

EXPOSITION OF FIRST PETER  
"Encouragement for the Chosen"  
1 Peter 1: 1,2

Introduction: I love to read the Bible! It is exciting to me to see how God used men of such widely divergent backgrounds to produce such a fascinating, informative and alive Book! Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, God used a King to write part of this Book (David); He used several government officials (Moses, Daniel, Matthew); He used many especially gifted servants who we call prophets; He used a Jewish religious thinker named Paul, who was also a brilliant theologian; He used a physician (Luke); and as well, He used at least three simple fishermen (John, James and PETER).

A number of documents have come down to us under the name of Peter. There's the Gospel of Peter, the Preaching of Peter, the Acts of Peter and the Revelation of Peter. Good biblical scholarship has shown that each of these documents was written by someone ELSE using Peter's name, and written even up to 150 years after Peter died. But two documents HAVE come down to us which are CLEARLY AUTHENTIC and which Peter definitely did pen. These are two letters written by this fisherman to various first century Christians. The letters are not theological letters strictly speaking (like Paul's Letter to the Romans, and the anonymous Letter to the Hebrews), but 1 and 2 Peter INCLUDE much rich mining for he or she who hungers for theological truth--but spelling our right theology is not Peter's primary purpose...his purpose is to encourage Christians who are suffering.

1 Peter is a warm, pastoral letter, full of encouragement on a number of specific issues which Christians of EVERY ERA must face. The exhortations are addressed to Christians who are scattered over a wide geographical area. Even though they may have various social, educational, cultural, ethnic or political differences, they SHARE A COMMON FAITH with Christians everywhere, and they face common problems.

Their basic problem is to live for God in the midst of a society ignorant of the true God. Because they are Christians they are misunderstood, and subjected to cruel treatment. It is in Peter's heart and mind to help these Christians see their sufferings in the FULL LIGHT OF THE COMING ETERNAL GLORY!

We too need to keep our troubles in perspective. We need to be reminded that this is not all there is to life--even though a cynical culture would tempt us to fall back into that mindset...We need to be REMINDED that in the midst of whatever discouragements we face, the sovereign God will keep us, and enable us to have real joy, by faith--This is Peter's purpose.

**The Author and His Circumstances:** This letter was written by the Apostle Peter. When he wrote this letter he was an older man, perhaps even in his eighties. He had seen alot and he expected to die before too long.

Sometimes we younger folk really need the benefit and perspective of our elderly brothers and sisters in Christ. They can show us the meaninglessness of scurrying so frantically after material possessions; the profit which the mind and spirit accrue after taking a LIFETIME seeking the Lord. It is true, there are some elderly Christians who slip into bitterness or a critical spirit. But with those believers who have walked with Christ for decades, we who have come to Christ recently and struggle so DRAMATICALLY with problems just bound up in our youth. If you are young in the Lord, I would encourage you to seek out some elderly saint, who is godly. Get to know them. Take some time out of your busy schedule to sit and talk with them and soak up some of THEIR perspective...

Now Peter writes this letter from Babylon (5:13). We cannot be completely sure to what this refers. Some think it is a code word for Rome. Others think it is a reference to the literal city of Babylon on the Euphrates River. Even by the first century there were still people living there, and there may have been a Jewish community still there, even possibly a small new Christian community. Although this is a possibility, it seems improbable that Paul's companions Mark and Silas would be there too, if it were the ancient Babylon. Therefore I take it that "Babylon" is a reference to Rome...

Peter wrote this letter to people who were true Christians he has no doubt, who were living in five provinces in what is now northern Turkey. They lived on the northern borders of the Empire, and no doubt sometimes felt isolated from the mainstream of developing Christianity. They were probably of mostly pagan upbringing, and receiving a letter like this, intended by Peter to be circulated among their churches, must have been an immense encouragement.

Can you imagine how we would feel if Billy Graham were to have a burden for our area, and for US, and wrote us a hand-written letter: "To the brothers and sisters of Dartmouth Bible Church, First Christian Church of Hixville, Calvary Bible Church, Mullein Hill Church and Elim Baptist Church." Just one copy...how would we respond?

As to when Peter wrote this letter, it is dated around 65 A.D., probably just at the beginning of the Emperor Nero's persecution of Christians. He says to them,

But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet

with gentleness and reverence. (1 Peter 3: 14,15)

This verse is one we often use in thinking about doing evangelism in our culture, but the defense of the faith took on a much more dangerous character in the first century...

1 Peter 1: 1,2 Peter addresses the people he is writing as those "who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father..." (eklektōis...kata prognōsin theou patros, in Greek). Think about that phrase with me for a moment...Peter states a fact about these Christians--they were chosen by the Father. Now Peter is a very practical Christian, and he does not delve deeply into the doctrine of election as Paul does in Romans 9, Ephesians 1, etc. He simply states the fact of election and WANTS TO PUT THAT DOCTRINE TO WORK IN THE LIVES OF THESE SUFFERING CHRISTIANS.

The Greek word for "chosen" means to "pick out" or "to select out of a number." Election therefore, has to do with God choosing for Himself individuals out of the masses of humanity. Election is not some new doctrine taught by the Apostle Peter. It was taught by Christ, (Mark 13:20). It was taught by the Apostle Paul (Ephesians 1:4,5). In fact almost every writer of the New Testament deals with election, and in many places in the Old Testament the doctrine is encountered. Therefore it is an important doctrine for us to know and live by. Why God would chose some and pass<sup>d</sup> by others is a great mystery to us. But I accept the truth of sovereign election ( and I hope you do to) because it is a divine revelation from an INFINITE GOD, although our finite minds cannot fully grasp it. Election to salvation is to be believed, if not completely understood...As our minds wrestle with this truth, let us remember that BIBLICALLY the question is not WHY God saves some and passes by others, BUT WHY GOD SAVES ANYONE, because all are sinners and deserve God's judgement---All that the Christian has and is, is by God's grace and love!

This verse says that Christians have been chosen "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." The key to understanding sovereign election is to get a right definition of "FOREKNOWLEDGE."

Some believe that foreknowledge is the same thing as foresight of what will happen to man. They equate foreknowledge with OMNISCIENCE and say that God looked down the corridors of time, saw how men would believe, and on that basis chose them to salvation, and then PREDESTINED them to become conformed to Christ. They see God as some kind of crystal ball gazer who foresees the future, and makes His plans on what he sees. The weaknesses of this view are many: 1) it equates foreknowledge with omniscience, which is both biblically and theologically wrong. 2) It makes man the originator of God's plan. 3) It renders everything in God's plan UNCERTAIN. 4) The simple meaning of the Greek word for foreknowledge ("proginosko") is NOT fore-sight. The word means to know EXPERIENTIALLY beforehand.

Some New Testament usages: Acts 2:23; Romans 11:1,2; Romans

8:28- 30; 1 Peter 1:20. Note: In the Romans 8 passage it does not say, "what ('tina') God foreknew", but "whom ('hous') God foreknew" (His people).

The foreknowledge of God is much like the way a man chooses a wife. Before a man asks a woman to marry him, he first falls in love with the woman, and woos her. Then, based upon his love for her, he chooses her to be his wife. God loved us before he chose us, if we are Christians...

Perhaps a good biblical translation would be, "chosen according to the planned, selective love of God the Father."

What can we say then about our salvation as Christians? God is the author and planner of our salvation, and to Him belongs the glory alone! If you have been born again (regenerated), you can't take credit for that. If you have had your life changed so that you are now able to rise ABOVE difficult circumstances and suffering by the fact that the Holy Spirit enables you to, you can't say, "Aren't I hot stuff?" All we can say as Christians is what the Apostle Paul said, "But by the grace of God I am what I am..." (I Cor. 15:10).

1 Peter 1:2 is just as practical and applicable for us today as it was for the first century Christians. When we feel under the pile, when we want to throw in the towel, when we have our backs up against the wall, when we are in the pits because of intense suffering and want to quit and go back into the world, remember who saved us! If we are true Christians, we cannot quit, even if we try to: we belong to God--He saved us...He chose us...the Holy Spirit convicted us and regenerated us...the Son purchased us and FORGAVE us...we have His stamp upon our souls...and we are sealed until the day of redemption. When we are suffering let us remind ourselves that we cannot get out of being a Christian. When this is settled in our minds, then there is only one course of action to take when discouragement comes: to persevere by faith and to wait on the Lord--to push on in obedience and to learn the lessons God has for us!

Perhaps you are wondering, "How can I know whether I am one of those God has chosen?" The answer is simple. Put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. Believe that he died for YOUR sins and humbly bow your will to Him as Lord. If you will do this then God will save you...Then and only then will you have the assurance and all the countless blessings of being numbered among God's elect.

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EXPOSITION OF FIRST PETER  
Chosen For An Exciting Future  
1 Peter 1:2-5

Introduction: Being given an offer for a new job, one that you would very much like to have is always exciting! You get spiffed up for the interview, go through the interview process, and then stare at the phone maybe for a few days--hoping it will ring and the employer say, "we would like to offer you the position." That's a great feeling! You start to think about all the good things that can come with a new position: a fresh start, maybe higher pay and more opportunity for advancement; the prospect of new relationships, and IN GENERAL a renewed sense of hope about what good things might come into your life...

I remember interviewing for the position of engineer in a consulting firm in Virginia, right after I graduated from college. I had the gall to think I might be of some use in a consulting firm under contract with the military...they granted me three different interviews over three weeks before they offered me a position. Then the offer came and I gratefully accepted it. I knew the Lord was in it, and in those few days between accepting the offer, and actually starting the job, my mind was FULL OF HOPEFUL ANTICIPATION! And as it turned out, the Lord put me in a position far better than I had even imagined--The pay was good. Renee and I were able to get married and start our life together. And I learned so much in the time I was with that firm...

In his first letter to the saints in what is now northern Turkey, the Apostle Peter wants to encourage them with thoughts of THEIR future. These are Christian people who are suffering for their faith. They are everyday folks that are trying to live for Jesus Christ in a hostile world, which for the most part is ignorant of the true God. The first thought which crosses the Apostle's mind as he thinks of these Christians and addresses them, is that they are PARTICIPANTS IN GOD'S PLAN FROM BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD--they are elect in the sovereign purpose of God; saved by HIS plan and foreknowledge.

If you are a Christian this morning, you are one because God has chosen you--not because you are any more WORTHY of God's blessings than anyone else--but because God has sovereignly selected you to be His child. If you are saved this morning, it is because there was a time, BEFORE you actually trusted Christ, when the Holy Spirit began to work in your heart--to set you apart (1:2)--to gently WOO you, and you were worked on by the Holy Spirit...if you are a Christian, you are covered by the precious blood of God's only Son: THAT is the grounds of your election! And God has a mission for you now: to live a life of obedience UNDER the blood of His Son. Are you GROWING inobedience to Christ?

Nate Saint was a missionary pilot in Ecuador who was killed along with four other missionaries in 1956, by the Auca Indians in Ecuador, while sharing the Gospel with those same Indians. He once wrote that his life did not change until he came to grips with the idea that "obedience is not a momentary option...it is a die-cast decision MADE BEFOREHAND."

Nate Saint, Jungle Pilot, p.216

We are called by God to salvation. We are called by God to a life of obedience to Him--SELECTED obedience is not obedience at all, it is merely convenience... --Haddon Robinson

Are we growing in our obedience to what we know Jesus Christ wants for our lives? That's part of being a member of the elect--a growing desire to want what God wants!

**WHAT EVERY LEADER SHOULD WANT FOR HIS PEOPLE (1 Peter 1:2c)**

The last part of the opening address shows what Peter wants for these readers, and what he really WISHES will be part of their lives! Grace and peace! Grace was DEAR to Peter--he knew how much he needed in his own life, and he refers to it TEN TIMES in this letter. The Christian's life is a story of grace! This is really what makes an evangelical different from other religious people: he knows that all that he has and is is by the grace of God. "Grace" means getting what you don't deserve, and that is what a Christian has experienced in coming to Christ! PEACE is also a commodity that Peter greatly desires for these people: they need peace in their minds, not confusion, turmoil, restlessness...they need peace in their hearts, not fear, uncertainty, insecurity...they need peace in their relationships, not selfishness, conflict, pride...they need peace with their non-Christian friends, not misunderstanding, bitterness, persecution. Peace should be something which is A SYNONYM for being a Christian: our lives should radiate the truth of being part of the elect of God. And peace is something we should pursue with every effort!

Ah yes! Tell me a story of someone coming to Jesus Christ for the first time, and I shall tell you a story of that person REALLY knowing God's grace and love, and finding that new-found peace!

**THE GOSPEL IN A NUTSHELL (1 Peter 1:3)** Verse three summarizes what evangelical Christianity is all about: this is the bottom-line of our theology. This is the lowest common denominator of our faith, the basics, if you will, that all true Christians share in their hearts...

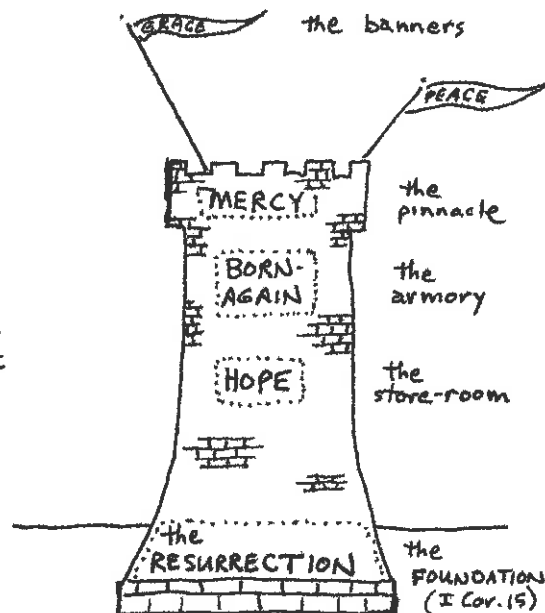
Notice four words in this verse with me: "mercy", "born-again", "hope", and "resurrection." God be praised for His great mercy! Until a person comes to see that what He needs from God FIRST OF ALL is His mercy, and a lot of it, he cannot become a Christian. If a person feels, "Well, I'm not all THAT bad," he has yet to meet the God of the Bible...It is out of God's mercy that He causes us to be saved; that He saves us...it is unmerited favor...it is the love of God, given to me freely, not because I have earned it, for

I have not! Mercy is NOT getting what you DO deserve...

The Judge has heard all the evidence: you are clearly guilty. Even YOU can see you don't have a chance--and just before the gavel comes down, the Judge stands up, takes off his robe, comes down to the floor beside you, and tells the bailiff that he will be serving your sentence for you--he puts on a blue work shirt, with YOUR serial number stenciled on the back, and is led off to jail. My friends THAT would be not getting what you DO deserve (sentenced) and getting what you DON'T deserve (freedom). That is grace and mercy...

