to pass just as He said they would.

Their prophecies are "like a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns..." (1:18). The Lords' words through His prophets shine on in the darkness of this sinful world. Sometimes they lie hidden for years until men find and obey them. When they are 'discovered,' "the Morning Star" (Jesus Christ), rises in their hearts.

Jesus' own followers missed the meaning of the prophets' words.

He had to remind them "of all that the prophets have spoken" (Luke 24:25).

TALK ABOUT 1. Peter knew he would soon die ___ True ___ False?
2. Why did Peter call his body as a tent? 3. How can we know a "false prophet" (Matt 7:15–16). 4. Who did Peter train to carry on his work?

Unit 24. GOD'S SPIRIT GAVE THE WORDS

Read: 2 Peter 1:20–21

Peter tells how the Spirit of God came on His prophets. They felt "carried along" as they listened to the truth God's Spirit was giving them (1:21). Just as sailors put up a sail and catch the wind even as a ship is carried along by it, so the prophets listened for God's voice.

Every verse in the Bible is God's own word, given to men as His Spirit guided their pens. We can trust God's word completely!

A friend said, "But it has all been changed over the years as men copied it." I told him that the words of the Isaiah scroll found near the dead sea in 1947 were exactly the same as those read by Jesus 700 plus years after Isaiah wrote them.

Jesus went to worship at the synagogue in His home town, Nazareth. The scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to Him. Unrolling it He found where the prophet wrote about Christ's work of saving and healing mankind (Luke 4:16–21). The word Jesus read from the scroll were the very same words that Isaiah had spoken to the people of Israel. Not a word had been changed during all those years of making copies!

become citizens of God's Kingdom (Eph 2:19). Peter calls this "the eternal Kingdom of our Lord Jesus," because His kingdom will go on forever.

Those who are careless and don't grow in their faith, build lives on the sand (Matt 7:24–27), or build lives of "wood and straw" (1 Cor 3:14–15). Both men lost everything they had worked for. They did not lose their salvation, but they lost their rich reward (1 Peter 1:7).

TALK ABOUT 1. What happens to lazy Christians (1:8)? 2. What happened to the man who built his house on the sand (Matt 7:24)? 3. Are you a citizen of God's Kingdom? How do you know? 4. Who makes us citizens of heaven?

Unit 23. PETER LEFT THEM A REMINDER

Read: 2 Peter 1:12–16

Peter knew that the end of his life was near. So he wrote this letter to remind the believers what God had done for them. Jesus told Peter he would die a cruel death (John 21:18–19), yet Peter showed no fear of death. He knew his spirit would return to God who gave it (Eccl 12:7). His spirit would live on with His Lord forever in heaven.

We all forget how Almighty God wants to walk and talk with us and have fellowship with His children. He often seems far away and out of our reach. Not so. He is eagerly waiting to hear from you!

Life is short. Peter called his body "a tent." He would keep on reminding them of their 'riches in Christ' as long as he lived in "the tent of this body." Paul used the same thought (2 Cor 5:1). He went further and called this body "a vessel of clay" (2 Cor 4:7). These human bodies are frail and the years go by quickly; don't delay in seeking the Lord's forgiveness and grace.

Peter urged them to go on in their faith "after his departure" (1:15). He would train others to carry on the ministry God had given him. He pressed them to "grow in grace and knowledge" and not be slow in serving (3:18).

When I was preparing to serve God, a missionary statesman said to me, "The first thing you must do is find an apprentice. Teach him everything you know." Those who have served the Lord faithfully and well for many years must pass the torch to others. Peter faced this task. He told all that He knew about Jesus to John Mark. Later Mark wrote the Gospel of Mark.

WE WERE EYEWITNESSES

Read: 2 Peter 1:16–21

"We did not follow...stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty...(1:16). Peter saw "the power and coming of Jesus Christ" and His majesty when he saw Jesus changed before his eyes on the mountain (Mark 9:2–13; 1 Thess 4:16–18).

should we do? 6. Who gives us the victory (1 Cor 15:57)? 7. Do you enjoy that victory?

GOD WILL MAKE US HOLY

God's purpose is to make us holy and like Himself. That is why He commands us to "Be holy in all you do" (1:16). But we cannot be holy unless we let the Holy Spirit work God's holiness into our lives. We do not become holy; God makes us holy as we submit to His Spirit's work in us (Phil 1:6).

The Holy Spirit does His work in our hearts without putting any pressure on us. He usually moves on our spirits without us knowing. Rarely, we may feel the presence of the Lord, the Spirit, prompting us to take a certain action. He waits for us to obey.

This work does not depend on our own efforts. It depends on our obedience. If we hear the Lord's voice and obey, we are blessed and fulfilled. If we say "Not this time," or "I am too busy," the voice may not come again. The Spirit's voice is quenched (1 Thess 5:19).

TALK ABOUT 1. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "You must be born a....." (John 3:5,8)? 2. Who come to our hearts to give us a new birth? 3. Do you have a sense that you are being holy in everything you do, every day?

Unit 5. SAVED TO OBEY OUR LORD

The chorus says: "Trust and obey, For there's no other way To be happy in Jesus, But to trust and obey."

God said, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed (obey God's voice) is better than the fat of rams" (1 Sam 15:22). The sacrifice of an animal was the way God chose to 'cover' or atone for the sins of the people. This did not please Him, because it pointed forward the sacrifice of Jesus.

The people of Israel came often to make sacrifice – to the sprinkled by the blood – because they sinned often. We, too, come often to God and confess our sins. We come because God has promised, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

This is our diligence and it pleases God. We come to Him over and over again. And each time the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses our hearts from sin (Heb 7:25). We need to be 'sprinkled' once, twice, many times, because sin is always present in our lives.

In Israel the blood was a means of forgiving their sins of ignorance and omission. Anyone who rebelled against God was cut off from among the people (Num 9:13). "Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses" (Heb 10:28).

TRAMPLING ON THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

In our own generation there are many who refuse Christ. They trample on the precious blood of Christ which was shed for them. God says that there is no

more forgiveness for those who reject the Savior. Jesus Christ will not die for them again (Heb 10:26).

“How much more severely (than those who died under the law) do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant” (Heb 10:29).

Peter wished these believers “grace and peace in abundance” (1 Peter 1:2). God gives us His grace and peace as we obey His commands and “they are not grievous” (1 John 5:3).

His grace helps us meet our many trials: “He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater...” He gives peace to our hearts when we are in trouble (John 14:28).

Read: 1 Peter 1:3–9 OUR HIGH POSITION IN CHRIST

Peter gives a review of how Christians receive their high position “in Christ.” They are “alive in Christ” (Eph 2:4–5). They enjoy this position because of God’s grace and mercy, and not because of anything they have done (Eph 2:8–9). Peter said, “In His great mercy He has given us new birth” (1:3). Salvation is God’s free gift and we can do nothing to earn it.

God loves all people. He wants to save all men and women. But they must receive His mercy and believe in Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31). God had given these believers “new birth...” New birth is a free gift. Jesus told Nicodemus that, without new birth, “No one can see the Kingdom of God” (John 3:3). New birth comes to us when we repent and believe.

Peter called their faith in Christ: “A living HOPE.” When God says to us, “All your sins are forgiven,” He receives us into His family. And He gives us an inheritance. That is the great hope that the gospel of Jesus Christ gives to all who trust in Him. That is the “good news” that Jesus brought to the world (Mark 1:15).

TALK ABOUT 1. We are saved to.....God? 2. Jesus can give us peace in the midst of our.....(John 14:28)? 3. What does it mean to ‘trample’ on the blood of Christ? 4. He gives more.....when we are troubled? 5. Only God can give these two things G.....and P..... ? 6. Can our good deeds earn salvation for us? 7. What are more people not saved? 8. Have you received Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord?

Unit 6. WE CAN COME BOLDLY TO GOD

Believers are told to ‘come boldly’ right into the Presence of Almighty God (Heb 4:16 KJV). We know that we are worthy of death for our sins. But because Jesus died in our place, we are forgiven and made worthy to approach God. Our hope is fixed in Him!

The HOPE of living a holy life becomes very real and entirely possible in this life. I am talking about an inward, personal holiness.