The second word is "born-again." Now we Christians HAVE been born-again, although more and more I find it a term sneered at by non-Christians who have observed much wrong and many inconsistencies accompanying some who take the term to themselves. Nevertheless, it is a Bible term. It is used here and in 1:23, and another similar expression (although not exactly the same Greek words) by Jesus in John 3. When a person becomes a Christian, they are transferred from one kind of life to another. A transformation takes place. It doesn't look the same in all people when it happens, but with every person who places his or her TRUST in the Savior alone to save (not some sort of deal-making); a change occurs. It is a NEW BIRTH. Regardless of how Christians may scar the term's credibility in the eyes of non-Christians, it is still a very REAL phenomenah. It is indeed psychological, but it is not ONLY psychological. It is indeed emotional, but it is not ONLY emotional. It is not a thing that can be wholly written off by the honest observer as simply tracable to a person's background or upbringing...it is a REAL phenomenah, and a term we should not be ashamed of using, no matter how much it gets laughed at or abused. The new birth is what makes a non-Christian into a Christian. It can happen at 3 years old and it can happen at 93 years old. It does not happen automatically, or just because you attend church. But it is the most wonderful thing that can ever happen to a person!

If you can picture Mercy is the tower, battlement! Without supremely MOTIVATED and STAY the sentiment that we DO would be no salvation of us! The NEW armory in the castle armed with equipment, armor that the Spirit instant we are born when times are tough able to look back version and say, real!" The store-castle is what you life, if you are a



a castle: the uppermost God being to save us, tence of judge-DESERVE, there tion for any BIRTH is the tle. We are the spiritual gives us the again; and you should be on your con-"Yes, that was room in the have in your Christian:HOPE!

1 PETER 1:3 — A CASTLE

A Christian must often draw on the storeroom of hope! AND the Christian's ASSURANCE in Christ, is as certain and sure as the fact that Christ is alive! (Raymer).

The FOUNDATION of the Gospel is the resurrection of Jesus Christ (I Cor. 15)...Praise God, Jesus didn't stay dead. He raised His Son from the dead, that death may be killed!

Suffering Christians need to be reminded OFTEN that their hope is a "LIVING" hope--it is sure, certain, and real, NOT like the deceptive, empty, false kinds of hope the world offers...

THE FUTURE IS EXCITING! (1 Peter 1: 4,5) These verses tell us some of what is in store for Christians in the future: our destiny involves our receiving an inheritance! And we are GUARANTEED that as we trust Christ, and keep clinging to Him, we will be always protected and kept, by GOD'S power--for the final revelation, the completion, of our salvation.

God keeps Christians, and protects them so that they will be glorified, at the end of time. Notice please the nature of the inheritance: IT DOESN'T GET OLD! Peter goes out of his way to emphasize that it never tarnishes...

Men, do you remember what you felt like that moment your bride appeared at the end of the aisle at your wedding? That's a once in a lifetime feeling! For that moment, there is nothing fresher, more NEW and exciting in the universe! And you spend the rest of your life looking back on that moment. The newness perhaps fades. Unfortunately, the initial excitement may wane...But when we first see Christ, the newness of that split second--the excitement WILL NEVER FADE!

"When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the Son; we've no less days to sing God's praise, then when we've first begun."

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8: 38,39

*"Faith is a sovereign preservative of the soul, through a state of grace, unto a state of glory."  
- Matthew Henry*

If you are a Christian, remember that your struggles on this earth are just temporary--in eternity, they will seem but a passing moment. Lean on your hope in Christ--You are kept by an omnipotent God who will take you to your final destination in heaven!

If you are without Christ, and you have never been born-again, you have no hope of life after death. You shall die in your sins. You have no REAL comfort for your souls because only CHRIST can give a person a living hope and ABSOLUTE ASSURANCE OF HEAVEN. Accept Christ, and receive salvation: Only He can give you a living hope!



EXPOSITION OF FIRST PETER  
"In Distress, Loving Jesus"  
1 Peter 1: 6-9

Introduction: Every so often, a Christian needs reassurance. Even if he is a strong Christian who lives his life closely to the Lord, every believer needs to be GENUINELY encouraged and reassured that his efforts to live a godly life are not in vain...that it is not all for nothing...that forsaking self-indulgence IS pleasing to God.

I have struggled this week with this passage of Scripture. I studied the Greek text of our passage. I read the commentaries...I have it clear in my own mind what Peter is saying to his readers...BUT the reassurance that Peter gives these Christians is directed to people who are suffering for their faith. I do not think that by and large we are suffering for our faith. I know that we are inconvenienced sometimes because we are Christians. I understand that from time to time we are sneered at and often made fun of, because we believe that Jesus isn't dead, and that because we have trusted Him, for that simple act of faith we are going to heaven. I realize that some of you have battled confusion, doubts and frustration with various things about your Christian life. But I do not think that many of us have yet SUFFERED FOR OUR FAITH... And so, I struggled to really feel the encouragement that Peter's readers must have felt as they heard from the apostle...

Nevertheless, we need reassurance too. I saw numerous examples even this past week in talking with some of you...you need to know that Jesus is still standing by your side, even when you doubt if this thing we call "the Christian life" is really REAL. You need to know that when your physical health fails you, that the Sovereign God is still concerned, and still loving you. You need to be reminded that though you reach WITS END, in trying to help a loved one come to Christ, that it is not in vain--even though the world, the flesh and Satan are telling you that you are a fool...or worse, deluded. AND, if the time DOES come when you may be called to suffer greatly BECAUSE you are a Christian, especially then you will need to remember these words.

1 Peter 1: 6,7 "In Distress..." What Peter is saying to us this morning is this: A CHRISTIAN'S JOY IS INDEPENDENT OF HIS CIRCUMSTANCES. Peter says "In this..." In what? In the fact that a believer is preserved in his faith BY GOD, we greatly rejoice. Our response to the tremendous theological truths taught ALREADY in this book (sovereign grace, eternal security, the fact that our hope is based in Jesus' victory over death) should be to greatly rejoice! "Rejoice" is a word we don't use too often...we are somewhat uncomfortable with it for some reason. The word just means "to be glad."

Now many mornings I pick up a newspaper and turn immediately to the Sports section and check out the previous night's baseball result for my favorite team. Sometimes the score is so lop-sided in my favorite team's favor, that I cry out, "WOW!" And then sort of look around, embarrassed, wondering if anyone heard me.

People who go to Bible Churches are sometimes too placid and stern. We say things like, "We don't go in for excesses, like some other people." I think we need to become a little more animated--a little more rejoicing over what God has done for us.

But what about the trials we face? How can we be glad when we're going through a hard time? Because for the Christian, his or her trials exist in the context of eternity--they are only temporary! The text says, "if necessary..." A better translation would read, "since they are necessary." Peter is speaking about sufferings which come because of persecution due to the Asian Christian's stand for Christ. He felt that they would not be for a long duration, but would pass. EVEN if they lasted a whole lifetime though, this would only be a short period when compared to eternity, because a Christian's joy is INDEPENDENT of circumstances.

You may ask, "How can you expect me to be happy when I can't seem to make enough money?" Or, "How can you expect me to be happy when my spouse doesn't care about the Lord,...,or me...or when I don't HAVE the spouse of my dreams yet?" Or, "How can you expect me to be happy when I have emotional hurts and pains that you can't even BEGIN to understand, Neil?" Let me reassure you: A CHRISTIAN'S JOY IS INDEPENDENT OF CIRCUMSTANCES. Your circumstances come and go... your relationship with God; your election unto eternal life and your being protected by God's power, do NOT come and go!

From time to time you will be in distress. I remember thinking last New Year's, "I wonder what trials we will face in the Body this year?" But I know that things don't happen to Christian randomly. God is not disinterested and He is not arbitrary as He orders our lives. Verse 7 tells us that our faith-relationship with God must be refined. I mean, our day to day walk with the Lord must undergo tempering, refinement, aging and extrusion (and many other industrial words I could think of...)

No person's walk with God is perfectly refined at conversion. Every Christian's faith must undergo refinement in this life. That's the way it is, and TRIALS have an efficient way of preparing us for that moment, either at death, or at the second coming of Christ, when we shall for the first time be present with the Lord--your walk with the Lord needs a READYING for that moment--not in a purgatorial sense, of burning out whatever remaining sin...but in refining your TRUST in Him.

A girl with Campus Crusade for Christ told of a visit to a gold refiner's factory. The gold went through successively hotter fires, as its purity increased. Just before they left, the manager said, "The refiner doesn't end the process until he can see his reflection in the gold."

The fact that you have persevered here with the Christian life, that you have kept trusting Christ as your Lord and Savior, will give back to the Lord THREE THINGS when you see Him for the first time (1:7c):

Praise, glory and honor...these are words I think we are unsure of their real meaning too...but we shall learn their meaning truly, when we see

Jesus, and SINCE we have trusted Jesus, even in times of great distress!

1 Peter 1: 8,9 "...Trusting Jesus" I think that it would be hard to really trust in a doctor whom you never saw. If you have ever been sick, and they run tests, weren't you just a little leary of some invisible person evaluating the test results? You think, "Do they care?" "Do they know what they're doing? Or did they get their medical training at the Horseneck Beach School of Medical Speculation?" BUT then they come to your room, sit down with you, and as they talk to you, they maybe show you their concern, and something of their expertise...And inside you are somewhat relieved.

Peter knew what it was to suffer. He knows that Christians need reassurance. He knows that in times of distress, believers need to know that the Lord is still with them--when a Christian KNOWS this in his or her heart, then his joy fills up, INDEPENDENT of circumstances.

In verse 8 Peter reassures his readers that their faith is real and not imaginary; that, yes, this IS the way faith properly works: you haven't yet seen Jesus with your eyes, touched Him with your hands, heard Him speak to you personally with your ears...but you still love Him. He is invisible to you still, but you still believe that He is and that what He has said is right! And you still even now in 1986, and next year still...and when you are old...still exercise your joy, and willingly honor Him! This prepares you to be WITH Him.

And, if I may be permitted to use a very worn out expression, the bottom line is that you will wake up, at the end of this life, finding your soul finally saved!

Salvation is such a wonderfully biblical word. I didn't make up the idea of salvation. The Southern Baptists didn't make it up. Jerry Falwell didn't make it up. It didn't just evolve in recent history. Salvation is a real and needed commodity. Many of you have it--you know that in your heads. One day you will find yourself in the presence of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, guiltless, sinless, ready for eternity in God's Kingdom...prepared...refined...purified.

This is what theologians call "glorification." Our salvation is actually in several stages. First there is the PREPARATORY work of the Holy Spirit in your life, bringing you to the place where you are ready to place your trust in the Savior. Then there is that moment when you trust Christ for the first time, what the Bible calls "justification." Then you spend the rest of your life growing in godliness; that is, APPLYING your salvation to all the practical matters you face. Then there is the moment or instance of GLORIFICATION, the final stage of salvation, which Peter calls, the "outcome of your faith."

Along the way you may face some pain...C. S. Lewis said in his book, The Problem of Pain,

Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, and shouts in our pain.

It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world...

If you are a Christian, your walk with the Lord should exist on a plane which is not damaged by whatever circumstances you must face. You need to press on towards a maturity which ENABLES you to worship the Lord, be glad with His people each week when we gather together, and serve Him, regardless of the struggles you have.

Note that I am not talking about DENYING to yourself or to others whatever trials you are under. That is a false spirituality! When we have sharing times, as we often do in this church, TELL us about your trials. But also tell us that God is taking you through them, and helping you to deal with them, one day at a time. Tell us what Paul says,

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18)

For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison (2 Cor. 4:17)

If you are not a Christian, what is your answer for suffering? Does it happen by accident? Are you a victim of a random universe with no real meaning? What about your final suffering at death? Do you have an answer to it? There are no answers for evil, suffering OR death except in the person of Jesus Christ. He suffered in the maximum in His death, and He rose victorious over death. He is the only answer. Believe in Christ. Trust your soul to Him. Receive Him into your life.

Be assured that the promises of the Bible are not for everyone. But they are for anyone who will simply trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. And then be assured that even in distress, trusting Jesus will indisputably result in inexpressible joy!

**EXPOSITION OF FIRST PETER**  
**"The Profoundness of the Gospel"**  
1 Peter 1: 10-12

**Introduction:** It has always been an encouragement to me that fundamental Christianity passes the test of intellectual scrutiny. It not only has integrity, but it is fascinating to the inquiring mind. Many thinkers have been won to Christ just by INVESTIGATING the claims of Christianity on an academic level. We never have to be ashamed of our faith. Sometimes Christians blow their testimony. But the basic doctrines are things in which we can always have the greatest of confidence.

The early Christians in northern Turkey who read this letter must have found encouragement from Peter's words. They were suffering greatly for their faith. They were accused of all kinds things: treason, religious novelty, disruption, and even cannibalism (since they said that in the Lord's Table they were partaking of the body and blood of Christ)...

When a person becomes a Christian, he naturally becomes interested in God's plan of salvation for the world. It becomes difficult to view other people without regard for their spiritual condition. The Gospel message is such a wonderful thing! And as I have said, it is a fascinating thing! Peter affirms his readers by telling them that he knows they love Jesus even though they haven't yet seen Him. The Gospel evokes in a person a love for Jesus Christ--not just a grudging acceptance of His Lordship or His deity, but a real love and joy in spiritual things, so that he can sing without reservation,

I love You Lord, and I lift my voice,  
to worship You, O my soul REJOICE!  
Take joy, my King, in what You hear,  
may it be a sweet, sweet sound, in Your ear.

And,

Son of God, this is our love song.  
Jesus, my Lord, I sing to You.  
Come now, Spirit of God, breathe  
life into these words of love;  
Angels join from above, as we sing  
our love song: We love You, We love You,  
We love You, we worship You.

It is good to affirm one another in our love for the Lord. If we see one another doing something out of love for the Lord, we should go out of our way to say, "Hey! I can see you love the Lord, even though you haven't seen Him yet."

Have you ever asked yourself, "Do I love God? Do I love Jesus Christ?" Loving God is not like loving electricity or astronomy or

loving to study American history...God is a person. Do you love Him? Not just do you have a warm, fuzzy, wuzzy feeling about the possibility that maybe He really does exist, and maybe EVEN He thinks about you once every two or three or ten years...Do you love the REAL God, the God that has REVEALED what He is like, and what He expects of US...Do you love that God?

If you do, you still need encouragement and AFFIRMATION from one another about holding on to Christ, and continuing to work OUT your salvation...not in EARNING it, for it cannot be earned. But in working out your salvation each day, in seeing it in practice more and more with each week that passes--in obeying (LOVING) the Lord a little more each week!

You will never EXHAUST God's grace, my friends. You will never get to the bottom of the well of God's kindness, and say, "Well, so much for THAT religion--what's next on the menu?" He will never leave or forsake you, and you will never growed bored with the Living God, dear ones, if you are truly a Christian.

The Gospel is Profound Because It Has Fascinated Men for Thousands of Years: If we could only get people to CONSIDER what Christianity is all about! It isn't about big fancy glass cathedrals. It isn't about, "Please send us a generous check to support our ministry..." It isn't about going to church and covering yourself with a clean-cut religious veneer once a week. It isn't about people forcing their convictions on other people. It isn't about being, as the columnist George Will recently wrote about,

"...virtucrats...people from the left and right, who, no matter what else they say, always say, "I'm fundamentally a damn fine person." Or who say, "when Jesus returns, He will register republican."

If only we could keep the message clear--If only we could communicate clearly, so that people would CONSIDER what Christianity is really all about. Christianity and God's plan of saving people in the world is all about trusting in the Savior that God provided, in sending His Son to be that savior. And having ONCE trusted Christ, to love Him and to serve Him more and more. That's what salvation is all about. It's such a simple thing, and it has fascinated thinkers for thousands of years! In fact, it fascinated the Hebrew prophets all through Israel's early history.

I Peter 1:10 tells us that the Old Testament prophets were very interested in the idea of grace. They knew that at some point in history an age would begin, in which people's relationships with the Living God would be dominated by God's grace. Now they knew that God had always been gracious. He was not telling the prophets, "OK, guys, at a certain time in the future I am going to change my nature and become a gracious God." But in the first century the era DID open up when ALL kinds of people, Gentiles, people who were not citizens of Israel, could enter FULL MEMBERSHIP in the nation of God, a spiritual nation; a holy nation.

The salvation spoken of here refers primarily to the FINAL salvation of believers (their "glorification.") When Jesus came to earth, the fourth quarter started...the last age of the earth before Jesus wraps it all up with His physical rule during the millenium. In predicting the future the prophets did not always understand their own utterances. Daniel is a good example: Daniel 8:27; 9:1-3; 12:8.

Verse 11 tells us that these men wanted to know about the Messiah they themselves were predicting would come. The "Spirit of Christ" within each true prophet told them about the coming Messiah. Each prophet had his own information about Messiah, the Deliverer. All together, it painted a picture about who He would be and what would be the circumstances of His life. This fascinated the prophets, just as you would be fascinated if you were to receive "the inside word" about what's going to be happening in say, the year 2086.

The prophets heard from the Spirit that Messiah would first suffer. Then there would follow "glories." The Spirit told the prophets that Messiah would SUFFER by (1) being hated by His own people; (2) betrayed by a close friend; (3) forsaken by His flock; (4) scourged; (5) crucified. But the GLORIES would include (1) His transfiguration (Matt.17; 2 Peter 1:17); (2) His resurrection (1:21); (3) His glorious return and (4) His reign on the earth.

Peter's readers would be encouraged that Christ's sufferings would be followed by glory. They too would experience glory after their suffering (I Peter 5:10).

The Gospel is Profound Because It Captivates Angels: I cannot think of a biblical phrase which has been MORE fun to study than the last phrase of verse 12. What God is doing on the earth is fascinating to the angels. Now angels are not fat little winged dwarves. They are those creatures who inhabit heaven and are completely sinless. What they know about salvation is not experiential for them. What they know about salvation they learn by watching the Holy Spirit work in men's lives on the earth...but let's hold off for a minute, and lok at the first part of the verse...

The prophets were ministering several hundreds of years before Christ, not for their own indulgence, but for the benefit of the beleaguered Christians in northern Turkey who would live in the FIRST CENTURY A.D. The word translated "serving" (Greek: dākenoun) is interesting to me: it points to the fact that the writings of the Old Testament are of service to the new community, to the church. The Old Testament and the New Testament join in Christ and His salvation-plan.

APPLICATION: How often we are motivated to engage in some activity by how we will immediately be gratified by it. It is exciting to think about sitting at the booth we will set up, Lord-willing, at the Whaling City Festival, because of what I might get out of the experience. It is motivating to consider working with the poor, destitute, hurting because of the fulfillment I will get, and the good feeling inside of my breast, or the shoring up of my own self-concept. But should we not be motivated to serve the Lord

just out of our love for Him, WHETHER OF NOT we get an immediate return on the investment of our time, money or everygy. The Old Testament prophets were men just like you and I. But they were so interested in what God was doing over the WHOLE COURSE OF HUMAN HISTORY, that they spent alot of time looking into it, and working for the Kingdom...

Paul wrote to Timothy,

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth [the Scriptures]. 2 Timothy 2:15

I am not suggesting that we should all hole up in a room somewhere and just study the Bible. I am not suggesting that we become "so heavenly minded that we become no earthly good." That is not Peter's intent in this letter. But we can learn from the prophets example that life is bigger than just my little corner of it--that I should be plugged into what GOD is doing in the world:

What about learning about foreign missions?

What about getting to know some people that you normally wouldn't cross paths with?

What about doing some reading of books you normally wouldn't look at?

Now back to the angels for a moment. Angels excel in strength and in wisdom. They are vastly more endowed with power and with intelligence than we are. And yet **THEY** have an intense interest in human salvation! The verb "parakypso" ("long to look"), means to "stoop over to look." It is not a quick look, but a continuous activity.

We have no reason to think that the angels directly know anything more about the final salvation of the redeemed among men than we do...no doubt they know all that is revealed in the Bible on this subject...and they probably understand it better than we do...but they are still not satisfied...Enlightened curiosity, holiness and benevolence [in the angels] all combine in turning their attention towards this subject.

Are you interested in what the angels find utterly fascinating? Is it of interest to you what God is doing among men today? He is not removed from the world, as we are continually tempted to think in modern American thinking. (Yes, there may be a God, or "higher power", but He [or it] is unknowable and disinterested). He is NOT unknowable. He is NOT disinterested. He has revealed so much about Himself and about what He is bringing to pass in His creation. If you have never really thought about God much, I implore you to make a careful inquiry of the Bible. See what it is that the Bible says Christianity is all about. Don't be confused by Christian's handling of the truth--check it out for yourself. And Christians, become a people of the Book. And be encouraged in the midst of whatever trials you are undergoing today that God has not abandoned you. Strive after the holiness that the Holy Spirit is trying to build into you!



EXPOSITION OF FIRST PETER  
Four Ways to Keep Obeying the Lord  
1 Peter 1: 13-17

Introduction: People's differing lifestyles is an area that interests me. In some parts of the country, folks always wear sweaters. In other parts it seems everyone wears Cowboy boots and a ten-gallon Stetson hat wherever they go. In Dallas, Texas it is not at all uncommon to see many of the men walk into church on Sunday morning and hang their Stetsons on the rack by the front door...Its just their lifestyle, the routine way of their lives. Did you know that our own Massachusetts State House has no air conditioning? Doesn't surprise you, does it? But in Dallas, at least in all middle-class and up establishments, EVERYTHING is air conditioned. We construct our lives around various lifestyles...

Lifestyle is affected by one's true beliefs about life too. If you really think that the "boys down in Washington" are a bunch of idiots, then you are more likely to disregard some of the laws they impose upon you--your lifestyle is affected. If you are not completely convinced that cigarettes or donuts are killing you, you probably won't alter your lifestyle to eliminate them. I feel that many Christians today, though saved and willing to grow in Christ in certain selected areas of their lives, are YET UNWILLING to change their lifestyle and get involved in some Christian activist program, which may require a change in your schedule somewhat, or getting involved with new people, or confronting wrong face to face. Many Christians are willing to write a check to a foreign mission board. Not many are willing to get involved personally. Many Christians are willing to say to another Christian that he thinks abortion is murder. Not many are willing to carry a sign in front of an abortion clinic or show up at their Congressman's open meetings and tell him that they think it is murder. I DO NOT MEAN TO BE CYNICAL ABOUT MY CHRISTIAN BROTHERS AND SISTERS...But when it comes to altering my lifestyle, we can become very hesitant--because our lifestyle is something I have taken YEARS to develop. And certain aspects of my very fragile SCHEDULE for instance, I have tinkered with with great care, and "bes' no one mess with it!"

Peter has been encouraging first century Christians in what is now northern Turkey, who are truly SUFFERING for their Christian faith, and who probably couldn't afford the luxury of nursing a highly developed lifestyle, to KEEP LOVING CHRIST. He is building them up and telling them that it is all worth it, in view of the second coming of Jesus, and the fact that we will be with Him then...

This morning we are considering four means of Christian obedience, or FOUR WAYS TO KEEP ON OBEYING CHRIST, from verses 13 through 17, (suggested by the nineteenth-century Scottish commentator, John Brown--NOT the one whose "body lies a'molderin' in the grave!)

DETERMINED RESOLUTION AS A WAY TO KEEP OBEYING CHRIST (1 Pet.1: 13a)

This section is going to tell us that when a person truly comes to Christ, his life will begin to show holiness, reverence for the Lord and love. Since the prophets and angels take such GREAT INTEREST in our salvation, how much more should WE AS CHRISTIANS pay careful attention to its results? (Blum's Commentary, EBC).

The verse says for Christians to "gird your minds for action." The figure is of a man gathering the folds of a long garment and tucking it into his belt so that he can move freely and quickly--I think about the scene in about the third quarter of a football game, and you'll see the star wide receiver trot onto the field after a breather, and he tucks his jersey into his pants, gets into his stance, and awaits the hike.

So much of the Christian life is lived in the mind. It is in the mind that we make the DECISIONS which affect the Christian life. It is in the mind that we choose how to word something when we speak to each other. It is in the mind that we imagine having things that are not ours. It is in the mind that we think highly, lowly or accurately ABOUT OURSELVES. It is in our minds that we contemplate righteousness, or sin. What needs FIRST OF ALL to be prepared, and guarded is our minds.

If you wish to keep on obeying Christ, there must be a DETERMINED RESOLUTION to do so. Dear ones, IMPRESS on your minds a sense of importance about what your duty to Christ is. There are obligations you have to the Lord, there are advantages to you in serving Him, and there are many NECESSITIES in performing your duty to Him. We have often in American Christianity come to live a lifestyle of "Christian option"--where we view the duties of the Christian life as options like on a new car...But Peter tells us to prepare our minds for the Christian life in such a way so that there is no hesitancy! Are we determined to obey Christ. We have such a marvelous salvation! Have we resolved TO OURSELVES to,

"forget[ting] what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13)

We live in a world where there is much pollution and distraction to the Christian life. Unless you RESOLVE to obey Christ, you will be distracted from performing your duties to Him.

MODERATION AS A WAY TO KEEP OBEYING CHRIST (1 Peter 1: 13b)

Now "soberness" is something you would expect a preacher to want to talk about. "Keep sober" refers to more than not getting drunk. It surely ENCOMPASSES that--there is never a time when its OK to get drunk, it is ALWAYS sin. But here the Apostle means to be GENERALLY sober-minded. John Brown explains it well:

The foundation of true Christian sobriety or moderation lies in a just estimate of the intrinsic...value of "all that is

in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," (1 John 2:6)--all that the eye or the flesh desires--all of which living men are apt to be proud. He does NOT consider the wealth and the honor, and the pleasures of this world as without their value; but he sees that that value is by no means what the deluded worshippers of money [suppose] it to be. He sees that the possession of [wealth, honor and pleasures] cannot make him happy, nor the [lack] of them by itself, make him miserable. They cannot obtain for him the pardon of his sin, they cannot pacify his conscience, they cannot transform his character, they cannot give him life in death, they cannot give him happiness forever. But [wealth, honor and pleasures] appear to him polluted with sin, replete with temptation, full of danger.

In other words, another way to keep obeying Christ is to keep the real value of the things of this world IN THEIR PROPER PERSPECTIVE. No doubt we can get along with much less than we already have--prohibit materialism from captivating your thinking.

Now I would very much love to learn to fly. I have always loved airplanes. I majored in Aeronautical Engineering for my first two years of college. I met the Blue Angel pilots and actually touched their F-4 Phantoms at the National Air Exposition in 1969. I used to sit in rapt attention while my father-in-law, an extraordinary pilot, would talk about flying. I struggle with the sin of envy towards my brother in law, who has in the past four years become a fine pilot, and moved up the aeronautical ladder quickly. I would love to learn to fly--and realistically, I have accepted the fact that I probably never will. It takes more time and money than I have, or probably will have. But that's OK...I can enjoy the limited flying I do get. I have learned to think soberly about what for me is naturally a consuming desire.

#### HOPE AS A WAY TO KEEP OBEYING CHRIST (1 PETER 1: 13C)

HOPE is a subject about which the New Testament is full. An absolutely NECESSARY part of our message to the world should be HOPE. We communicate alot of ideas to non-Christians--some of which are wrong. Buit let us not screw up on getting across the message of hope. As Christians, let us not forget for a minute the great hope we have INHERITED since we came to Christ.

We are MOTIVATED by the hope for the future and for the present too, that we have because we have trusted Christ. Will you look back at verses 3 and 4? Do those verses have anything to offer you? With those verses in mind does the Christian ever have any right to be cynical about life or negative about living in the world today AS A CHRISTIAN?

Think with me for a moment about what you're LOOKING FORWARD TO, if you are a Christian:

1. Being WITH Jesus, never cut off or separated from Him.

2. Living in heaven--no decay, lessening of joy, or boredom.
3. Living with all the saints of time.
4. Living with no sin in your life.
5. Having a resurrection body, sinless, diseaseless, etc.
6. Having most, if not all, of your deepest questions answered.
7. Living without fear.

Now Peter tells us to fix our hope completely on Christ, our inheritance...but that hope is obtainable only in the way that God has promised to bestow it: through faith and patience in living out the Christian life.

Some Bible teachers will say that the performance of Christian duties is the basis of eternal life. They are not wise teachers, because they turn things upside down as God looks at them, and place the roof "down cellar." Until a person has trusted in the Gospel, and obtained the HOPE of the Gospel, he will never be motivated to obey Jesus Christ! BUT the more Christian hope a person becomes well-grounded in, the more rapidly he will pursue the will of God in his life, and the more easily he will master the difficulties facing him in living the Christian life.

Another word for "hope" is the word "assurance." They are synonymous! I do not believe that God saves somebody and then leaves them without assurance that He loves them and that they truly own Him in their hearts. If a person does not develop, in some time at least, an assurance that Jesus Christ is ruling graciously in their life, I do not believe that we have any right to believe that they are truly saved; no matter how much external religious activity they show.

THE FEAR OF THE LORD AS A WAY TO KEEP OBEYING CHRIST (1 Peter 1: 14-17)

Now fearing God is not like fearing Rambo, or Godzilla or the Mafia. Fearing God is to live your life in front of a holy God. It is to know something about what it means to worship and serve a holy God. It not to be terrorized by a distant though powerful God. It is to love Him, although He is awesome.

I loved the video series by R. C. Sproul on "The Holiness of God" that we watched a couple of months back. It sends chills up my spine when I listen to a Bible teacher or preacher that I respect talk about the nature of our God. He is perfect; there is no imperfection, no sin, no POTENTIAL or POSSIBILITY for sin in Him. He cannot blow it. He cannot misjudge a situation. He cannot overlook some aspect of evaluating His creatures!

CONCLUSION: The Christian life is a life of obeying Christ. The yoke that Jesus lays on our necks is not difficult. And He promises every resource to help us in time of need, if we will trust Him. As you face decisions each week about following Christ or not, will you resolve to do so? Will you moderate your life, zoom in on the great hope we have, and live your life in love of an awesome God?