Before the fall, Adam was righteous and holy. He walked and talked with God. This righteousness was part of God’s ‘image’ put upon him at creation (Eph 4:24).

and the ‘roots’ of our faith go down into the rich soil of His word as we read and study the Bible. The more we read the Bible and pray to Him, the stronger our faith will become. We will not grow in our faith by looking on!

Grace and peace are multiplied by knowing God and Jesus Christ. Time spent reading and studying God’s word is never wasted.

TALK ABOUT 1. What must a new Christian do to grow in his or her faith? 2. What happens to us when the let God’s Spirit takes control of our lives (2 Cor 3:18)? 3. Does your life show the goodness and glory of God? In what ways?

STRIVE TO LIVE FOR CHRIST

Read: 2 Peter 1:5–7

Because we partake or share in “the divine nature” of Jesus Christ, we must live like He did. We must “escape the corruption” in the world by leaving our old ways. The sins of this godless world are “caused by evil desires” that fill men’s minds (2:14–19).

Even after we are saved, Satan will bring these “evil desires” to our minds. Paul said, “take them captive” and put them out of your mind. Don’t leave any foothold in your life for Satan (Eph 4:27). Ask God to clean your life up and to keep it clean (1 John 1:9).

It takes effort to grow in grace and faith. Peter said, “Make every effort to add to your faith...” And he gives a list of gifts of God’s Spirit. Compare them with the gifts of the Spirit Paul gives us in Galatians. Paul called these the “fruit of the Spirit” in our lives (Gal 5:22–23).

All these parts of the Spirit’s fruit in our lives are bound together by love. Paul told the Christians in Corinth, “the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor 13:13). God’s love in our hearts will keep us “from being unproductive” or of no effect in serving our Lord Jesus Christ. God has done for us all that He can and will do. He will not force us to obey His words. It is up to us to do the things that will cause our faith to grow and mature.

A RICH WELCOME HOME

Read: 2 Peter 1:8–11

Peter tells the difference between those who grow in their faith and those who do not. Those who don’t grow are a) Not productive in their Christian lives (1:8). b) “Shortsighted and blind” (1:9). c) Forgetful of all that God has done for them.

Those who continue to grow in faith will never fail. They will confirm their calling. And, when they die, they “will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (1:11). Believers may stumble and fall, but they will confess their sins to God, pick themselves up and go on in faith (Jas 3:2).

When we believe, we are born-again by God’s Spirit into His family. We

of sins” (Eph 1:7). The writer of Hebrews tells us that, “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Heb 9:22).

Others preach a ‘prosperity gospel.’ They tell their listeners that God will bless their tithe if they bring it to them and that He will multiply it one hundred times. God does not promise His children material things or money. God asks for 100%, not a tithe!

TALK ABOUT 1. Who did Peter write his letters to (2 Peter 1:1)? 2. What did he write this second letter to warn them about (2 Peter 2:1)? 3. What two words did Peter use to describe himself? 4. Do believers have everything they need to live a holy life (2 Peter 1:3–4)? 5. How should we give ourselves to God? 6. What does it mean to be “a living sacrifice” (Rom 12:1–2)?

Unit 22. GOD HAS GIVEN US ALL WE NEED

👉 Read: 2 Peter 1:3–4

Before we start out in the life of faith, we need to understand that “God has given us everything we need” to live a holy life (1:3). Peter says “for life and godliness” – “life” or living is the outward expression of God’s work in our hearts and “godliness” is the deep inner change that comes in our hearts as we let the Holy Spirit take control.

“His (God’s) divine power” comes to us by His Spirit. Believers are born-again by the Holy Spirit (John 3:5,8), and “sealed” or marked out as God’s children by the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13).

God called these believers by the preaching of the gospel. Men must hear the truth about Jesus Christ to have “knowledge of Him” and be saved (Rom 10:13–15; 1 Cor 15:1–3). This means knowing God as our personal friend and Lord. This is not the “knowledge” the false teachers said was needed.

The man who says “I know Christ” but does not do what He commands is a liar, and the truth is not in Him” (1 John 2:4).

When we hear the gospel call and respond, we receive a ‘calling’ or a vocation – a way of life. We must “walk worthy of the calling” God gives us by obeying His word (Eph 4:1). God calls us “to His own glory and goodness” (1:3). This means that we must live out His goodness and show His glory in our lives, so that others will see Christ in us and believe. This is a heavy responsibility, yet the one and only purpose of our calling.

“Through these (His grace and goodness) God has given us very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature” (1:4). We have Christ’s nature and are being made into His likeness (2 Cor 3:18). This is God’s promise. Our faith and our very lives rest on God’s promises. They are the foundation on which our Christian lives must be built. We must know what these are and learn them. God has promised those who believe in Him eternal life in Christ (John 5:24). God plants His very own nature in their hearts.

His grace ‘shining’ on us is like the sunshine. His Spirit ‘waters’ our new faith

In the New Testament Church we find that personal holiness is a practical, day-to-day possibility and the goal of the Christian life.

Look at Peter’s words to these scattered Christians: “Just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do” (1:15). That is God’s command.

Is holiness in all things possible? Yes, it is wonderfully possible. It is the HOPE of every truly born-again person to be holy in this life even as God is holy. A holy life brings glory to our Saviour.

As we grow in grace, we learn how to deal with sin. The moment we sense wrong thoughts, we confess them and accept cleansing (1 John 1:9). We are not sinless, but forgiven.

When the Holy Spirit speaks to us about something that is wrong in our lives, we put it right. We put off the old works of the flesh and put on (accept) the works of the Spirit in our lives (Eph 4:22–27).

This sort of living does not depend on our circumstances, or what the other person does or says about us. It depends on God giving us all the grace and forgiveness we need, as we come to Him and confess our sins.

TALK ABOUT 1. In Old Testament days, did men have free access to God? 2. What changed that? 3. How can a person be “in Christ?” What does that mean? 4. Can a Christian be holy? How is this possible?

WE YIELD OURSELVES

I was a seaman in the Australian Navy. The Navy told me what to do and I did it. When I did not obey, I was punished. When I lived in sin, I yielded right-of-way to Satan. I obeyed his orders and he directed my thoughts and actions.

I am no longer in the Navy and I don’t take any notice of them. If my old master (the Navy) came to me and said, “You take the middle watch,” I would tell the Navy, “Get lost. I am serving a new Master now. I am not under your authority any longer.”

As a Christian I obey my new Master, Jesus Christ. Of myself, I am not able to live a holy life. But the Holy Spirit of God, living in me, gives me power to obey God. This grace of God, ministered to me by the Holy Spirit, teaches me to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and “to live a self-controlled, upright and godly life in this present age...” (Titus 2:12).

A RESURRECTION AND NEW BODIES

Believers have a “living hope” of Christ’s soon return. We who love Jesus, live with another great HOPE. We hope for the resurrection of the body. The world does not have this hope. They think of things going on much as they are, or getting better. They even scoff at God’s promise (2 Peter 3:6).

Jesus said He would come for us and take us home to glory. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 gives a vivid description of His coming again.

The first time Jesus came, the shepherds found Him lying in a manger, a helpless babe. The second time Christ will come in victory. He will come as King of glory with His angels (Matt 24:30).

We wait for the resurrection when God will give us new bodies. Why bodies?

Because He rose with a resurrection body and we will also

Christ has bought us back and He wants us to live forever with Him in Heaven (John 14:1–2). Our spirits are bought back at the price of His precious blood. Next time He comes our bodies will be resurrected by the power of His victory. His resurrection led the way for us, who are following hard after Him. He was the first fruits or the first of the harvest (1 Cor 15:23).

Those who will rise from their graves and go to heaven are the ‘fruit’ of the gospel (1 Cor 15:20, 23). At Christ’s second coming all who are His will share in His glory. We will be raised with new, glorified bodies, suited to the environment in which we will live forever with our Saviour. It won’t matter where this old physical body falls. People have problems with that. The Haitians want to be buried in Haiti, not in the Dominican Republic. So what? If we love Him, it does not matter much where our bodies lie after we die.

TALK ABOUT 1. Where do you want to be buried? 2. If you are a Christian, does it matter? 3. All who die “in Christ” will be resurrected to E..... L.....? 4. What will awaken the dead (1 Thess 4:16–18)? 5. Where will believers meet Jesus? 6. Is there a place reserved for you in heaven?