EXPOSITION OF FIRST PETER  
"The High Cost of Salvation"  
1 Peter 1: 17-21

Introduction: The Body of Christ can never hear too much about the subject of BIBLICAL HOLINESS. Holiness is something which we should have. Holiness is something which our God IS, and which we should be learning more and more. I think it is hard for us to imagine JUST HOW perfect our God is. We tend to view God as something like our own earthly fathers; or, as something like the President, or a King...But if you are a true Christian there will be within you a growing desire to KNOW God more and more, and to enjoy His presence in your life...and to learn more of His excellent features. As you get to know the Lord more and more personally (and this is the offer of evangelical Christianity, offered by no one else on earth!)...you will WANT to please Him more and more, and you will develop a HOLY lifestyle more and more. I did NOT say you will develop more of a "holier than thou"--You will develop more HOLINESS, you will become more like God--slowly perhaps, but inevitably, if you are really a Christian.

I resent any view of the Christian life which lessens or underemphasizes our need to walk with Christ. I get agitated when Christians provide me with all kinds of excellent excuses for not sustaining, working on and striving to walk closely with the Lord Jesus Christ. I am not impressed with MY OWN EXCUSES...I am not impressed with anyone elses'. Dear ones, it is so URGENT that we keep on growing in our love of the Lord. It is so URGENT that we learn a CORRECT view of what holiness is all about, and that it is our NUMBER ONE PRIORITY! I am concerned for us. I think many of you really need to see the Lord working in your lives...Can we plan to seek the Lord together soon, in an intensive way?

I am always impressed when I go to my ministers' fellowship and hear the brothers testify to what amazing things God is doing in some of their churches, after they have taken a day of prayer and fasting, just to seek the Lord--as a church, not just the pastors. I would like to call for us just such a day: how about from 5 PM Wednesday, June 18 until 5 PM, Thursday, June 19--when we shall really seek the Lord as much as possible. We can seek Him about our own need to know Him better, and to see His grace more fully in our own personal lives; we can seek Him about our two upcoming major OUTREACH PROJECTS: Vacation Bible School, and the Booth Ministry at the Whaling City Festival; and we can seek Him about many other pressing needs around us. I know God will honor such an endeavor and time of commitment. You can still go to work of course, and go about all your responsibilities; but that will be a special day for us to seek the Lord!

1 Peter 1: 17-19 Now back to 1 Peter! This morning we are looking at the **HIGH COST OF OUR SALVATION**. Verse 17 calls us to be serious about the Christian life. We are to live as people who live in the fear of the Lord--this is not saying we live in **TERROR** of our God, though many do--it IS saying that it was not easy to get us into the Kingdom! God had to pay a terrible price so that we could stop being His enemies and start being His children--He had to send His own Son to do the job of redeeming us, of buying us back from sin, of paying the price with His own life and precious blood!

In the history of the Roman Catholic church, relics have an interesting role. I believe it used to be true in the Middle Ages that a cathedral could not be erected without some significant relic from the ancient church around which to build the cathedral. All kinds of objects, supposedly dating to the earliest years of the Church, were preserved as **MEMORIALS** to the earthly lives of early Christians, Mary, and Jesus. Grave items, cloths, bone fragments and so forth were originally used as reminders of those who lived and died for the faith. Soon it became a cult, and the objects themselves, many bogus replicas and inventions, became the objects of **WORSHIP**--a practice surely an abomination to the Lord.

But one relic which was circulated during Martin Luther's day has intrigued me. I do not believe that it was authentic. But I have often thought that if it was, it would have been **ONE RELIC** I think I could have treasured: it was an object, a cloth, as I remember, reputedly sprinkled with several drops of blood from the veins of Jesus. I think a cloth like that, if it were real, would have been something!

Now when we buy something it is natural to think of how much it's going to decrease my checkbook or savings account balance. When we purchase an item, it is purchased with money or time or some other tangible thing that I presently own. We would never think of offering one of our children in order to have say, a new house or part-ownership in some company. If someone did that, or tried to, it would probably make the front page of the papers and we would think, "ghastly, evil thing to do!" I mean, **NOTHING** is worth **THAT** kind of sacrifice, right? Take my car, my house, my Beatle album collection, but don't ask me to give my **CHILD!!!**

Your salvation, if you are a Christian, cost alot though! It didn't come cheaply! Getting into heaven can't be purchased with **ANY AVAILABLE COMMODITY** on earth--if you **OWNED WALL STREET**, it couldn't buy eternal life and forgiveness of sins--and that is the great **NEED** in the world today! Something to wipe away my guilt and free me from the hold that **SIN HAS ON ME...**the world doesn't need a **BETTER VCR!** We don't need a more efficient automobile! We don't need faster computers. We aren't in desperate need of someone to invent a new kitchen appliance. Mankind isn't groaning because we don't have enough sophisticated weaponry! The world is not suffering because there isn't enough nuclear megatonage available to keep the peace! We

don't need BETTER means of birth control...we need a solution to the SIN PROBLEM! And that solution has always been available, just for the asking; or rather, just for the TRUSTING!

The Jews in Jesus' time had largely lost the life of faith. Their religion had DEGENERATED into just that: RELIGION. They had forgotten the truths of the Old Testament, like Habakkuk 2:4,

Behold, as for the proud one, his soul is not right within him; but the righteous will live by his faith.

They had fallen into living by a futile religion, rather than living each day in dependence on God's grace! You see my friends, no matter now old we may get on this earth, our Christian walk is to remain a simple thing: trusting in Christ...trusting in Christ...depending on His righteousness to get you to heaven, and seeking Him more and more with each year! The more you get to know Him, and walk in His ways, the more HOLINESS you develop and experience...but no matter how sophisticated our lives can become--no matter how many projects you get involved with--are you walking with Christ? Are you making time to seek Him? Some of you have a lot of hurt in your background...are you seeking Christ? Some of you don't have much money...are you seeking Christ? Some of you can't find a mate...are you seeking Christ? Is your faith GROWING?

Now we must not pass by this section without seeing that we shall be judged as Christians for our works AFTER we become Christians. God is our Father. I am so thankful for verses like,

And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' (Gal.4:6)

For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!' (Rom.8:15)

But it's also true that our works will be judged at the Judgement Seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Cor. 3:11-15). At that time the Lord Jesus will make an "honest appraisal" (Dr. Jack Arnold) of our lives AS CHRISTIANS. Works in a person's life are an indication of the PRESENCE or ABSENCE of true saving faith. We can only see a person's faith BY WHAT HE DOES. If he does nothing for Christ, or if all that he does is motivated by selfish interest, then we have no right to believe that he has been truly saved yet. This is what James teaches us.

This judgement on our works, if we are Christians, will be impartial. God will show no favoritism within His family. Outward appearances, wealth, culture, social position, skin color, family background, education, beauty and intellect--THINGS WHICH MORE OR LESS SWAY MEN--do not count with God...

...for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. (1 Samuel 16:7)

The thought of offending our holy Father should strike a note of healthy, godly fear and wholesome reverence in the Christian. Let the world get cynical, bitter, sarcastic, selfish: I must fear the Lord!

1 Peter 1: 20,21 Salvation indeed has had a high cost, and if you are a Christian, you have been in the mind of God long before the world was ever created. Notice the text says that Christ, the spotless Lamb, was "foreknown." Verses 1 and 2 said that Christians were chosen according to the "foreknowledge of God." I shall not dwell on this point because we dealt with it at some length not too long ago (check out the notes!) But the Son was foreknown by the Father, and incorporated into what God was planning for saving people before the world was created. Now Christians will sometimes say, "God knew IN ADVANCE that I would believe--therefore He chose me." But is this the Bible's meaning of "foreknowledge?" Did the Father merely know ABOUT Christ, His Son? No. The Father had an intimate, predestining relationship with the Son, such that the Son's role in REDEEMING the Church was planned. Anything less than that is a toothless plan of redemption.

But even though God has sovereignly planned the salvation of the church, it was motivated out of His specific love of you and I, and for all who would believe in Christ, whoever that would be: "He has appeared in these last times for the sake of you..." His love and plan are sovereign; but they are PERSONAL, not impersonal! He wants us to have a continuing dependence on Him. He wants us to have hope and not be down in the mouth, full of despair, full of doubting. The testimony of what Christ did in the world is the greatest encouragement to keep on walking with the Lord, keep on working on your Christian life, keep on developing holiness in more and more areas in your life!

**REVIEW:** We are motivated to holy living by 1) a godly fear, because we should fear God's disciplinary hand on us as His children, and know that one day we will face judgement for our works as Christians. 2) We are motivated because of His eternal love for us, since we have been redeemed by the most COSTLY thing in the whole universe, the blood of God's own dear Son. 3) His power motivates us because we know that God was the final cause in our salvation, and He will continue to grant us faith to live for Him...

If you are not yet a Christian, please think about this one thing so clearly set down by the Apostle Peter: "For it is time for judgement to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner?" (1 Peter 4: 17, 18) The non-Christian will face the wrath of God and eternal damnation at the Great White Throne judgement. I beg of all of us, let us become prepared to meet the Holy One!



EXPOSITION OF FIRST PETER  
"Loving One Another and Why"  
I Peter 1: 22

Introduction: After I was first saved in 1972 I was at first a little skeptical of the interest the Christian guys in my college dorm were showing me. I was somewhat cautious about spending alot of time with some of these people who were not much like me, nor did they appear to have many of the same interests. But they showed a genuine interest in me and befriended me nonetheless. Oh sure, I had lots of other friends before I made a commitment to Christ. But they were pretty much wrapped up in their own lives, and not much interested in listening to me talk about Jesus or "rapping" about religion...But two guys, named Don and Chuck spent alot of time with me in those first several months--they displayed a pleasure at being with me, an interest in talking and a willingness to disciple me in the things of Christ. I had been heavily involved in the counter-culture movement and along with alot of other young people in those days, I wore all the badges of the sixties. I had been searching for peace and love, whatever nebulous things they were--and these eerliest Christian friends in my life showed me alot of both. I will always think back on the Spring and Summer of 1972 with alot of fond memories.

The Apostle Peter was burdened to try to encourage some Christian friends of his up in northern Turkey. They had been having a rough time of things, simply BECAUSE they were Christians pretty much...and Peter was burdened that they might find the courage and the spiritual stamina to PERSEVERE under their difficult trials. Peter knew that these Christians had thus far hung in there, but he also knew that they would continue to truly need each other to be faithful and loyal.

This morning I would like to impress on you the importance of having as the OBJECTS OF YOUR LOYALTY 1) your brothers and sisters in Christ and 2) your Bibles. I would like to suggest that MUCH DEPENDS upon whether you choose to be FAITHFUL to each other and to the Word of God. We need to have the absolute determination that only under the most drastic circumstances will I break fellowship with another Christian, and UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES AT ALL, will I allow myself to become divorced from my Bible.

LOVING ONE ANOTHER (I Peter 1: 22) The Bible is full of teaching about the subject of love. The routine practice of real love is supposed to set Christians apart from all other people in the world. The Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 4: 15,16

As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love we are to grow up in all aspects in Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the

whole Body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the Body for the building up of itself in love.

Can you see in this verse why it is important in Paul's mind whether or not his readers practice Christian love? There is a direct connection between a Christian's being built up in the faith and whether his brethren live their lives with a Christ-like love. For us...whether we develop more and more into a church full of growing Christians, is seriously impacted by how much love we practice--or whether we wain into selfishness, and plain old religion. I think we ARE a loving church, by the way. I'm sure we aren't always completely consistent, but generally I think we try to demonstrate the love with which Christ loved us. Let's keep it up and learn more and more ways to do it!

Now verse 22 talks about being cleaned up--when a person truly comes to Christ in a sense he is cleaned up. I don't mean that he forever stops sinning. But before God a person who trusts Christ is repenting of their old lifestyles. Peter is not saying that these people saved themselves BY GOOD WORKS. He is stressing the human agency as having an important part in the saving of a soul. He is not here referring to the FIRST CAUSE of salvation, which is God, but to the secondary cause, which is faith and repentance...coming to Christ involves a turning away from sin--and doing that has a purifying effect on a person.

When I first came to Christ I had need (and still do) of alot of purification. But I could actually tell that Christ was working in my heart as a few things dropped away immediately. I had no desire to get stoned any more. Soon, my foul mouth cleaned up pretty much. (APPLICATION: if you are in the habit of saying, "My God," "that's a helluva whatever," or maybe "get that damn car out of my way," would you quit it? Just ask the Lord to purify your mind and your mouth.)

When a person comes to Christ, when they exercise trust in Christ for the very first time--THAT is an act of obedience! The verse says that when these people trusted Christ, they were being obedient to the truth--that is, to the Word of God.

The best bar of soap you can get--the only true miracle cleanser is the Word of God--it can REALLY take spots out!

-Dr. J. Vernon McGee

A real evidence of whether a person is truly a Christian or not is whether there is any love of other Christians or not. Sometimes a person will hear the Gospel, maybe understand it even, and make an initial profession of faith--but they remain cynical about the church. You rarely see them with other Christians because, for whatever reason, they just don't like being AROUND other Christians. I am not talking about the person who having walked with the Lord for some time, then struggles with some specific crisis and then drops out of sight for a time--I'm talking about the person who

SEEMS to come to Christ and then never makes any effort to be with other Christians, or to become part of a fellowship of Christians. THAT person, I believe, has not yet met Christ--because when Christ saves you, you have a new-found energy to become involved with your new brothers and sisters in Christ!

The initial purifying that a person experiences when he first becomes a Christian ENABLES him to have a new love for other Christians, where maybe he was disinterested, ignorant or even hostile towards Christians before.

We have seen this numerous times in the past several years here. Someone new comes into the Body, they hear about Christ can do for them, they flee to the cross (in their hearts), are marvelously regenerated, and then they can't seem to get enough of Bible studies, worship services, small group fellowships, conferences, etc. Indeed, as someone has said, they need to be almost locked up in a closet for about six months just to protect the poor non-Christians around from them!

The first Greek word for "love" in verse 22 is the word philadelphian. It means "affection." Christians are (or SHOULD be) noted for their affection for one another. There is a PREFERENCE for one another's company among people who have mutually met Jesus Christ!

At the end of the verse a second and different Greek word for our English word "love" is used. Peter says, "ferverently love [agapao] one another from the heart." (...since you have been enabled to have affection for one another). Or, as the N.I.V. renders it, "love one another DEEPLY from the heart."

Do we love one another deeply here at Dartmouth Bible Church? I am not talking about do you have a warm, fuzzy, wuzzy feeling for everyone in this room each and every Sunday. We are not a very physically affectionate church, as some churches go. But under the surface, do we prefer one another? Do we choose to be with one another? Do we go out of our BUSY way to sympathize with one another or just to sit with one another in our grief? Do we rejoice with one another in our joys and successes? Do we share with one another the necessities of life? Do we bear with one another patiently when we screw up, or occasionally offend? Do we assist one another in our various labors? Do we take the risk to admonish one another or rebuke one another ("speaking the truth in love") when we sometimes need it? Do we delight to be connected and associated with one another? Do we REFUSE to be ashamed of one another? Dear ones, these are the kinds of questions to ask ourselves as we look at this verse 22. It is a high love that God calls us to practice! It is a high love that He has exercised towards us!