Unit 7. ANCHORED IN HEAVEN

Finally the writer says: “We have this hope as an anchor of our soul” (Heb 6:19). Our hope cannot slip and it will not break. It has been carried for us into the very presence of God – “within the veil” (KJV).

“Within the veil” or “behind the curtain” (NIV) means in heaven. Jesus Christ took our hope there with Him. He was the “forerunner.” In Greek “the forerunner” was the small boat that carried the ship’s anchor behind the sand bar and dropped it there. Jesus carried our hope with Him, and planted it in the Holy of Holies, in the presence of God. There it is secure.

In this life, we are secure “In Christ” as we hold firm to the faith. And He will resurrect us at the sound of the last trumpet (1 Thess 4:16).

BORN AGAIN INTO AN INHERITANCE

 **Read: 1 Peter 1:4–5**

Christians are born again “into an inheritance that can never perish...” spoil, or be taken away from them (1 Peter 1:4). Jesus is guarding it for us. In heaven, Jesus, the King of kings is watching over my inheritance for me. He never slumbers or sleeps. I trust Him completely. The presence of God’s Spirit is the first installment and guarantee of glory (Eph 1:13–14).

The promise of salvation from this present earthly body is preserved and reserved for those who are “shielded by God’s power” (1:5). We must be constantly shielded or we will never make it (Heb 7:25). His power is round about us like a shield (Psa 5:11–12).

Satan cannot touch our inheritance, but he can tempt us! We are kept by God’s power “until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed...” at

lot of Peter’s sermons in his Gospel. Later Mark, also called John Mark, went with Paul on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:5).

TALK ABOUT 1. Why are believers called “one body”? 2. How can we have peace with our brother? 3. Do non-Christians have peace? 4. What was the ‘wall’ that kept Jews and Gentiles apart (Eph 2:15)?

Unit 21. PETER’S SECOND LETTER TO BELIEVERS

Introduction: Peter was an overseer or ‘shepherd’ of God’s people.

He wrote his letters to Christians. He called them “strangers in the world.” He named some of the places where they lived 1 Peter 1:1–2).

The believers in the Roman Provinces had been persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ. Peter wrote his first letter to encourage them to be strong and hold fast to their faith in Christ.

In his second letter Peter told the Christians how to deal with false teachers who rose up in their churches. Some still lived as they had before they professed faith in Christ. They said that Christians did not need to live holy lives. Sin in the life of God’s people weakens His Church. It must be confessed and put away.

Peter wrote this letter near the end of his life (1:12–15), probably about AD 65–67. He died a martyr in the reign of the Roman Emperor Nero.

A SERVANT AND AN APOSTLE

 **Read: 2 Peter 1:1–2**

Peter said who he was and called himself “Simon Peter.” He was one of the twelve disciples. He was “a servant and an apostle;” first a servant and then one sent by God to teach His people.

In the New Testament, an ‘apostle’ is a sent one, one who goes out with a message from God. Peter wrote to “those who have received a faith that is as precious as ours” (1:1). Faith is a gift. God gives faith to those who hear His word and receive it. Once we have faith we must hold fast what God has given us in Jesus Christ, which is the salvation of our souls (1 Peter 1:9). There is only one faith in Jesus Christ. Paul told the believers in Galatia, “If anyone is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned” (Gal 1:9).

God has done this for us “through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.” God is perfectly righteous in giving us faith and forgiveness in Christ, because He died on the cross. Christ’s death was for us and in our place.

Peter called Jesus Christ “God.” God is God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit (Matt 28:20). Jesus was not only the Messiah, but He was God Himself come in human flesh!

He said “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30).

In our day many preach a ‘social gospel’ of do good to all men and you will go to heaven. They preach that you can be saved without the blood of Jesus. Nothing could be further from the truth!

Paul said, “We have redemption through His (Christ’s) blood, the forgiveness

All Christians must be “self-controlled and alert.” Peter called Satan “your enemy” (1 Peter 5:6). He said Satan wanted to catch them, like a lion waits to catch its food. Peter knew what he was talking about; Satan had caught him many times before! (Matt 16:23).

James wrote, “Resist the devil...Stand firm in the faith...” (James 4:7). Use God’s word against Satan as Jesus did (Luke 4:3–4).

THE CROSS BRINGS UNITY

Christ is our peace. He breaks down every wall that separates classes and nations of men. He “destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility” between Jew and Gentile (Eph 2:14). In Christ all men are equal.

The prophets wrote of the peace and prosperity of God’s Kingdom. “The leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together” (Isa 11:6). So “it was revealed to (the prophets) that they were not only serving themselves (the Jewish race) but you (Gentiles) when they spoke of the things that have now been told...” (1:12).

TALK ABOUT 1. Are you treated as an equal? 2. Do you treat others fairly? 3. What reward did Christ promise the faithful? 4. Where does peace reign?

Unit 20. JESUS CHRIST IS OUR PEACE

Jesus Himself is our peace (Eph 2:14). Jews and Gentiles were always enemies. Christ brought those who believed together as one. He “abolished in His flesh” the law’s demands... The law pointed its finger at them and shouted ‘Death to sinners!’ But Jesus took sin’s punishment. Christ died to satisfy the demands of the law (Gal 3:13).

The Jews kept God’s laws. They lived by a calendar of feasts. Gentile peoples lived for pleasure and gain. So the law divided Jew and Gentile.

In Christ, many groups were made into “one new man” (Eph 2:15). A wall kept Gentiles out of the temple courts. In Christ all men are equal. There is no difference between Jew and Greek, slave or free man, male or female. They are one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:26–28). Christians are ‘one body.’ The body is the whole Christian Church. God does not see Jew and Greek and Roman, but a new community of faith, fellow citizens and heirs (Gal 3:29).

FAITHFUL BROTHERS

Silas, also called Silvanus, was a leader and teacher in the church at Jerusalem (Acts 15:22,32). He helped Peter write these letters. Peter called Silas “a faithful brother.” Silas went with Paul on his second journey. He joined Paul at Corinth (2 Cor 1:19).

Peter wrote “She who is Babylon...sends you her greetings” (1 Peter 5:13). After their failed revolt (AD 66–70), the Jews called Rome Babylon. Peter did not name Rome to protect the Christians there.

Peter called Mark “my son” (5:13). Some think Peter led Mark to faith in Christ (1 Tim 1:2). Mark went with Peter and heard him preach many times. He used a

Christ’s Second Coming. Believers are being kept, moment by moment, until Christ comes and takes them to heaven (John 14:2–3).

The keeping power of God is not automatic. Diligence is required on our part. When we are diligent and obey what the Holy Spirit says to us, we live under the protection of Jesus’ blood. The blood of Christ is our covering and protection against the wiles of the devil. He may well go around “like a roaring lion,” but he is on a chain. He is not free to work his full evil on us.

TALK ABOUT 1. What is the hope of every Christian? 2. Why does Peter call this hope a “living hope” (1 Peter 1:3)? 3. What in us will answer Christ’s call when He comes again “with a loud command” (1 Thess 4:16; Dan 12:2)? 4. Do you need any more assurance that Jesus is coming again? 5. Do you have such a hope of the resurrection?

OUR REJOICING IN CHRIST

Read: 1 Peter 1:6–7

We rejoice in God’s wonderful plan (1:6). These scattered, persecuted Christians in the five provinces of Asia Minor did not feel very secure, but they could rejoice in this great salvation God has provided for them.

Our new life in Christ may start sunny and bright, but clouds may soon creep over. This world is full of trials, but God uses them to make our faith strong. Your faith “is of greater worth than gold which perishes” (1:7).

Of greater worth than all the things we collect – they will perish, but the things of God will remain” (Psa 102:26).

You are an eternal, spirit being. Your spirit is all that you will take away from here when you leave this earth. God is developing your spirit, making it like Jesus was in His character.

God tests our faith. He is like a refiner, heating the metal to white hot, skimming off the dross, making the gold pure. He cannot leave any of the ‘trials’ out of your life without spoiling you! He wants us to be the best that we can be. And our trials will only last “for a little while,” eternal rest will be forever (2 Cor 4:17).

“Why would God make the course so difficult?” a man who played golf asked me.

“So that we will run with our eyes set on Jesus and not on our own ability,” I told him (Heb 12:2). “You would not be satisfied playing an easy course.”

Faith must be proved true and firm (Deut 8:2). God wants our faith to be genuine. We turn away from a counterfeit faith and so does God. Faith that holds on to God in the worst of times will result in “praise, glory and honour... when Jesus is revealed” (1 Peter 1:7). As we receive this final salvation of our souls, there will be joy that cannot be expressed (1 Peter 1:9–10). We ‘see’ Him by faith now, then we will see Him face to face.

TALK ABOUT 1. What is the believer’s inheritance? Peter said it will not perish, spoil or fade (1 Pet 1:4)? 2. As we trust and obey, we are kept by God’s power __ True __ False (John 17:11)? 3. What will heaven be like

(Heb 12:22–24)? 4. How did God test the Israelites' faith (Deut 8:2)? God tested their faith to prove it was g.....? 5. Has your faith been tested to make it like pure g.....?

Unit 8. THE PROPHETS OF OLD

Read: 1 Peter 1:10–12

God spoke to us through the prophets of old. He spoke to them and through them to us about “this great salvation” and the grace that was to come in Christ to all peoples.

In eternity God had already done everything necessary for man's salvation. He had us on His heart from eternity past and had prepared a Savior for us sinners (1:10; Eph 1:4).

This salvation would come to the whole world in Jesus Christ (Gal 4:4).

Peter said the prophets “searched intently and with the greatest care...” They studied God's word which they had on scrolls (Dan 9:2). Many prophets wrote down the words God gave them for the people of their day. And they listened carefully for God to speak to them by His Spirit. God controlled their pens and directed their thoughts as they wrote. God's Spirit was upon them, but did not fill them as He fills believers now.

THE PROPHETS SEARCHED

The prophets did not fully understand what the Spirit was saying to them. God's message was first to the Jewish people living at the time the prophets spoke. But the message also looked to a time far in the future and to the coming Messiah Christ (Dan 8:15; 9:2).

So it was that all the hope of the Old Testament saints was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He came to earth to save all men from sin, Jews and Gentiles alike (Luke 19:10; John 1:29).

The prophets searched to know “the time and the circumstances to which the Spirit.....was pointing...” (1 Peter 1:11). God hid this mystery. But when the time was right, “God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons” (Gal 4:4). God had given His last revelation of Himself to the world through Christ the Savior (Heb 1:1).

The men who preached the gospel were filled with the Holy Spirit “sent from heaven” (1 Peter 1:12; Acts 4:8). When Jesus Christ ascended to heaven He sent the Holy Spirit to take His place. The Holy Spirit came as our teacher and guide. Jesus said, “He (the Holy Spirit) will guide you into all truth” (John 16:12).

There is no mystery now in the meaning and purpose of Christ's suffering. He came to earth and suffered to redeem us from sin and Satan.

He came and died and rose again that we might have eternal life. Even the angels “long to look into these things.”

WRONG IDEAS ABOUT SUFFERING

1. All suffering comes from God. This is wrong. We know our enemy, Satan, inflicts physical and mental hurt to God's people.

2. All suffering happens because of sin. Our sin can cause much trouble, but suffering is not the direct result of sin. Jesus in John 9 said, “Neither this man nor his parents have sinned...”

3. All suffering is an illusion. No, it is not all in our hearts. Jesus did suffer in His body as well as in His Spirit.

TALK ABOUT 1. What are some of the wrong ideas people have about suffering? 2. Who destroyed Satan's power. 3. Men feared.....But Christ took the sting out of it (Heb 2:14–15)? 4. Do you fear death? Why not?

Unit 19. TEACHING FOR YOUNG MEN AND ELDERS

Read: 1 Peter 5:1–14

The elders were men chosen to take care of the new Christians. They were gathering in homes and worshipping God (Acts 2:42–45). They needed leaders and Paul set out who should be a leader or overseer in the Christian churches (1 Tim 3:1–13). These men, chosen by the believers, were told to “feed the flock of God; care for it willingly...not for what you get out of it, but because you are eager to serve the Lord” (1 Peter 5:2–4 TLB).

Peter told these leaders to be honest and upright. He was a “fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings...” (1 Peter 5:1). Peter had seen his Lord suffer in Gethsemane and at His trial, but he had denied Christ and then run away. He wanted these leaders to stand strong and stay on the job.

Don't run away! “Be shepherds of the flock...under your care...” In Israel, the shepherd went before his sheep, a theme often used in Scripture (Isa 40:11; John 10:1–16).

ELDERS SERVE THE CHURCH

The elders were to serve a) “Not because you must, but because you are willing...” b) “Not greedy for money, but eager to serve” c) “Not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being an example.”

“When the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of glory that will never fade away” (5:4). Jesus Christ is the Chief Shepherd. He will come again and He will reward the faithful leaders with a “crown of glory.”

Peter told the young men to serve in the assembly with humble spirit and follow directions from those who were older in the faith. They were to do this even if they felt of little worth. Peter assured them, “In His good time He will lift you up” (1 Peter 5:6 TLB).

“Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you” (1 Peter 5:7, KJV). The young men had many cares. They must make their way in the world, build careers and lead their families. Some take pride in the works of their hands, but all we have comes from God and we give thanks to Him

waiting for God's redemption (Rom 8:20–22). So Christ died to reconcile all things – in the heavens and on earth (Col 1:20).

The world is full of injustice, unimaginable heartache and sorrow which touches every person – believer and unbeliever alike (Eccl 4:1–3). None of us are exempt from suffering (1 Peter 2:21).

- Resisting the devil and evil will bring suffering (1 Pet 5:9).
- The Apostles followed Christ, and resisted Satan (Act 5:41;9:16).
- suffering for the sake of the gospel and Christ (2 Tim 1:8,12).
- suffering for the Kingdom of God (2 Thess 1:5).
- suffering with others who suffer (Gal 6:2).

We must take up the cross and practice its principle of sacrifice. The cross was God's entry into our suffering world! It must be ours, too (Mark 8:34)! God will enable you to be 'more than conquerors' in this evil world. His strategy for moving His Kingdom forward in this world is not to conquer the evil systems, but to make His followers 'more than conquerors' in it...(Rom 8:31–37). This means being 'living sacrifices' in the world. Giving ourselves up to His will and to His victory every day.

We join in the sufferings of others. We love them; we suffer with them; we overcome evil with good! We act as supporters in their suffering. We bear them up before the Lord – we shoulder their suffering with them.

SUFFERING TO OVERCOME EVIL

Suffering to overcome evil with good should be joyous! "If we see the extraordinary meaning of our suffering, that it parallels and continues Christ's suffering for the salvation of the world, then we understand why suffering became glorious for the early disciples (Act 5:41; 1 Pet 4:12–19).

It is the process through which the grace of God will reach more and more people for Christ...(2 Cor 4:11–18). The result of such a ministry is glorious and results in us being 'more than conquerors' through Christ (Rev 12:11). How can we explain, theologically, the defeat of Satan by the martyrs? They defeated Satan in three ways:

1. By the blood of the Lamb...Satan's first tool to enslave men is man's sin nature and the death-judgment it brings (Heb 2:14). When a man receives Christ as his Savior, the shed blood of Christ destroys/cancels Satan's dominion over him.
2. Men are in bondage to fear of dying. The man who counts not his life dear, and witnesses for Christ in his death, defeats Satan (Heb 2:14–15).
3. Men are kept in slavery because Satan blinds them and darkens their minds (2 Cor 4:4). When a martyr dies, he makes the truth shine forth so powerfully that it penetrates the darkest mind.

We will share in Christ's suffering and in His glory (Rom 8:17–18). The glory of His person – knowing Him and being like Him (Phil 3:10 Amp; 2 Cor 3:18).

- God will perfect us (as His sons) through suffering (Heb 2:10).
- God will teach us obedience through suffering (Heb 5:8).
- God will make us strong through suffering (1 Pet 5:10).

CHRIST SUFFERED TO MAKE US HOLY

Read: 1 Peter 1:13–15

Peter called the believers "obedient children." They were young in their faith – like new-born sons and daughters. He instructed them to: a) Have their minds prepared for God's Spirit to work in them. b) Be self-controlled. c) Set their hope fully on the grace Christ will give them when He (Christ) comes again.

Until Christ comes again, we have the Holy Spirit in us to make us strong in faith, holy in conduct and kind in our attitude toward others.

At Christ's second coming we all will see His unveiled glory (Matt 24:30). This prospect causes all Christians to rejoice amidst their struggles and sufferings.