It is from His heart that God engineered our rescue and redemption in Christ. It is from the heart that we are to reflect that among ourselves--within these fine, attractive walls at 52 Morton Avenue! May I suggest a few other practical measures we can take in loving

one another?

1. Be aware of the different phases in life that we each go through, and "cut slack" when slack is needed.
2. Ask God to help you ABSORB criticism or insensitivity if it comes your way from someone in the Body.
3. Be willing to serve in various ministries among our children, even if working with kids isn't what you think is the most fun.
4. Go out of your way to befriend, at least on a casual basis, one person in the Body/month that you do not already know.

Why Should We Love One Another? I Peter 4:8 Verse 22 tells us to "fervently" love one another. Sometimes practicing love involves strain, and that is exactly the word for "fervently," in the Greek ("ektenos"). The word is also used in 4:8. It means "to love in an all out manner, with intense strain." How FAR will we go in our devotion and loyalty to one another? Is there any room in Dartmouth Bible Church for us to grow in this way? Let's be looking for more ways to be devoted to one another. Let's not make a big promotional deal about it--let's just do it, and praise God as He brings the fruit of the Holy Spirit into full bloom in our lives!

If you are with us this morning and you are as yet unsure if you know Christ personally in your heart--may I ask you a question? Do you not inwardly long to be loved by God? Do you not wish you could know in your heart and in your mind that God loves you, cares about every aspect of your life? Do you wish you had more potential to love other people? You can know Christ, know His love personally NOT JUST THEORETICALLY, and you can have His love for other people. You can't ATTAIN it. You cannot earn it. God's mercy and reconciling love are knowable only by faith, the Bible says--by simply trusting in the sin-bearing work of Jesus Christ on the cross. May the Lord help you to do just that!

EXPOSITION OF FIRST PETER  
The Source of Our Salvation  
I Peter 1:23-2:3

Introduction I would like for you to use your imagination with me this morning. Imagine that we have all decided to take a cruise together and we charter a small cruise ship. By some minor miracle ALMOST everybody who is any part of Dartmouth Bible Church comes along, so that we are the only patrons of the cruise. The only other people on board are the crew, say 20 other men and women. The cruise we have planned takes us into the Pacific and we are having a grand time of it! But we run into a storm and our ship starts to break up. Fortunately we have enough life boats, and everybody gets safely into one. We sadly watch our beautiful ship turn stern-up and bubble into its watery grave. All of us have been saved, and we make our way in a day or two to a little-known island. We scabble ashore, with only the clothes on our back, and maybe one hand bag each. It happens when we sit on the beach, that we discover only one Bible has survived, and that one (a New American Standard, by the way) is soaked with sea water. We have no copy of our Constitution and By-Laws, no church building (indeed NO buildings), no clothes other than those we have on, no stereos, cassette decks, no books, no magazines, no cars, no nothing! Just us, the Lord and a beautiful, rich, uninhabited island. Would we survive?

Now on Gilligan's Island they all made marvelous adaptations to the same situation, and I'm sure we would do at least as well...But what I would like you to think about for a moment, is, WHAT WOULD BECOME OF OUR FAITH? How much of our church structure and practice THAT WE HAVE HERE, would we continue? What I am suggesting of course, is a picture of us as the Body of Christ, reduced down to the basics of the faith--stripped of all the normal equipment, accouterments and decorations of modern church life. Would we still recognize our deacons as deacons? Would I still be your pastor? Would we still sing? And MOST SIGNIFICANTLY, how would we each get into the Word--how important would the Word of God BE to us?

I might add that just such a scenario is not absurd in history. The Pilgrims in 1620, who made up about 1/3 of the Mayflower's company, faced almost exactly these circumstances, except I believe they had more than one Bible, and a little more equipment.

Have you ever doubted whether your conversion to Christ was REAL? Have you ever asked yourself questions like, "Did I really have a supernatural, life-changing experience brought upon me by God, or did I imagine it?" Or, "Maybe I just THINK I became a Christian because of psychological reasons???" Or, "Did I just become religious to pacify my family?" And there are alot of other questions you might ask yourself at some point or another, which basically ask the same question, "Was my conversion experience real, or imagined?"

Now let me encourage you with the fact that if you have asked yourself some such question, or if you find yourself asking similar questions

periodically, it is not unusual. In fact I am persuaded that it is a normal part of the Christian life. We SHOULD be re-evaluating our commitment to Jesus Christ on a regular basis. We are truly bombarded with the idea in the media that evangelical religion (and by that I simply mean Bible-believing religion) is anything BUT real...The world will generate all kinds of explanations for the experience that Christians claim: coming to know God in a personal way. And so, if you find yourself asking yourself, "When I came to Christ WAS IT REAL?" know that you are not alone--many of your brothers and sisters in Christ ask themselves (maybe secretly) the same questions from time to time...

The Apostle Peter is going to say to us today that the foundation of trusting in Christ is NOT imaginary. Becoming a Christian is not just a human institution, it is not just man-made. He's going to tell us that our salvation is ROOTED IN GOD'S WORD...that we can always trace our faith back to an OBJECTIVE REVELATION, handed down to man by God Himself. We can always think back to the fact that the reason we became Christians was because we decided to trust the Book. Your BEING a Christian today, if you are one, is because somebody shared a message with you--someone alerted you to what this "memorandum from God" says! Somewhere along the line you can recall that you heard for the first time that GOD IS THERE, AND HE IS NOT SILENT (as Dr. Francis Schaeffer put it)--that God has in fact penned a reliable, understandable and in fact URGENT DISPATCH to man--that you didn't just imagine this, back in 1980, or 1975 or 1972 or 1947 or whenever you first trusted Jesus in your heart, to be your Lord and Savior! Again...the message this morning from God to you is this: if you are a Christian, your salvation is rooted in God's Word.

Then Peter is saying that conversion results in three things:

1. A sincere love for the brethren (1:22).
2. Repentance from sin (2:1).
3. A desire for spiritual growth (2:2).

Dear ones, if there is NONE of each of these three things in you, then I must suggest that even though you go to church, you may have not yet truly trusted Christ. These three results of conversion can be counterfeited. A person can be confused about the Gospel and think that he must PRACTICE these things to BECOME a Christian--No. These are the things, Peter says, which RESULT from being born-again. These are what happens, at least gradually, when a person has set His feet on the rock of God's Word, and personally trusted in the record of Jesus' substitutionary payment for sinners.

Being born-again is a supernatural event. It is not a magical event--the sensational kind of "side-show" the media loves to play up. But we should never apologize for the fact that being born-again IS a supernatural event. And WHEN A PERSON is truly born-again, the change that takes place will not die, because it is rooted in God's Word. The writer to the Hebrews had this to say about the Word,

For the Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge both the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Hebrews 4:12

Peter describes the Word also as "living" and "abiding." The Word of God endures. People change. Our circumstances change. We're born, we live and perceive life as a child--then as a teenager--then as a single--then maybe as a young couple--then as a parent--then as a middle-aged person--then as an elderly person--and finally, we pass from this life. All through your life and mine, and for thousands of years the Word has endured. It does not change. It is dependable. It is a rock! This is Peter's reason for quoting the verse from Isaiah 40 (vs.6ff). And he says to us as he said to the Christians in northern Turkey, "This is how you became Christians". This was the MEANS by which you were saved! Oh sure, there is a psychological side to it. Sure, there is a sociological side to it. Sure, Christianity is more a part of some ethnic or cultural groups than it is others. But THE BOTTOM-LINE EXPLANATION for WHY we are Christians is because we trusted in the Book--our salvation is rooted deeply and firmly in the objective truth of the Word of God!

I am able to weather periods of doubt in my own life--and I am able to weather the periods of doubt in OTHER Christians (some whom I respect greatly), because I know that when I first trusted Christ I made a decision based on SUBSTANCE, as did you if you are a Christian.

Chapter 2, verses 1-3 Here Peter mentions five specific attitudes which can drive wedges between believers, and which we should repent of REGULARLY:

1. Malice, which is a wicked ill-will towards someone.
2. Guile, or dectiet, is deliberate dishonesty.
3. Hypocrisy, which is pretended holiness or love.
4. Envy, which is resentful discontent.
5. Slander, which is backbiting lies.

These practices have no place among God's people. We are to make decisive breaks with our past and not allow these things to take place in your life.

Now sometimes a Christian will say, "Well, that's just the way I am." Or, "That's just the way I was raised," as if that makes it OK. Indeed, we were all raised as sinners! That is never any excuse.

So a result of being born-again--of experiencing the new birth, is a new-found repentance from the practices or attitudes of the OLD life. No doubt sometimes there will be a little friction among us as we DO try to rid ourselves of these things.

Now can you see that verse two is tied closely with verse one? Longing for the Word, with the innocence of a newborn, is tied closely with ridding ourselves of the fleshly attitudes (like the five mentioned, although the list is not meant to be exhaustive) we may have held before we experienced the new birth.

I love being around new Christians! There is so often such a freshness and zeal for the Word. THAT should never disappear! I hope you and I never lose our delight for God's Word!

And if you find yourself having to admit to yourself that you do NOT really delight in God's Word because you do not read well, or because you are not disciplined--you can resolve to become so! There are many ways to devote yourself to the milk of the Word beyond reading (although there are no BETTER ways than reading it and feeding yourself). There are tape recordings of Bible reading, an almost infinite number of Bible teachers available on tape, the radio and the television. There is the weekly exposition of the Word here and in other evangelical churches in the area. The point is, do you LONG for the Word? I do not just wish to make Bible-readers out of you just for the sake of that! BUT I' DO KNOW that without digesting the pure milk of the Word--YOU doing the digesting!--you cannot grow in the faith. I want you to grow in grace, to not become static, stagnant, distracted. I want you to be discovering each day the kindness of the Lord. I want you to be able to say TO YOURSELF each day, "Well, whatever happens today, I know that my Lord loves me, and my salvation is rooted in His Word--and THAT ENDURES, so therefore I shall endure!"

Have you been born-again into God's family? If you are not interested in being so, then I have little to say to you except what Jesus Christ Himself said to that self-righteous, religious man Nicodemus, "...unless one is born-again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3b). But anyone can become born-again at any time by going to Jesus Christ personally, who is God's own deaar Son who came to give man forgiveness of sins and eternal life. It is through Christ that a person realizes he has been born-again. And he can always look back, during times of doubt or persecution or trial of any kind and remember, "Yes, my faith is not grounded in imagination--it is grounded on the Word of God which lives and endures forever!"



EXPOSITION OF FIRST PETER  
Who Do You Think You Are?  
I Peter 2: 4-10

Introduction: There is a lot of talk today about "self-esteem." And it's a good thing because it is a very strategic issue, especially when we are talking about how to raise our children as Christian parents. In fact my plan is to offer a Sunday School course this Fall for young parents on "how to discipline and build self-esteem in your child." How a child, a teenager or an adult thinks about himself or herself has a tremendous impact on what kind of person they are in society and even in the church...What YOU think about yourself--your intelligence, your appearance, your character--are all significant.

Then what about the "multiple you"? What about the person you THINK you are, the person you think you HAVE been, the person you think you COULD be...? What about the person OTHERS think you are, the person THEY think you HAVE been, the person they think you COULD BE...? And what about the person you REALLY HAVE been, the person you REALLY are, the person you REALLY CAN be...? It gets confusing, doesn't it? That's why we need to give our attention [this morning] to one other "you" we haven't yet mentioned--the "WHO YOU ARE IN GOD'S EYES."

-- M.R. De Haan II

And in point of fact, WHAT GOD THINKS OF YOU IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN WHAT YOU THINK OF YOURSELF, OR WHAT OTHERS THINK OF YOU. Peter has something to say about what God thinks of Christians, people who have intentionally put their personal trust in His Messiah, Jesus Christ.

It is truly incredible what He DOES think about Christians! I am persuaded that we have only the sleepest and vaguest idea of how highly God values us! If you have come to Christ, and joined yourself to Him, then you are IN FACT undergoing a fantastic "construction program," whether you are always aware of it or not. You are part of the building materials that God is using to rebuild the world. Now I know that all that sounds a little picturesque--but Peter says Christians are the "bricks", so to speak, of a new building God is erecting.

I Peter 2: 4-8: In verses 4 and 5 Peter says that Christians, by virtue of their relationship to Christ, are being erected into a spiritual house. This is Peter's way of relating to the Old Testament economy, with which his first readers would have been so familiar.

It was very important that Peter's readers understand that they could approach Christ in TRUE WORSHIP because they had been facing an identity crisis. Many of them were converted Jews. Now that they were Christians, and no doubt suffering for their Christian beliefs, they may have had some nagging doubts. Much of what was important to a Jew had been swept away by Christ. They had no physical temple, no physical priesthood, no physical sacrifices for sin and no sense of belonging to Israel any more. They were pilgrims and strangers in this world and

they needed some answers...WHAT IS GOD'S PROGRAM NOW? How do we fit into it? How can we worship if there is no physical temple, priesthood or sacrifices?

The answer is that through Christ, they had all these things still--in fact they had the reality of which all the Old Testament practices were only types and shadows. NOTICE in verse 5 the phrase, "being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood..." In this age, the age in which we live too, God's chosen sanctuary is not a building--it is His people, Christians. And in contrast to Judaism, where only a selected few from a single tribe could minister as priests, in Christianity ALL who come to Christ become priests--If you are a Christian YOU are part of the sanctuary of God (and Paul tells us that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit: therefore don't destroy the body!)

What was unthinkable in Judaism is fundamental to Christianity: Proselytes [converts] become priests. The priesthood and its ministry are a status and a privilege enjoyed by everybody in the assembly--by every member of the people of God.

-- Alan Stibbs, Comm. on I Peter.

The sacrifices that believer-priests offer are "spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." People try to do alot of things for God in the world today. In our pluralistic society, many people have come to believe that any sacrifice of time, money or energy must be acceptable to God, because all that is important is whether you do it with a sincere heart. And so it is no surprise that so many believe that salvation is "winnable" by doing good works of any kind--all good works are acceptable to God. But as Christians, we are the only ones who can offer up "spiritual sacrifices." Our sharing time here is for this purpose where we can share some praise that TESTIFIES that the Lord is real and active in our lives. We give thanks, tell about answered prayer, share how we are trying to trust the Lord through some problem. Our sharing time is NOT a time to talk about trivial details of the past week. It is a time to offer up spiritual sacrifices. Talking about what the Lord has done IS a sacrifice, because it is a reminder TO THE PERSON SHARING that he is not self-sufficient, the beginning and end of his own existence!--Other spiritual sacrifices that we offer up are my time for the work of the ministry. Some Christians offer up much of themselves to God--they make themselves available to the Lord; others offer up none of this kind of sacrifice. Your offering of money to the Lord should be a spiritual sacrifice--and that by the way is why we do not solicit offerings from non-Christians, because they can offer up no sacrifice pleasing to God, when they have not yet trusted the mediator, Jesus Christ.