The believer's love for Christ and his or her daily walk with Him makes their joy a present reality. Peter said it this way, "Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy" (1:8).

They were already glorified in Christ and living in His presence. Peter called this state of being "the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls" (1:9). This state of being is the preparation for the "the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time" (1:5). That salvation is the transformation that will take place in this lowly body.

TALK ABOUT 1. Did the prophets have the Spirit of Christ to guide them (2 Sam 23:2)? 2. God sees the believer already seated with Jesus Christ in heaven __ True __ False (Eph 2:6)? 3. Do you have the Holy Spirit?

Unit 8. ALIENS IN A FOREIGN LAND

Read: 1 Peter 1:16–25

Christians are distinct and different. Peter called them "strangers" and aliens living in a hostile world (1 Peter 1:17). God said to Pharaoh, "I will make a distinction between My people and your people..." (EX 8:23). Malachi wrote, "you will see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not" (Mal 3:18). Those who are different live in "reverent fear" of their Father in heaven. They live holy lives (1:16). Now Peter gives another reason for pursuing godly conduct: They had been redeemed – an Old Testament word that means bought out of slavery or bondage. God brought His people out of Egypt where they had been slaves for 400 years.

In the same way Jesus Christ redeems His people from the bondage of sin (Heb 2:15). He paid the ransom price for them. This was not a ransom paid with silver and gold, but with the sinless blood of Christ.

When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He paid the debt we owed. Believers are no longer condemned because of their sin (Rom 8:1). They are freed from sin's bondage and granted a free pardon in Christ Jesus.

THE SINS OF THEIR ANCESTORS

Their forefathers handed down an empty or vain way of life (1 Peter 1:18). Vain living was always joined with idolatry. Their forefathers left God's way and turned to idols (Jer 8:10; 10:3–5). For this great sin, God allowed their enemies to defeat them and carry them off to Babylon.

Over and over again the prophets cried out against the idolatry in the land. Again and again God rebuked His people for their idol worship.

Peter's readers had taken on many of the pagan customs of their forefathers. He said to them, "You have spent enough time in the past doing what the pagans choose to do – living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry" (1 Peter 4:3). Praise God, these believers had been redeemed out of such pagan practices. They must separate themselves from any part in it and live holy lives to their Lord.

The price paid for their redemption was Christ's precious blood, so precious and pure that it made gold and silver look worthless, like something that would decay. Perhaps some thought their gold and silver could save them in the day of trouble. The prophet said, "Their silver and gold would not be able to save them in the day of the Lord's wrath" (Ezek 7:19). Only the blood of Jesus Christ can take away our sin and set us free!

TALK ABOUT 1. Why do Christians think of themselves as aliens in a foreign land? 2. Why were their forefathers accused of vain living (1 Peter 1:18)? 3. What did the prophets say about this (Jer 8:9)?

Unit 9. A LAMB WITHOUT BLEMISH

 **Read: 1 Peter 1:19–22**

Christ was likened to a lamb that was offered under the Law as a sacrifice for sin (Lev 22:19). John spoke of Jesus Christ as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

The Passover Feast celebrated the time when God delivered Israel being delivered out of bondage in Egypt (Ex 12). On that fateful night each family killed the Passover lamb and sprinkled its blood on the doorposts.

Peter said, "He (Christ) was chosen (or foreknown) from the foundation of the world, but was revealed in these last time for your sake" (1:20). This speaks of the eternal sonship of Jesus Christ (see John 1:1–18; Heb 1:1–14). (The last day or last times refers to the period between Christ's birth and His coming again).

Christ came as a babe, born in Bethlehem "for your sake" or benefit. Note how personal the gospel is in Peter's thoughts. Christ's coming, His death and His resurrection was "for you." It could not be plainer. Have you received Him as your Saviour from sin?

"Through Him you believe in God.." (1 Peter 1:21). These believers had the prophets' words. They had the message brought by John the Baptist and last of all they had Christ's own words of life (John 6:63).

was "made alive in the Spirit" after His death (3:18). Now His life is given to us as a free gift by the Holy Spirit.

So the believer's spirit is "alive unto God" having the Spirit of God already dwelling within him. Though this wicked world may abuse and kill them, they have eternal life and their spirits will live on in Heaven forever.

TALK ABOUT 1. What should you do when neighbors abuse you? 2. Do you 'preach' the gospel by the way you live? Who watches you? 3. Should we do what others do if it is our culture? 4. What in your culture is anti-God?

THE END OF ALL THINGS IS NEAR

 **Read: 1 Peter 4:7–9**

Peter declared, "the end of all things is near" (1 Peter 4:7). He pointed us again to the second coming of Jesus Christ. His soon coming is the reason for the warning, "be clear minded and self-controlled..."

Before we take action, we need to have a clear mind and know what we are about to do and the consequences. God said, "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask of God, who gives generously..." (Jas 1:5).

Christians should be better at planning and executing the affairs of life than their non-Christian neighbors. They should have a clear purpose in life and know where they are going.

TALK ABOUT 1. Self-control means Spirit control (Gal 5:22–25). Self-control is a fruit of the Holy Spirit's work in the believer. You must be clear-minded and self-controlled "so that you can pray" effectively. The Bible sets forth prayer as the most important occupation of the believer. We all need to pay more attention to prayer. 2. We all need to give more attention to prayer (Eph 6:18 KJV)? 3. Do you "keep on praying for all the saints"?

Unit 18. LOVE ONE ANOTHER

True love comes only from God. His love in our hearts enables to love others, even the ones who are the hardest to love.

Jesus said to His disciples, "As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34).

When Jesus comes to live in a person's hearts, He fills it with His love. There is no such love in pagan cultures. That is why the writers of the New Testament had to find a special word for God's love. They used the Greek word "agape."

CHRISTIANS WILL SUFFER

 **Read: 1 Peter 4:12–18**

We live in a fallen world. There is not part of our world that has not been touched by man's sinfulness and rebellion. Even creation (all nature) groans

our own way as “sheep going astray” (1 Peter 2:25).

Peter calls on his readers to “arm yourselves with the same attitude” that Jesus had when He suffered for our sins (1 Peter 4:1–2).

Jesus did not fight back, but submitted to the Father’s will. “He was obedient unto death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:8).

“He who has suffered in his body is done with sin.” When we suffer in our bodies, we are cast upon the Lord. We see our priorities much more clearly. Areas of life that seem important become less so.

Peter said, the man who suffers for Christ’s sake “does not live the rest of his life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God” (4:2). His suffering has caused him to advance in sanctification, to be more like Jesus Christ. Sin will have less and less power over us.

Paul said, “Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness” (Rom 6:12–13). Rather, offer yourself to God as a priest, sanctified and living a holy life.

STOP DOING UNGODLY THINGS

👉 Read: 1 Peter 4:4–6

Christians must stop doing “what pagans choose to do.” Peter names some common sins. Your neighbors will “think it strange” that you do not plunge into these sins with them, so “they heap abuse on you” (4:4). Their abuse may be another cause of your suffering.

“But they will have to give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead” (1 Peter 4:5). God is the Judge of all men. He will call each of us to give account to Him of how we have lived – whether we have lived in pagan orgies or lived as priests unto God.

The people abused Noah when he told them of a coming flood. Noah preached God’s warning to the people of his day, but they laughed at him.

When he began to build an ark, they ridiculed him. They rejected God’s message and they all perished in the flood. Yet these people had godly ancestors!

THE GOSPEL WAS PREACHED

Many who had heard the gospel were now dead (1 Peter 4:6). There is no second chance gospel. After people have died there is no way we can change their eternal state (John 5:24). All our prayers and gifts will not help.

The gospel is preached so that our sins may be judged now in Christ’s death. He bore our sins in His body on the cross (2:24). For all who have had their sins judged now, there is no judgment for sin later (Rom 8:1).

Sin is judged in our bodies in that we all die physically. God told Adam, “When you eat of it (the fruit) you will surely die” (Gen 2:17). And man’s body has been dying ever since! But Adam’s spirit was cut off from God!

Further, the gospel is preached so that we may “live according to God in regard to the Spirit” (4:6). Believers will live as God lives – eternally. Their Saviour

They might have doubted the messages brought by prophet, so God sent His only Son (Heb 1:1–4). He fulfilled all His covenant promises made to Israel by raising Jesus Christ from the dead and by glorifying Him in heaven.

👉 Read: 1 Peter 1:23–25 MADE PURE BY FAITH

What happens when we obey the truth? Peter said “Our love is made pure” toward our brothers and sisters in Christ. The purifying of the believers pointed to a past act that continued to bear fruit. They had obeyed the truth. They were born again and their faith showed out in their acts of kindness.

This is a very practical matter. The believers suffered persecution and needed love and help. They were one body in Christ. God had made of them “one new man” (Eph 2:15).

God used His word to effect this change in their hearts. The word is the ‘seed’ that does not perish. The word of God is alive and endures no matter what their persecutors may do.

They (the persecutors) were like grass in the field – here today and gone tomorrow (Isa 40:6–8). All the glory of men is like a flower that quickly falls, “but the word of the Lord stands forever” (1 Peter 1:24–25).

The contrast here is between the withering falling flower and the word of God which stands upright and strong forever. This is the word that was preached to them. This is the word they believed. This is the word that worked faith in their hearts. No word of man could change the way they lived. The change in lives is the greatest testimony to its truth and inspiration.

TALK ABOUT 1. Jesus is “the Lamb of God” who came to take away our sins __ True __ False (John 1:29)? 2. Did He die only for Jews? 3. How is our love for God made pure (1 Peter 1:22)? 4. What did the prophet mean when he said, “All men are like grass...” (Isa 40:6–8)?

Unit 10. PUT OFF YOUR OLD WAYS

👉 Read: 1 Peter 2:1–5

In the opening verses Peter called on all believers to put off their old ways – ways they had as pagans before they came to Christ. God’s Spirit, working in the new believer, point to things in our lives that grieve Him. We put these off as Paul commanded (Eph 4:24–28).

Christians do not murder or steal, but they often envy a brother who succeeds and they do or say malicious things (2 Cor 12:20). The sins listed here spoil our fellowship and divide our churches.

In their place we are told to put on the virtues of love, faith and hope. We learn what God requires of us by studying His word. This is the meaning of “pure spiritual milk” (1 Peter 2:2).

The same thought is found in 1 Cor 3:1 and Heb 5:12, where the writer suggests that the mature Christian should outgrow the milk and turn to the meat of the word.

Peter's desire is that they might "grow up in your salvation now that you have tasted that the Lord is good" (2:3; Psa 14:8). The verb tense for 'tasted' points back to a moment in time when they received God's grace and were born again.

PRIEST AND TEMPLE

Peter describes these scattered believers as: a) priests before God. b) a temple in which God dwells. c) living stones in the temple of God.

These three statements make up the most remarkable picture of the Church of Jesus Christ. God had saved them from the darkness of their pagan past (Col 1:17), and trusted them with a wonderful ministry. They were now a "holy priesthood" (1 Peter 2:5). Who or what made them holy?

God did by His Spirit. He gave them His own righteousness. As He looks at them, He sees Jesus Christ who was without sin (Heb 4:12). They are accepted before the Father, forgiven and made holy.

They have been saved for a purpose, a ministry. First and foremost they were to "offer spiritual sacrifices." This is "the praise of their lips" (Heb 13:15). These spiritual sacrifices are only accepted if they are made "through Jesus Christ."

A LIVING STONE, A STUMBLING STONE

Read: 1 Peter 2:6–8

They had "come to Him, the Living Stone...." (1 Peter 2:4). They had received Jesus Christ, the living One who was "rejected by men, but chosen by God and precious to Him..." (Rom 9:33).

In Jerusalem and throughout all Israel, the leaders had rejected Christ and handed Him over to the Romans. They had crucified Him, the chosen Messiah sent by God to redeem the world.

Christ is "the living stone" because God raised Him from the dead. But they, too, were "living stones, being built into a spiritual house...." This house is also called a temple (1 Cor 3:16). God's house or temple is made up of all true believers in whom God dwells by His Spirit. It is a living temple because God fills it with His life and light.

Those who did not receive Jesus Christ as their Saviour stumbled over Him. They were offended because He claimed to be equal with God. The leaders of Israel and their followers threw out the Cornerstone, then they stumbled over it (1 Peter 2:8).

In the same way, if we reject the gospel of Jesus Christ, we will stumble over Him and He will reject us. We will not be saved and God's wrath will abide on us (John 3:36).

Read: 1 Peter 2:9–12 OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES

Peter uses Old Testament Scriptures which point to the Christian Church as the heir of the promises made to God's ancient people Israel.

Christians belong to the new and true Israel. The Scripture used is taken from God's words to Moses after the people of Israel came out of Egypt (Ex 19:5).

A SYMBOL OF BAPTISM

What is the meaning of Christian baptism? It is a witness to the world that we have a clean conscience before God. It does not mean "the removal of dirt (or sin) from the body. That takes place at salvation.

Paul shows baptism to be our identifying with Christ in His death and resurrection. a) In Christ, the believer died to sin – his whole body went under the water (Rom 6:10). b) His old nature was 'buried' with Christ. c) He is one with Christ in His resurrection – he is raised out of the water. From that day on the believer will live for Jesus only.

God saved eight persons from the flood. Peter said this is a picture of baptism. Noah and his family were saved because they obeyed God and went into the ark. Those who enter into Christ's death (His baptism) are saved from death and will live with Him forever in heaven (John 14:2–3).

Peter assures his readers that "Jesus Christ has gone into heaven and is now at God's right hand. This is a place of honor and power. He is there for them and us. He is our mediator and friend.

Further, the angels, authorities and powers in the spirit world are "in submission to Him" (3:22). Jesus Christ is King. He reigns over all. He has all power over Satan, evil and death (Rev 1:18). He reigns over all things in heaven and on earth. He is reigning now and He will reign forever. Christ's reign and power are most important to us as believers. He reigns as Head of the Christian Church (Eph 5:23).

The Christian Church is the fullness or completeness of Jesus Christ and His work. "The Church is the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way" (Eph 1:23). It is the fruit of His ministry as the Son of God.

"The same power that supports the world supports the Church" (Matthew Henry). That same power raised Jesus from the dead and it is present in the believer by God's Spirit. How we avail ourselves of the power that works in us is "according to our faith."

The Scripture says, "How much more with your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him" (Luke 11:13).

TALK ABOUT 1. Where is Jesus Christ now (3:22)? 2. Who has power over Satan and evil spirits? 3. What is the true Church? 4. Why do believers need to be "filled with the Spirit" Eph 5:18)? 5. What community did Jesus bring into being? He called it "the Kingdom of God" (Mark 1:15)? 6. Have you asked for more of His Spirit today?

Unit 17.

LIVING FOR GOD

Read: 1 Peter 4:1–11

To live for God means to put God first in everything, to and give Him full control of your life. It is easy to talk about this, but much harder to make it actually happen. We all hold on to things we want to keep private. We want

peace he enjoys. The believer must do this

1. "With gentleness and respect."
2. In good conscience, so that those who accuse them "may be ashamed of their slander" (1 Peter 3:16).

TALK ABOUT 1. In what ways can we show respect to others? 2. Who in your family deserves most respect? 3. Do you feel God's protection? 4. Do you feel that God is not protecting believers when they perish in natural disasters?

👉 Unit 16. CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS

Peter points us to Christ's victory over sin. His death was shameful, but glorious because Satan was defeated at the Cross (Hebrews 2:15).

Christ is called "the Righteous" or the Righteous One (2:22; Isa 53:11), because He had no sin (Heb 4:15). His sinless blood was shed "once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous," to bring us back to God (3:18; Heb 10:6). Jesus said Himself that His great work of redeeming mankind was "finished" (John 19:30). He died in our place. By faith in Jesus Christ our sins are forgiven and we can come into God's presence in worship and praise.

The first goal of the gospel message is to "bring you to God." If you are still wandering in sin, this message is for you. Repent of your sins and believe in Jesus Christ and you will be saved and made alive in your spirit.

"He (Christ) was put to death in the body, but made alive by the spirit. This is not the Holy Spirit; Christ was alive in His own spirit (Rom 1:3)

While Christ's body died on the cross, but His spirit returned to heaven. Jesus said to the thief hanging on the cross beside Him, "Today you will be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). His body lay in Joseph's tomb!