Once again, we can very wrapped up in what we think about ourselves and what other people think of us. Many people crave the approval and acceptance of other people. But the most important thing is what does GOD think of us? Are we actively worshipping Him? Do we live our daily lives like subjects and servants of a High King? It is HIS assessment of me that is what is really important!

I Peter 2: 6-8: Now in verses 6-8 Peter quotes several Old Testament references about how Messiah is like a rock. The cornerstone of the

building--that which really IDENTIFIES the building has been rejected by Israel. And you and I live in a Christ-rejecting world today too. Jesus is either a person's Cornerstone or his stumbling stone. When confronted with the real claims of Christ, so that he really understands what Christ has said about Himself, a person either receives Him as Lord and Savior, or he rejects Him with a "bhaah..."

Verse 7 is a quote from Psalm 118:22. There is a tradition which takes us back to the time of the building of Solomon's temple in Jerusalem. From I Kings 6 we know that the stones of the temple were hewn to exact measurement, and when they were brought to the building site there was no sound heard of hammer nor axe--they were just fitted into place. Well, the tradition is that at the beginning of the project a very large, fine-looking stone came up from the quarry, but the builders couldn't fit it in any place; so they moved it to one side. Because it was in the way, eventually they just pushed it over the brow of the hill to make way for the other stones that they were receiving, and they forgot about it. Finally, when all the other stones had been fitted into place, they sent word down to the quarry, "Send up the cornerstone." The building was finished except for the cornerstone. Word came back, "We sent the Cornerstone to you at the very beginning." Then they remembered, "That's the stone we pushed off at the very beginning. So with a great deal of effort they had to haul that stone back up the hill, and they found that it DID fit right into place. If this tradition is accurate it sheds some light on what was in Peter's mind as he quoted from this Psalm!

-- Dr. J. Vernon McGee

Notice the end of verse 8. This is a very difficult phrase, and I will offer what is my interpretation. This verse seems to tell us that nothing happens by chance. Unbelievers in Christ are not forced or compelled to disobedient-unbelief. They voluntarily do this by an act of their own wills. But even man's rejection [of Christ] does not take God by surprise, because He has a plan, and it will certainly be carried out! This verse seems to support a double-predestination interpretation of some sort, and there are other verses in Scripture which seem to support this view (Romans 9:22,23; 2 Thess. 2:10-12). But I must point out that the word "doom" is not in the original Greek (thus the italics), and it is possible the "to this" refers to stumbling--that is, those who reject Christ are appointed to the penalty of unbelief, eternal judgement.

I Peter 2: 9,10: Peter tells us that God has called us into one people for a purpose: He has sovereignly called us out of darkness (and that is exactly what living without Jesus IS), so that we may tell people about God--His excellent characteristics, His excellent movings among and on behalf of men.

It has been popular among some in this country to believe that perhaps there is a God, but that He is not knowable, and really quite disinterested in man, and surely not INVOLVED with him. But Peter tells us that God IS INDEED interested in being KNOWN

by men, and He has ordained that the way He is going to reveal Himself and His Son is through us, and through all the other "living stones" in His spiritual house! Its important though that we send the right messages to those who listen--not "Look at us, how great WE are." But "Consider Jesus, who lives with-in us!"

The PREMIER FEATURE of being a Christian, and being an assembly, and I hope a growing COMMUNITY of Christians--the most significant DISTINCTION about us is that we are a people who have experienced God's mercy! This verse 10 has always been a favorite of mine! It calls us to remember back to when we had not yet experieced the rich and precious mercy of Christ! We should never lose sight of our profound need of God's mercy, dear ones--that's what makes us really different!

And THAT is what God thinks of you, if you have trusted Him. You are one of HIS living stones, one of HIS believer-priests offering up spiritual sacrifices as a way of life, not just "on holy days." You are HIS elect people, working out holiness in your lives, telling people about what an EXCELLENT God we have come to know--and most important reminding ourselves regularly, and telling others about God's mercy!

If you are a non-Christian, there is a warning in this passage for you: do not reject Christ. Do not be disobedient to the Word that Jesus Christ forgives sins and gives eternal life. Do not stumble at Christ's sovereign claims over your life. Believe that Christ died for your sins and rose from the dead to be your Lord, King and Master--for as the end of verse 6 says, "He who believes in Him shall not be disappointed."

EXPOSITION OF FIRST PETER  
Alien Qualities  
I Peter 2: 11-17

Introduction: As the Bible paints it, the Christian Church is supposed to be a very noticable entity in the world. We are to have a visibility which draws the notice of those non-Christians around us. And as the Lord wants it, the notice we draw should be a POSITIVE influence in the lives of non-Christians. Jesus said in Matthew 5 that His disciples were to be the salt of the earth--having primarily a preserving effect on the decay going on in the world; and His disciples are to shed His light abroad, bringing His light to bear on people's lives. Because God does have love for the world, He has set us IN the world for good: to help the non-Christians we know...

Christians are not to be isolated, uninvolved people, who want nothing whatsoever to do with non-Christians. If we are to be pleasing to Christ, then we must accept our role as His ambassadors here--Peter is going to help us understand HOW to be Christ's ambassadors here. He is going to lay out for us some of what our conduct should be like, while living in a hostile world.

I might add here that the Bible teaches that there is a fundamental difference between those people who are truly Christian, and all the rest of the people in the world. We are not just all part of one big happy family of man. It is true that some non-Christians LOOK like the real thing. And it is true that some professing Christians LOOK no different from people that are CLEARLY non-Christian. Yet there is an ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE--in reality the church and the world are, as Dr. John Stott has said, "as different as chalk and cheese."

The Bible teaches that since Christians ARE different, Christians should BE different. I hope that is your goal this morning, to NOT allow the world to decide FOR YOU what your life is going to be like--but that you are making daily decisions that you want to look like Christ, to be like Christ.

I Peter 2: 11,12 Peter uses two words to describe Christians: "aliens" and "strangers." Yours and my real home is heaven. We should live lives like Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob, who while,

"All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God for He has prepared

a city for them... (Hebrews 11: 13-16).

I am persuaded dear ones, that when a person truly meets Christ, a number of genuinely supernatural things happen within him. These changes are not adjustments which he manufactures himself...they happen within Him by virtue of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which occurs at the moment he first genuinely trusts Christ. One of these internal changes is a new-found desire to be WITH CHRIST, in CHRIST'S HOME, heaven. We cannot completely explain the feeling; we may not be able to thoroughly articulate, validate and quantify how that feeling comes about. There are definitely times when that sense of belonging to another country SLEEPS because we are not walking near to Christ. But nevertheless it is there.

The Christian singer Larry Norman wrote a song about 15 years ago that I liked. Here's a line: "What a mess the world is in, I wonder who began it!? Don't ask me, I'm only visiting this planet."

Peter calls his beloved readers "aliens and strangers" for another reason. He wants them to not be BOUND TO THIS WORLD, so that they can be effective witnesses for God."

Now if someone asks you what your goals are in Dartmouth Bible Church, you should say three things: 1) to worship and honor the Lord as a local group of His people; 2) to build up and edify one another, and to love one another sacrificially; 3) to win as many people as possible for Christ. These verses bear on number three in that set of goals for our church. One of the three reasons we exist is to have a positive, noticeable, beneficial impact in Southeastern Massachusetts. It makes a difference whether we have any influence in the area, or not, ESPECIALLY in light of the fact that there are so few healthy evangelical churches around!

Peter tells us to "abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul." The REASON is that if you are a Christian, you owe your loyalty to the King of another world! We are not to be tied here.

Now I find that many ethnic groups are pretty fiercely independent! It seems everyone thinks THEIR ethnic group is the "baddest" people around. And in our sense of independence and individuality we scarcely tolerate any outside invader coming in and shoving us around. Why then dear ones, do we let the dictator, the destroyer of this world rule our bodies, our thoughts, our emotions, our affections with HIS program of sin? We are not SLAVES to sin or the devil or even our own still-fallen flesh. Peter says abstain. Period.

In the abortion controversy the most obvious, the most effective and the most scoffed at solution is to teach young people to ABSTAIN from premarital, irresponsible sex. But our society is so convinced that sex is OK under any circumstances as long as the principle parties both agree, and nobody is hurt.

But Peter is not just speaking of sexual lusts--there are many other kinds of fleshly desires which we are to abstain from. Materialism

sometimes has a Christian in its grip who would never think of committing sexual sin. Hatred, vengeance, slander, envy, being conceited, etc. are all in Peter's mind.

Dear ones, only by maintaining a daily walk with Christ though, do you have much hope of succeeding in abstaining. I know I sometimes sound like a broken record when I bring up the subject of Quiet Time and regularly fellowshiping with the saints, but you need the reminder.

Peter mentions that it is the soul that is under attack by lust. Much attention today is focused on the effects of sin on the mind and body. But here Peter tells us that the CORE of your being is damaged by submitting to fleshly desires. That part of you which distinguishes you from the animals, your soul, is assaulted when you submit to baser desires. Christians, let's be a church which concentrates on issues of holiness, which knows what is involved in becoming holy--NOT "holier than thou," but holy...Christlike. WORK on those issues of lust that you struggle with, don't just let the months go by and turn into years of defeat. Much is at stake...

In verse 12 Peter instructs his readers (and us) to disprove the accusations of scrutinizing non-Christians by PROVING TO LIVE RIGHT in that area. Last week I suggested that the most important thing to us should not be what others think of us but what God thinks of us...but I did NOT say that it doesn't matter at all what people think of us. And we CAN develop a good reputation by DEMONSTRATING THE REALITY OF OUR CHRISTIANITY by living a good life; that involves NOT entertaining fleshly desires, and it involves BUILDING INTO OUR LIVES INSTEAD, godly disciplines--this, by the way, is why we have Sunday School and Bible studies and service projects, etc.: to help you begin to build godly disciplines into your life!

The phrase "on the day of visitation" at the end of verse 12 probably refers to the day of salvation, "when God looks in on them in His mercy and brings them to conversion" (Raymer, Bible Knowledge Commentary). I can say to the Lord, "I praise you Lord, that Amy and Chuck and Chris faithfully held your Gospel before me in those months before I came to Christ, and even when I secretly accused them of various inconsistencies." APPLICATION: This has particular application I think to the raising of our children, who are so PERCEPTIVE at picking up our inconsistencies in the faith. It is vital that we maintain a good life before the watching eyes of our children!

My friends the point this morning is that witnessing for Jesus Christ goes far beyond passing a tract (the "love them and leave them method"), even opening a Bible and introducing them to the Gospel of John. Of course that is THE POINT WE WANT TO GET TO with any non-Christian. But we must remember that the only Bible that most of the lost world will ever read IS OUR LIVES. Peter says later in this letter, "Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence (3:15). Brethren let's view our evangelism as a 24 hour job. Let's be praying that the Lord will be praised and honored by the non-Christians in our lives in part at least, because we lived consistently before HIM and before them!

EXPOSITION OF FIRST PETER  
"Christian Submission and the Will of God"  
I Peter 2: 13-25

Introduction: There is much discussion these days among Bible-believing Christians about how to determine the will of God. I think this on-going discussion among Christians is a good thing, because it signals that more and more people are becoming CONVINCED that God has a will for their lives, and becoming CONCERNED with discovering it and doing it!

When I first became a Christian in 1972, one of the first exciting truths I learned was that God loves me and has a wonderful plan for my life. It seemed reasonable that any God who loved me enough to sacrifice His only Son for me specifically, must be worthy of serving as much as I could! It figured that any ideas and plans He would have for my life would be in my own best interests, and would not be some kind of arbitrary, kill-joy mandate...this wonderful God Whom I had recently come to know and love...

In our passage this morning, there is the phrase, "For such is the will of God that by..." (verse 15). There are a number of places in the New Testament where it could not be plainer as to what the Lord wants us to do. Be assured, beloved, that God does not keep His will for us hidden, under lock and key--as we seek Him, and as we grow to love His Word, decision-making in our lives becomes more and more second-nature. It is SECONDARY how I feel about a certain matter! The important thing is WHAT DOES GOD'S WORD TELL ME TO DO?

So I hope as we consider Peter's words again this morning, you may find some clear application for your life, as you seek to do God's perfect will for your life!

Now there are two subjects which usually spark a robust discussion, sometimes even a heated argument--religion and politics. Most people try to keep these subjects separate, but this is impossible for the Christian because he believes God is sovereign over all, even in the political realm...

To remove God from politics is to leave this area of life to atheistic and humanistic thinkers which will ultimately bring chaos to any society. A case in point is the French Revolution which was led by brilliant intellectuals who were pagans. Only about 17 years after this very bloody revolution, when the aristocracy was thrown out, the French accepted another monarch, Napoleon, a dictator. (Dr. Jack L. Arnold)

Christians very much need to know what relationship they sustain to their government, whatever government they find themselves under. Peter knew that it was VITAL for his readers to hear from him on this matter--Christians today also need to know what the will of God is.



But before we look at Peter's words on submitting to the government, let's look at something Jesus said, which I can't help but wonder if it was in Peter's mind as he wrote our section in 1 Peter...Let's take a look at Matthew 5: 43-48.

In those verses Jesus lays out for His disciples (and us) a lifestyle which is several cuts above His contemporaries' ideas about what made up a godly life. And as in every issue He dealt with in the "Sermon on the Mount" Jesus says His Kingdom will be evidenced by our attitudes and by the QUALITY of commitment to Him we have. Its not enough just to love those who love you. Jesus' people need to love those who don't love them back--who even HATE them. The Kingdom of Christ comes about as more and more people are TRANSFORMED from the inside out by the work of the Holy Spirit. This has to do with our political feelings and civil attitudes as much as in any other area of our minds.

1 Peter 2: 13-17 In short, Christians are to obey the law--and the REASON is because we are a people who fear God--not who are TERRORIZED by God, but who live in awe and respect for the sovereignty and power of our God. Therefore we should not be rebellious or cantankerous towards our government. The will of God for you and I, today, August 10, 1986, is to silence the ignorant accusations of non-Christians (whom Peter calls "foolish") not by skillful arguing, not by drowning them out, not by compelling them to believe as we do, BUT BY OUR EXAMPLE. I can think of so many applications of this, it is difficult to keep it brief...

Today, Bible-believing people are accused of all kinds of weirdness. This week I read about a new pseudo-Christian movement known as "Christian Identity." Basic to the beliefs of these religious neo-Nazis is the notion that the white race is superior to all others. They also tote Bibles and probably sing many of the same hymns we do. Now Peter would not have us hate these people--they desperately need the love in Christ, in fact. By our actions, we need to silence their ignorance. By our example we need to DEMONSTRATE the genuine Christian life: and that involves NO RACISM! If we fear God, love the brethren (of whatever race), honor ALL men and honor our government leaders--we will have a gentleness, a non-combativeness about us which testifies that we really do know Christ!

A Christian's best defense against slanderous criticism is good behavior. Folks, the world really needs to see some genuine Christianity! There is so much counterfeit Christianity around that it is no wonder we are so often asked, "Are you for real?"

I hear many people, non-Christians and Christians alike, who have become pretty cynical about our nation's legal system. Many have come to believe that the poor man has little chance for fair treatment, and the rich man will always be able to buy lawyers who are smart enough to evade the law, or at least to exploit its loopholes. Or, there are those who are of the opinion that some law-enforcement officials are basically corrupt, lazy or incompetent. I hear this alot, and the adults pass their convictions on to their kids. Dear ones, we are to

respect our governmental officials--I do not mean a blinded, turn-the-other-way kind of thing--for that is not justice. But we are to live like we are trusting God to work THROUGH the government over us. And we should be praying to that end!

In Titus 3: 1,2, the Apostle Paul has some words which also reveal God's will for our lives:

Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing every consideration for all men.

Why? Because God wants us to be smiling wimps? No, because God wants our attitudes towards those over us to REFLECT our love of HIM!

1 Peter 2: 18-20 Now God's will extends to our behavior in our employment. I am not really completely comfortable applying these verses to the subject of "employment," because that is the closest thing most of us can come to in understanding slavery. Peter is writing to slaves, in fact. Notice that neither he nor Paul elsewhere either condemn or condone slavery as a valid institution. Peter just writes to Christians slaves and tells them how to live under those conditions...

They are to be indiscriminating as to which masters they show respect. All masters (and I would suggest for us, employers) should receive a consistent respect from their Christian servants. This does not mean that I think management can do no wrong. In our free enterprise system there is much room for honest, fair and aggressive negotiation with the owners of businesses. But as a Christian, you are to REFLECT Jesus Christ on the employment scene, even if you are mistreated, exploited or slandered.

Jesus Christ is not pleased if we are REACTIONARY people. He wants us to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world--not just to do good to men in general, but to honor and glorify Him. Remember, the only Bible many people will read will be your lifestyle, and they will make a judgement, fair or not, on what they see in you!

This passage may also have some application on the home front, where an older child is living under his parents roof still. If you are in that situation, it is your duty to the Lord to have a submissive spirit and to be a servant, not feel like your folks still owe you a living or a place of residence!

Verse 20 has some striking logic: God is pleased (and isn't that what we are struggling to do with our lives?) if we patiently endure mistreatment, even abuse. Peter would have us go to extremes to DEVELOP PATIENCE IN OUR LIVES--it is a fruit of the spirit. But we sometimes are so careful about "our rights," and standing up for them vehemently that we develop little patience! I think the Bible is quite clear in the line it draws about when a splintering action is appropriate, and when it is appropriate to wait on the Lord and to pray and to be submissive: Some people are quick to sue for divorce; some are quick to leave a church; some are quick to bring someone into

court...and they MISS the quiet voice of the Holy Spirit, who says, "Keep entrusting yourself and your situation to Him who judges righteously." If we were as quick to turn to earnest prayer in a difficult situation, as we are to other splintering moves, we might see a little more of the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in and around our lives!

1 Peter 2: 21-25 Peter doesn't get very far without telling us about the Lord Jesus Christ again, and here he reminds us of the sufferings of Christ as an example to us. (By the way, this would be a good passage for one of you men to bring to our attention during our Lord's Table open meeting...[hint,hint]).

Sometimes we feel that suffering is to be avoided at all costs. I fall into this too, because I am basically a very cautious person. I think, "If I can be smart enough, and use enough foresight in planning this or that aspect of my life; if I carefully avoid all risks in working with people, etc., then I might be able to avoid suffering, at least at the hands or under the voice of other people...But verse 21 reminds me that Jesus suffered FOR ME. In fact, he went out of His way to suffer for me and for you, if you are a Christian. He didn't yell back when they yelled at Him--He didn't strike back when they struck Him, although I am completely persuaded he could have VAPORIZED THEM, with the briefest divine thought! He intentionally suffered unspeakable abuse to the end that I might be redeemed. Cannot I then suffer a little in this life; entrust a situation or a slanderer to His providential care (as did Esther in the Old Testament)?

Verse 24 is precious. He wants us to live in new life, dear ones; to NOT BE governed by the old sinful impulses (the compulsion to wreck vengeance on people who offend you--in your government on your job or in your neighborhood! By the wounds which Jesus absorbed, we are healed (a reference to Isaiah 53:5) of sin. We are healed of the penalty of sin, if we have trusted and depend TODAY in that fact!

Now this verse does not refer to physical healing. I think it is a gross mishandling of this verse to apply it to physical illness "cart blanche." The context has nothing whatsoever to do with illness. The healing is an already accomplished fact--I do not mean to say that I don't believe God heals today, for I do indeed. But this verse is not an incantation to say which automatically renders a Christian well.

Verse 25 humbles me further--it also is an allusion to Isaiah 53. All people are viewed by God as sheep. And all men, like sheep, go astray, left to their natural devices--I do not have much confidence in any "goodness of man" as would a humanistic thinker. But for us who have trusted Christ, He is not only our Savior, dear ones, but our Shepherd and Guardian. Nothing can separate a Christian from the loving care of the Sovereign God--not oppressive government, not harsh employers, not even brutal slavemasters. The Christian fixes his or her hope on the future--once we were NOT a people. Once we didn't know much at all about God's mercy--Now, we have been called out of darkness into the Light of God's Son. Peter tells us folks to DISPLAY that reality (IF it is a reality for you personally) by the day to day attitudes and disposition we chose to practice!

EXPOSITION OF FIRST PETER  
The Hidden Person of the Heart  
I Peter 3: 1-6

Introduction There are two kinds of godly people in the world: godly men and godly women. This morning we are going to consider Peter's idea of how to be a godly woman. Remember, Peter is writing to Christian people in what is now northern Turkey, whose Christianity was under close scrutiny by non-Christians. Peter had a heart for these "wilderness Christians" and he was concerned that their Christianity SHOWED in some very difficult situations: under persecution possibly (as people who lived in a society which did not understand their religion), under various government officials (whom we can assume were not necessarily ALWAYS just or fair), even in slavery (where surely it would be so very difficult--and yet WHAT A WONDERFUL PLATFORM!), and also in marriage. Perhaps Peter had in mind in our passage women who were married to non-Christians. The idea in verse 1 of some of the husbands being "disobedient to the Word" makes me think this is indeed the situation in Peter's mind (cf. 2:8).

There are represented in Dartmouth Bible Church several families where the wife is a Christian and the husband is not. In many cases where this is true the wife is sincere and dedicated and longs to see her husband become a Christian, but he shows no interest at all. It is only natural for her to want her husband to love her "first love," Jesus Christ, and without her husband's love for Christ that family will never be united as it could be or should be. There may be peace and even degrees of harmony, but there can never be unity. Fortunately, this is only the situation for a few of our people (I can think of few marriage situations sadder than when a Christian chooses to marry a non-Christian), BUT our passage applies to every Christian woman. Please remember also that these six verses are divine revelation, and they set forth principles THAT WILL WORK to make any marriage better, even a spiritually mixed marriage.

I Peter 3: 1,2 Verse one begins with the phrase "in the same way..." The submissiveness of Christian wives is to be of the same kind that Christians are to exercise towards their government and on their jobs. Christians are not to be quarrelsome or embittered. They should not allow grudges to rule their lives or to become cynical. These kinds of things in a Christian's life tell the world that his Christianity is false (whether it IS or not, the world has every reason to think so). And so, a Christian wife is to have a generally submissive attitude and outlook towards her husband. Now admittedly this idea is not at all popular today. Some religious thinkers have bent over backwards to try and show that Peter and Paul's concepts of women were bound by the prejudices of their culture. But they were not. The proper roles of men and women in marriage have not changed since God created them. The Bible does not teach that women are inferior to men (although you might get that idea from some Christian men). But it does teach that God desires for them to have different roles in marriage, and He has designed them to work in the role He has planned.

In my car there ~~are~~ an engine and a transmission. Neither is more important than the other, but one comes in front of the other. They work in harmony with each other, and are mutually dependent. Without the transmission working well, a perfectly tuned engine is worthless. Perhaps sometimes the engine gets more attention, but behind it is an equally, maybe MORE crucial component in the transmission. Now if the transmission starts giving me trouble, I can think of nothing else!

Well, that illustration is going to break down pretty soon, so I better get back to reality...My wife is not inferior to me, and I try to not treat her disrespectfully in such a way as to communicate inferiority (although I fail from time to time). In fact there are some ways in which I have no doubt she is superior to me. But in our family it is her responsibility before God to be submissive to me and to follow my lead from day to day. That should not injure her DIGNITY or ESTEEM. But if a woman is NOT submissive, it is really a spiritual issue between her and God.

Would you notice a little detail in verse one: Christian wives are to be submissive TO THEIR OWN HUSBANDS. Peter does not say to all men, but to one man--all the more reason to choose your husbands CAREFULLY, single girls, because this type of submission in your life is to be unique to one man. Now this is not a license for pride or arrogance to other men because all Christians are to be ruled by a general submissiveness to each other (Ephesians 4:21).

Now I think women today are confronted with a lot of authoritative-type sources on HOW TO LIVE. We listen to Phil Donahue and we get one idea. We might read Cosmopolitan or Good Housekeeping and get some more concepts. We might have some good friends who have some other ideas about what is and what isn't THE RIGHT WAY TO LIVE or BEHAVE IN MARRIAGE. Some of you may have watched "Hill Street Blues" a time or two and there you get some additional notions...But ladies, my point for you this morning, and for the men too, is that submission to your own husbands is necessary to stay closely in fellowship with the Lord. The matter of how you choose (and I use the word "choose" on purpose, because I think how we act as Christians is a matter of CHOICE) to act and think in your marriage is INTIMATELY TIED IN TO HOW YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST is doing. As your relationship with Christ grows, and you come to love Him more and more, so you will also find it a little easier each year say, to submit biblically to your husband. And it is Peter's view that this is the key to SUCCEEDING in winning an unsaved husband.

As a woman really seeks Christ in her life, she is going to become more and more pure in every way: faithful sexually of course, but also purer in motives, words, attitudes and so forth. And she will demonstrate respect for him, GOING OUT OF HER WAY TO DO SO, if she is married to a non-Christian.

Now surely this doesn't mean that a woman can never share Christ with her husband. She should share whenever her husband wants to talk about it, but if her husband is ANTAGONISTIC to Christ there comes a time when verbal communications cease and it becomes nagging. The husband sees

this as a threat to his leadership AND an IMPLICATION that his wife wants to assert her own will in the home. If the wife continually pecks away at the way her husband dresses, acts, eats, thinks and talks, in that these ways may be unChristian, the man will just clam up and rebel even more because he is alienated by what HE SEES as super-piousness in his wife (and it might be). There are women that are SO desirous to see their husbands saved that they drag them off to church and to every evangelistic or revival meeting; they put tracts on their pillows at night and in their bowls of Wheaties in the morning; they may even go so far as to write on the bathroom mirror with lipstick or shaving cream the words, "God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life," so that the husband cannot MISS it when he shaves! There are even those women who might say, "My husband plays golf on Sunday mornings, but I try my hardest to get him in church with me." They should let him play golf on Sunday and win him to Christ by a quiet godly life. When he gets saved he will WANT to be in church with God's people. Remember, men HATE nagging. When a wife nags, the husband will either give in, smolder with resentment, become stubborn, or just blow up, and will be driven further from Christ. A woman may have the best motives, but these "trumped up" situations are not God's methods for winning a man to Christ.

A woman might say, "Well, you don't know my husband. The bum sits around the house in his shorts and dirty tee shirt, watches T.V., drinks beer, and when he speaks he constantly uses the Lord's name in vain. He never shows me any attention or affection. He's never interested in the kids. He doesn't give a rip about the family and he only thinks about himself. Why SHOULD I respect him?" You are to respect him as the head of the home because God asks you to do it! I'm not saying it's always easy, but as a Christian wife you must not ridicule him, tear him down, make fun of him to others (and only selectively to his face!) When a man sees a positive, supportive life in his wife, it will hopefully whet his appetite to know something about Jesus Christ! (illustrations from Dr. Jack L. Arnold)

Verses 3-6 Now in these verses Peter is not saying that women should take no care whatsoever in their outward appearance. In fact I think that in today's American society it takes a fair amount of concentration to dress and appear in an appropriate fashion. There is something of a fine line to balance between communicating a "trendy-look-at-me" appearance, and an excessively plain "don't-you-dare-look-at-me-you-pervert" appearance. Personally I think classic, chaste apparel is fine whatever a woman's taste (and her husband's).

But Peter's point here is simple: how much energy do you invest in adorning your body, ladies (and girls). And how much energy do you invest in adorning your heart and mind with the things of the Lord? We can't see inside your heart--that is hidden, although THAT is where you make the strategic decisions, the most important choices about each day and each week. Are you as concerned about developing an inner walk with Christ, and becoming beautiful INSIDE as you are about other matters?

There is also the cost factor...I am not going to belabor this, and I certainly recognize that men can fall into "textile vanity" too, but the Lord's will for you is to CONCENTRATE on developing your spiritual life, for THAT is what is precious to God. We live in an extremely sensua-

lized society, where we greatly ESTEEM those who please our senses. But God's value-system runs counter to the emphasis in our media...He is looking for the precious jewels that He might find in your heart!

Being careful not to overgeneralize, I have noticed SOMETIMES it is the ladies who in one way or another are not beautiful physically, who have the most beautiful spirits, because they have been unsuccessful in the "gorgeous department." I am thinking of one woman Renee and I know, who has a low bank-balance at the "First Bank of Fox," but who has chosen, while working on staying healthy, to concentrate these last ten years or so on her Quiet Time, her marriage and her ministry. She now has a child, so that child will no doubt occupy much time and energy. She is not ugly, or unpleasant to look at. But she is a delight to talk to!

Ladies it would be profitable for you to undertake a fresh study of the Book of Ruth, even if you feel you know the Book inside and out. It is an endeavor I think the Lord delights in when we do it, to seriously study the life of some former saint. We learn as much by EXAMPLE as we do by DATA. When I think of what the spiritually mature Christian gentleman looks like, I think of the Scriptural blueprint. But I also think of some fine Christian men I have known or studied about! Not only did Boaz fall in love with Ruth's appearance, but he had heard of her character!

Ladies learn how to look up to your husband--It doesn't matter really how pretty you make yourself (and I do not think there is any overemphasis on this in our church); being in style and attractive is fine--but make your husband's ESTEEM a priority for you. Ask God to help you find ways to LIFT HIM UP, and honor Him, indeed as Peter just told us in the previous section to be a GENERALLY honoring person!

Single ladies, be careful about whom you choose to marry--don't allow yourself to make decisions with cloudy thinking. Marry a man whom you respect in advance: it isn't a guarantee that he will always remain respectable, but its good to have respect on your side GOING INTO THE BALLGAME!

If you are a non-Christian and maybe married to a Christian, I can understand your confusion or frustration in being married to a person with some noticable "religion." But if you will listen to the simple message of the Gospel, you will find that your mate's relationship with Christ is NOT IMAGINARY but in fact real, even if he or she doesn't always present it in the best light! Trust Christ and find forgiveness for all your sins, and a genuine hope for eternal life and peace here in this life!