👉 Read: 1 Peter 3:18–22 THE TRIUMPH OF JESUS CHRIST

The triumph of Jesus Christ is the most important theme of the next difficult verses (3:18–22). Christ's triumph had to be heralded or proclaimed to all spirits – and Peter notes those 'dead' spirits who rejected God's warning through Noah. Their bodies perished in the flood but they lived on to await final judgment.

Some believe these "disobedient spirits" were angels who had sinned. We do not agree. Jesus said that angels do not marry or have sex (Mark 12:25). Spirit beings cannot join in sexual relations with human beings.

Rather the "sons of God" of Noah's day were the sons of the godly line of Seth. These Sethites married Canaanite women and mixed the line of faith with the godless world (Gen 6:4). They are the 'dead' of 4:6 and "in prison" or in Hell from which they will come forth to final judgment (Luke 16:19–31; Rev 20:13).

Peter said Christ went to these "spirits in prison" and preached to them. (This does not mean Christ evangelized them). He proclaimed (Rev 5:2 is the same word) the victory of His death, resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father (3:22).

At Mount Sinai God declared the Israelites to be His "treasured possession"... "a Kingdom of priests"... "a holy nation..."

Now all Christians are "a chosen people" (Isa 43:20). They are "a people belonging to God," sons and daughters of the living God (Rom 9:26).

Before they were born again, they were not God's people. They were Satan's people, lost in the darkness of sin. Jesus said so to their faces (John 8:44).

ALIENS IN THE WORLD

After leaving Egypt, God's people of old were without a homeland. They had come "out of darkness" in Egypt.

God promised them "a land flowing with milk and honey" (Ex 3:8). Until they reached the Promised Land they were aliens. They would always be a distinct people, not like their pagan neighbors (Gen 8:23). So Peter calls the scattered believers to live as "aliens and strangers in the world" (1 Peter 2:11). Not like those around them but "free to choose or abstain from sinful desires" that "war against the soul."

Believers are never free of sin's tug. Our old nature or bias never goes away. But in Christ we have victory over it (Gal 5:16–25).

Others may persecute us. They may tell lies about us, but God is faithful. Be patient with others and do good deeds. This will show to all that you are trusting in God alone. A believer's good testimony does more to convict others of their wrong-doing than a thousand words.

TALK ABOUT 1. Why did Peter call these Christians "a holy nation" (2:9)? 2. Why did God choose the nation of Israel to be His people (Deut 7:7–9)? 3. God said His people must be holy __ True __ False (1 Peter 1:15)?

Unit 11. SUBMITTING TO AUTHORITY

👉 Read: 1 Peter 2:13–25

The believer's first and greatest authority is Almighty God. He commands that all men and women to love and worship Him (Acts 16:30). He said to His ancient people Israel, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength (Deut 6:5). Jesus said this was the greatest commandment and added a second which evolves out of the first, "love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:29–31). God gives us the same command today.

God's laws are greater than man's laws. We must obey God at all costs as the early disciples showed us. When Peter and John were told not to preach in the name of Jesus they told the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish court, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 4:19).

We may wonder if God chose every ruler and authority. "God as a faithful Creator who provides for the proper government of His creatures" (Matthew Henry Commentary).

Some rulers are harsh and some laws seem unjust. What should we do? We can pray that God will change men and laws. The Scripture says, "The king's

heart is in the hand of the Lord; He directs it like a watercourse wherever He pleases" (Prov 21:1).

It is God's will that we submit to the authorities and laws of the country in which we live and to the institutions they have established (1 Peter 2:15).

DO GOOD TO EVERYONE

Many scoffers spoke against the Christian Church and the gospel of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:3–7). We should not argue with them. They will stop their "ignorant talk" when they see the Christians doing good deeds in the community. Indeed, many of their own families may be among those receiving help.

Christians are free in their spirits – they are free from sin and Satan's power. They are free to serve others. They are not free to do as they please. They must do as God's word commands. They must not use their freedom as a cover-up for evil (1 Peter 2:16). God sees and knows all that we do (Heb 4:12–13). We cannot really 'cover' our sins because they are open before God. They will stay 'open' until we confess them and receive His forgiveness.

When we submit to God, it is not hard to submit to the authorities He has placed over us. In this way we serve both our fellow men and God (1 Cor 9:19). When we are persecuted, we must look to God. The authorities were not set up to favour one class of people and not another. They were set up to bring law and order to society and to punish those who break the law (Rom 13:1–7).

TALK ABOUT 1. Why do men find it hard to submit to authority? 2. Do women have this problem also? 3. God has set us free, but not free to do as we like ___ True ___ false? 4. Do you feel free in your spirit and at rest in Christ? 5. If our laws seem unjust, what should we do?

Unit 12. EMPEROR WORSHIP

All citizens who lived under Roman rule were commanded to worship the Emperor of Rome. This was against God's command to worship Him only (Ex 20:3). Christians were persecuted and burned at the stake because they refused to worship the Roman Emperor.

We are to respect others, but this does not mean agreeing with what they do. Peter gives us four avenues of respect: a) Honor all men. b) Love the brotherhood. c) Fear God. d) Honor the king.

All persons are made in the image of God and every person is precious in His sight. They are also our brothers and sisters in the flesh, suffering like we do from the tug of a fallen nature.

Above and beyond the respect we show to others, we must love them for Christ's sake and seek to lead them into God's Kingdom. When they receive Christ they are our brothers and sisters in the Lord. Peter calls those who have come to Christ "the brotherhood of believers..." (1 Peter 2:17).

We are bound to our brothers and sisters in Christ by the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (1 John 3:14–16).

"Fear God, honor the king." We do not fear that God will do something to

YOUR ARE BEING WATCHED!

"For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil" (3:12; Psa 34:12–16).

Peter takes an Old Testament promise and applies it to those who do good and do not repay evil for evil. God spoke these words to the king of Judah in a time of battle. King Asa had not trusted God and had hired foreign troops to help him against his enemies (2 Chron 16:2–9). For all his lack of trust, God gave Asa victory over "A mighty army with great numbers of chariots and horsemen."

David used the same thought in Psalm 34 where he said, "Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous... the righteous cry out and the Lord hears them; He delivers them from all their troubles" (Psalm 34:14:17).

Read: 1 Peter 3:13–22 VICTORY OVER SUFFERING

Peter surprises us by asking, "Who is going to harm you if...you do good" (3:13)? This speaks of the law and order of Roman society. The Roman magistrates were ordered to be just and encourage morality. We have the same thought in 1 Peter 2:14.

"Even if you should suffer for what is right" – it is unlikely, but may happen – "you are blessed" (3:13; Matt 5:10). God will bless you. Peter added, "It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil" (1 Peter 3:17).

To all who suffer at the hands of others Peter said, "Do not fear what they fear." Trust God and do not fear what man can do to you. Fear of God – setting Christ apart as Lord of our hearts – has a powerful influence on how we accept the sufferings of this life (Isaiah 8:12–13).

TALK ABOUT 1. How can believers live in harmony? 2. God watches over us,.....also watches? 3. God said ".....is Mine, I will repay" (Rom 12:19)? 4. What cannot be tamed (James 3:3–8)?

DO NOT BE AFRAID

Peter quoted, "Do not fear what others fear" (Isa 8:12). At that time people feared a cruel invader. The prophet assured them that God would protect them. Jesus Christ is "the Rock" and a shelter in the time of trouble.

Some may fear loss of health or job or loss of position.

When we let Jesus Christ reign in our hearts, He takes away our fears and gives us His peace (John 14:27).

"Always be prepared to give an answer...for the hope that you have..." (3:15). People will think you are strange and they will ask "Why are you not afraid?" Tell them of the hope you have in Christ. This is what a witness does. He tells what has happened in his heart. "Do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience..." (1 Peter 3:15–16).

If the believer is called before the magistrates to answer charges brought against him, he can defend himself (2 Tim 4:16). He can tell of the reason for the

Peter wrote, "Be beautiful in your hearts with...a gentle and quiet spirit which is so precious to God..." (3:3–4, The Living Bible).

Such a spirit demonstrates that Christ indwells the believer by His Spirit and His way is superior. It pleases God where the outward show only pleases men.

LIVE IN HARMONY ONE WITH THE OTHER

Read: 1 Peter 3:7–8

Husbands are told to be reasonable and considerate toward their wives "as you live with your wives" (1 Peter 3:7). Three aspects must be taken into account:

1. Woman is the weaker partner and cannot equal the physical strength of her male partner.
2. As one created in the image of God the wife has an equal right to life and happiness.
3. The husband's prayers will be hindered if he does not consider and respect his wife. Husbands are not only to respect their wives, they should put their confidence and trust in their wives (Proverbs 31:10–12).

Be there for your wife when she needs you. Live "with your wife" not without her. This means share all her fears and burdens.

Husbands should lead their families in family prayers. And it is a blessed thing for husbands and wives to hold hands and pray together before they go to bed at night. There is no freedom to do this if the husband does not respect his wife.

All believers are told to "live in harmony with one another..." showing all brothers and sisters the love and compassion of Jesus Christ (3:8).

TALK ABOUT 1. What is God's marriage law (Gen 2:24)? 2. Where is true beauty seen (1 Peter 3:3–4)? 3. Were the women of old beautiful? 4. Man looks at the outside, but God looks at the.....(1 Sam 16:7)? 5. Who told husbands to love their wives as He loved the C..... (Eph 5:25)?

Unit 15. DO NOT REPAY EVIL WITH EVIL

Read: 1 Peter 3:9–12

Peter returns to the subject of repaying evil with good – the sign of a true Christian. Repay insults with blessing. God has called each believer to do this and by doing it you will "inherit a blessing." You will be blessed in your spirit every time you repay evil with good.

God has said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay" (Rom 12:19 KJV).

The tongue is like a weapon, it can be used to slay or to heal. Those who wish to see good days and a rich life "must keep his tongue from evil" (3:10). This is the best way to seek and make peace with a brother.

Does God notice? The writer of old reminds us that "the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are attentive to their prayer..." (3:12).

punish us. Our fear of God is reverent devotion to Him. A fear of displeasing Him by not acting as a true believer. It must be our goal to please the Father in all that we say and do.

Read: 1 Peter 2:18–20 SLAVES OBEY YOUR MASTERS

At this time in history as much as half the population was slaves. In Roman times, slaves had no rights. Many had become believers, yet they suffered under cruel masters. God knows everything. We honor Him when we bear unjust suffering without complaining (2:19).

Christ suffered for us and we will suffer because we follow Him. Though He was without sin, He suffered at the hands of evil men.

We live in a world of sin and evil. The world will hate us because we belong to Christ and it may do many things to harm us. But God is for us and we have the final victory. Paul said, "We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us (Rom 8:37).

Many suffered great hardships. Peter commended them for accepting what they could not change. He said, "To this (suffering) you were called because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps" (2:21). Patient endurance is God's plan for us.

JESUS DID NOT FIGHT BACK

Read: 1 Peter 2:21–25

Christ "committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth, yet He suffered at the hands of evil men".

We must expect to suffer too. Christians suffer because of their own sins. They suffer because of the sins of others and because they live in a world under Satan's control.

"When they hurled...insults at Him (Jesus), He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly" (2:23). Jesus left His just cause in the hands of the Father. He knew the Father was in control.

God said, "It is Mine to (take) revenge; I will repay" and again, "Do not take revenge...but leave room for God's wrath" (Rom 12:19).

TALK ABOUT 1. God commands all men everywhere to..... (Acts 17:30)? 2. He also tells us to obey those who rule over us. Believers could not worship the Roman Emperor because it would have been?

Unit 13. HE HIMSELF BORE OUR SINS

Christ did not suffer in vain, or only as an example of suffering. He suffered to bear away our sins. Here Christ's suffering is joined with His sin-bearing. He was the suffering Servant (Isa 53). He was the cursed one who hung on a cross of shame (Gal 3:13), that we might be healed of sin's curse and

delivered from its power. He suffered “so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness...” (1 Peter 2:24).

Sins power over us dies or is brought under the Spirit’s control, as we devote ourselves to doing what is right in God’s sight.

Paul wrote, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom 12:21).

WANDERING LIKE SHEEP

Because man has a sinful heart he goes astray. It is his own choice. No one makes him do wrong. It is his nature to sin. It is of our own free will that we go astray.

Man is lost from God. He is away from the Shepherd, lost in the wilderness of sin. Without the grace of God and the love of Christ, man is lost forever. But God is very patient. “not wanting any one to perish, but all to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

The Good Shepherd seeks the lost sheep and keeps on seeking them (Luke 19:10). He does not stop searching us out.

They have been brought back to the Shepherd. Or better the Shepherd has brought them back. They have recognized His love and care for them. Now He is “Christ the overseer of their souls” (2:25).

WIVES AND HUSBANDS

Read: 1 Peter 3:1–12

Peter wrote to wives and husbands, but the message is for all believers. The subject is the family, the most important of all social institutions. When the family breaks down, all society suffers. Jesus said this (Matt 12:27).

The way of submission is not an easy one and many do not find it. It is introduced to us in the previous chapter where Peter tells us that Jesus submitted to the will of the Father (1 Peter 2:23), even to the point of death. The scene now moves to the home and family where submission is equally important. Peter’s message is the same for all: a) Wives (3:1). b) Husbands (3:7). c) Slaves (2:18). d) Free citizens (2:13).

The emphasis is not only on “wives submit” but on “husbands love” your wives, both submitting to each other in love.

We pause to note that the gospel of Jesus Christ has been the greatest force for the liberation of women that the world has ever known. God sees no difference between the sexes (Gal 3:28).

MARRIAGE IS GOD’S PLAN

Marriage is God’s plan for men and women. At the very beginning of creation, God set down His marriage law (Gen 2:24). He said the man would make the first move. He would leave home and take a wife.

It is to be understood that the woman would willingly marry the man. Laban’s family asked Rebekah if she would go with Abraham’s servant to marry

Abraham’s son Isaac. They asked her, “Will you go with this man?”

“I will go,” she replied (Gen 24:57–58).

Faithful women of old were beautiful because they trusted God to make them that way. They waited on God with a meek and quiet spirit. Sarah was one of those faithful women. They were not perfect and Sarah was not.

Abraham also had many faults. But Sarah respected him as her husband. She obeyed and looked to Abraham as the head of her house. If you are a wife and you respect your husband’s headship, you will be like one of Sarah’s daughters in the faith. You will be “doing what is right; then you will not need to fear (offending your husband)” (1 Peter 3:6 The Living Bible).

TALK ABOUT 1. Jesus is like a Pastor who cares for his people and prays for them. Do you know Jesus Christ that way? Do you sense His loving arms around you and know that He is praying for you every day?

Unit 14. EACH PERSON IS RESPONSIBLE

God planned marriage between one man and one woman to meet our many needs. Each partner has a duty toward the other and each is responsible before God (1 Cor 7:2–5).

In Christian marriage, it should not be hard for one partner to submit to the other. For believers, the Holy Spirit joins man and woman in a spiritual union. God called this “one flesh.” They grow as one in the Spirit and in their love. They trust each other and it is not hard for them to love and submit.

In Paul’s letter to the Ephesians ‘love’ and ‘submit’ and ‘obey’ have much the same meaning for the believer (Eph 5:22 to 6:3). Submit means one partner giving love to the other in the Lord, whatever their need may be.

Jesus Christ is joined to His Church like a husband and wife are joined in their marriage – in a close, personal relationship.

Christian marriage is a picture of the true Church of Jesus Christ. The Church is the ‘Bride’ and Jesus is the ‘Bridegroom’ (Psa 19:5; Matt 25:1–5). The Church looks to Christ, the Head, for all her needs and honors Him with all her love and devotion. Husbands and wives are “heirs together of the grace of life” (3:7 KJV).

UNBELIEVING PARTNERS

In the early churches, things were not so straightforward. Many were married before they were saved. They found themselves married to husbands or wives who did not believe in Jesus Christ. Peter said that the unbelieving husbands or wives might be “won over” to Christ by the faithful testimony and the behavior of their spouse (3:1).

Paul also wrote to those married to unbelieving partners (1 Cor 7:15–24). Peter said the pure and reverent life of a believing spouse is a powerful testimony (1 Peter 3:2). Join this testimony with the “ferveat prayer of a righteous man (or woman)” and they will move mountains of opposition to the truth (Jas 5:17).

Feminine beauty, Peter said, should not come from the clothes women wear or their jewelry or the way they style their hair. Instead their beauty should come from within the person (1 Peter 3:3–4).