EXPOSITION OF FIRST PETER  
"The Duties of Christian Husbands"  
I Peter 3:7

Introduction This morning we are going to deal with only one verse in Peter's first letter: verse 7. I have chosen to concentrate on this one verse because it is so very critical to our happiness in marriage. You will remember that I have been emphasizing the question of knowing God's will in these last few weeks. In desiring a word from God on things like, "should I buy a Chevy or a Ford, Lord?"; "Should I date this person or that person?"; "Should I take this job or that job?"...we can easily forget that the Bible is NOT SHORT on many things that it is CLEARLY pleasing to God for us to do! This morning let's think, men, about doing what God has made it crystal-clear IS His will. In the first six verses Peter challenged his female readers to be submissive wives, and to have a burden for developing an INNER BEAUTY of godliness. The male readers are now encouraged about how God wants them to behave towards their lives. NOTE: God wants this to be our strategy in EVERY stage of marriage, not just in one or another stage. Too often Christian men lose sight of the importance of doing God's will in this area after they have been married for a while--it is a sign of Christian maturity when a man continues to treat his wife respectfully and with great consideration after they have been married for years.

In our American culture we are experiencing on many levels the reversal of male and female roles, and of husband and wife roles. This will be devastating to a marriage and bring chaos to a family. If the wife becomes the leader, the physical and emotional provider then the church will have in it a weak marriage and ultimately, FAR too many divorces. Beyond this, when there is a reversal of roles the CHILDREN soon come to believe that the Christian home, the Christian church and the Christian life are basically for women and weak men--if they do not see that the men are NOT the leaders. The Bible is very clear that the husband is the leader in a marriage and in the home; God holds him responsible for the spiritual, physical, economic and emotional condition of the home. He is to give loving, intelligent leadership to his wife and children...If he fails to make this a priority in his life, the home has "two strikes against it" and it is no wonder that his church is weakened too. In the verse we are looking at, there are four sections:

- 7a The husband is to live with his wife in an understanding way
- 7b The husband is to live with his wife in an accomodating way
- 7c The husband is to live with his wife in a spiritually honoring way.
- 7d The husband is to live with his wife in a spiritually careful way.

Verse 7a First, Peter says that a Christian husband is to live with his wife in an understanding way. Literally this phrase (as it is rendered in the KJV) reads, "according to knowledge." Men, we should all enroll in "College of Lady Knowledge." It takes effort and concentration to come to understand what women are like and how to best live



with one. Believe me it is much different than living with other men! You often find yourself saying, with Professor Higgins, "Why can't a woman, be like a man?" God's will is for you to CULTIVATE your own understanding of your wife. Unfortunately some men live their whole lives and come to very little understanding of what makes a woman a woman, and then if we have LEARNED some of it, we tend to forget it! For instance, I am convinced that it is very important for a woman to feel like she is worth something to her man. Some women may deny this, but I think it really true in marriage. The more you come to understand things like this, men, and if you go FURTHER and say to your wife, "Honey, would you HELP me to grow as a Christian husband?", the happier a marriage you will have--and THAT IS GOD'S WILL FOR YOU!

I should not gloss over the words, "live with your wives." Men are you fonder of your wife's company than anyone else on earth? Do you look forward to coming home and being with her? This is God's will for you...he will give you direction about the Chevy and the Ford, no doubt. He will help you decide about this career or that career decision I am persuaded. But His revealed WILL for you is for you to faithfully live with your wives.

There some husbands who never consult their wives. In so doing, they are not living with them according to knowledge. A pastoral candidate at this church some years ago told the Body, "My wife knows my mind better than I do," and that was looked on by some in the Body as a negative thing. But it says to me that there was some intimacy between that man and his wife--she was maybe his closest confidant.

I also believe the Scripture teaches that when you marry, you and your wife should have your own home, and not be forced to live with other people. Much is sacrificed in terms of esteem for those couples who must share their lives with other adults by living with them. Also, if at all possible, a man should not spend great amounts of time AWAY from his wife. He is to live with her.

So what other kinds of knowledge is a husband to have in living with his wife? It is the knowledge of SCRIPTURE. The husband who understands the Word of God will not be a brute to his wife--he will grant her the respect she is due. He will be a man committed to doing whatever God shows him from the Word, about his marriage. He will make it a priority to have a biblical lifestyle WITH his wife in terms of their spiritual lives together, in their financial partnership, as a team of parents, in their sexual relationship, and in their social relationships with other people.

Men, do you know what pleases your wife? Do you practice the things which you KNOW bring her delight? It would be good to make a list of those things, stick it in your wallet, and each Monday PLAN to do at least one of them in the next week. The PAYOFF to you is not meager! A happy wife is worth more than anything money can buy!

The Husband is to Live With His Wife in an ACCOMODATING Way (vs. 7b)  
Notice will you please that I did not say in a patronizing way. There is a big difference in accomodating someone and patronizing them. If you knew the President was going to pay you a visit, you WOULD accomo-

date him, but I daresay you would not patronize him.

Now Peter says the woman is "a weaker vessel." By this he means physically (though there some lady wrestlers and weight-lifters who contend with it). By "vessel" he means "framework." Now both man and woman are the handiwork of God. Both are weak and delicate. But the woman is physically weaker. I like what one commentator said (over a hundred years ago,

In delicacy of apprehension, both intellectual and moral, and in capacity of passive endurance the woman's mind is, I perceive, far superior to man's. But in general, she is of the weaker fabric. (John Brown, Commentary)

It is foolishness men, to treat wives as if they were children. It is not uncommon for some "macho" men to do this. She is not to be patronized, but her different and weaker framework is to be accomodated. This is how GOD has designed it. This is God's will for you men.

The Husband is to Live With His Wife in a Spiritually HONORING Way (vs. 7c) Men, you must also make it your duty to esteem your wife as a child of God, if she is a Christian. You must understand that you are living with a very important person! If she is a Christian she has come under the adoptive love of the sovereign God! She has become one of Jesus' elect. She is not a second-class Christian. She has a vote equal to you, in the family and I believe in the church too. If she has trusted Jesus Christ as her personal Savior, she is an heiress of God's favor and an heiress of new life.

Your stategy needs to be to grow in Christ together, not separately. You are not just two Christians living together. You are two of God's children that the Holy Spirit is trying to weave together. Do you pray together? Do you read God's Word together? Do you entertain any non-Christians together in your home, with a view to winning them to Christ? Do you have friendships with other Christians, AS A COUPLE?

Honoring your wife, because you understand the theology of the Christian home is something I love to see in the Body! Quite frankly, it depresses me when I see two believers who just exist together. The husband is primarily to blame for this. He is to be the leader in the home.

The Husband is to Live With His Wife in a Spiritually Careful Way (vs. 7d) But there is more at stake than just happiness. If you take care in your marriage men to honor God in how you choose to live with your wife, your OWN spiritual experience will be much less hindered. But if you refuse to obey the Lord in these things you can EXPECT your prayers to go pretty much un-answered. That is how strongly God feels about this! That is how VITAL it is that you please God in your marriage!

Folks, whatever issues you are facing in your marriage today, are first issues between you individually and the Lord. Your marriage does not exist on one plane, and your walk with Christ in another. They are intimately bound up together. Men, you may adopt the attitude, "Well, I'll just pay the price--I'll accept having an immature relationship

with God--I'd rather hold onto my CURRENT attitudes about marriage rather than LEARN from the Spirit how to change." Then, you will never be a happy, joyful Christian. Your children will not likely become so either, if they even ever come to Christ.

My friends, I realize this area of marriage improvement strikes deep into where we live. I do not have it completely sown up either. But is our strategy to keep working at our marriages?--to be cultivating and developing them? The Lord Jesus will give us every resource we need to see our marriages grow! He has promised it! He ALWAYS honors the person who steps out and says, "Yes, Lord I WANT to do your will--help me to do it!" And even men if you are married to an unbeliever, you can do much to show your unsaved wife the reality of Christ by how you treat her and by how you live with her. Especially watch your tone of voice, your attitudes and your use of time. Even if you are married to a non-Christian woman, you are still the leader of the home--YOU set the pace, and God holds you responsible. Trust Him to work, as He has promised!

EXPOSITION OF FIRST PETER  
"Summing Up the Christian Attitude"  
I Peter 3: 8-12

Introduction As we face many decisions, and seek to MAKE decisions which honor Jesus Christ, we are often prone to get all tangled up in details and forget some basic things that are very important to the Lord! Modern life can be pretty complicated, and even the time we spend together in our churches can become hectic and time-taxing. This morning we need to spend some time dwelling on what the overall Christian attitude should be! This is one big thing which should set us off from non-Christians and if it does not, it doesn't matter how much fired-up church activity we have, the Lord will still be grieved! Dear ones, the Christian life is NOT so much DOING Christian things: going to meetings, practicing supernatural phenomena, learning new and interesting facts...the Christian life is PRIMARILY the experience of being gradually transformed into the likeness of Jesus. It is being changed...It is being a little different than you were a year ago, and a little more different this time next year...And if I left and came back to visit in FIVE YEARS, you and I would be NOTICABLY different!

As we seek Jesus on a daily, weekly, monthly and yearly basis, our hearts become slowly transformed into something which has Jesus' vision, which has His heart, which thinks His thoughts...When we are growing in Christ, and we go to a Christian meeting say, there is an INCREASE in our inner desire to see my brother edified; to see Him encouraged...not just to see what I can say or do to meet my OWN needs.

By the way, it is not your responsibility to meet your own needs. Did you know that? It is always someone ELSE'S responsibility to meet your needs in God's economy! He has not designed each of us to be self-sufficient, or a "closed system" as an engineer might say. He has designed each of us to be dependent on someone else in Christ's Body to meet our needs--now that is NOT MY idea; it was God's!

So this morning, let's dwell on an overall attitude which it is very important to the Lord that you and I are cultivating: I'm talking about having a strategy and commitment to PRACTICAL LOVE. When you sum up the Christian life, whether you are talking about the marriage context, the employment scene, the community situation or the local church atmosphere, God's absolute, non-compromised, perfect WILL for you and me is that we become PRACTICED and HABITUAL in exercising His love for one another.--for one another, and towards the world too.

Dartmouth Bible Church  
N. Dartmouth, MA

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.  
Lesson 15, Oct. 26, '86

EXPOSITION OF FIRST PETER  
Continuing On, With Christ's Conscience  
I Peter 3: 13-22

Introduction: Evangelical Christians should be known as the most positive-minded, active "do-gooders" in the world! We should have the reputation in the world--and in our community--as people who GO OUT OF THEIR WAY to do good!

Sometimes, I fear, evangelical (and by "evangelical" I mean Bible-based and Bible-believing) Christians are known for alot of other things...fund-raising, narrow views of entertainment, political shallowness, not being realistic, and in general DOWN on alot of things--that is, I think that American evangelicals today are too often known in the world FOR ALL THE THINGS WE ARE AGAINST! Now, no doubt there is much going on the world that we SHOULD BE against. But are we KNOWN as a group of people who love nothing better than to say, "This or that is wrong!?"

In the Apostle Peter's mind, Christians are to be the people who are KNOWN MOST for the good that they do in the world. We ought to be known not just for opposing elective abortion, but also for providing resources for women and girls who DO find themselves in a problem pregnancy. Another example is the Hospice program, which is designed to render love and support, free of charge, no strings attached, to cancer patients and their families. I have been involved with Hospice myself this past year, primarily for a theological reason: because Jesus wants ME to be a person who does good in the world, and thereby to testify of His grace, and to WIN opportunities to share the Gospel, the good news.

The Gospel is supposed to be just that, you know...GOOD NEWS! It grieves me that too often though, the non-Christian sees the Christian coming down the street, or down the hall, and thinks, "Oh oh, here comes bad news!"

Sometimes Christians are persecuted for what they believe and for what they teach. To this problem Peter has had, and will continue to have many comforting words. When you tactfully and lovingly tells someone the Gospel...when you and I advertise our functions and our convictions on various issues...BECAUSE OF WHAT we are saying, we may incur the hostility and persecution of some non-Christians or some non-Christian organizations, possibly even the government. To this the Lord says, "In the world you shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

BUT SOMETIMES Christians are persecuted for WHO THEY ARE--that is, because they have acted obnoxiously, or "for doing what is wrong." A person who comes to Christ, is not a Christian long

before he soon discovers that he still makes mistakes! Occasionally those mistakes are doosies! The Christian, though he or she has trusted Christ and all their sins are wiped away, and although their future in heaven is secure,...can still live with real inconsistencies in his life! The New Testament was largely written (at least in many of the epistles), to CORRECT those inconsistencies in the lives of first century Christians, and to instruct them about those inconsistencies...

Even though you and I go through different stages in our Christian growth, our testimony is ALWAYS an issue, and we should not forget this! I am not suggesting that we become paranoid or guilt-ridden either. But we need to remember that for many of our non-Christians, friends and family members, you are the only Bible they may ever get a look at for a long time! This is very much in the mind and on the heart of the Apostle Peter as we look at this morning's section of his first letter.

I PETER 3: 13,14 DON'T BE AFRAID Peter encourages his readers with the confidence that they can REALLY come to no harm if they are the kind of people who get excited about being the salt of the earth...if they can get cranked up about being a benevolent community of people, within a basically selfish society at large, then they KNOW they are in God's will, and then the chances of coming to harm BECAUSE they are Christians are minimized.

If we as Dartmouth Bible Church are known in our little community here for protesting abortion, pornography, liquor stores, X and R rated movie houses, cable TV, and other unfortunate fixtures in S.E. Massachusetts, and THAT IS ALL WE ARE KNOWN FOR, let's not be surprised if people are not attracted to our ministry!

BUT, if we are known for undertaking the general good of our community through involvement in various projects OF OUR OWN DESIGN, as well as taking a stand on moral issues--and these are coupled with an awareness in the community that we are unique because we love our Bibles, and what we believe, we believe because the Bible teaches it--and the BIGGEST THING TAUGHT IN THE BIBLE is salvation, by grace, through faith alone, IS THERE ANY LIMIT TO THE IMPACT ON DARTMOUTH WE CAN HAVE?

There are many things we can do to be a people who are zealous for doing good. I have ideas, and I'm sure you do to. Let's be thinking about things we can do that benefit other people (like sponsoring a refugee, no strings attached; or like holding a fund-raiser dinner, NOT FOR OUR MINISTRY, but to benefit some cause which we deem worthy)--all the while hoping and praying for the opportunity to share about Jesus Christ, and what He has done for us!

There is another application for us here, I think. Verse 14 says that if we are doing what we are supposed to be doing, there is no need to fear the intimidation (literally "the fear") of the critics. The application is that Peter says to get beyond our insecurities. An insecurity is a fear. It is fear of rejection, fear of failure, fear of safety. And as Christians, being zealous for doing good things for folks, without prejudice and without partiality, THEN what is there to be afraid of? AND if you do come under fire, and suffer for righteousness, then your state will be one of peace and happiness, because you know you are in God's will!

I PETER 3:15a DO BE ALERT In this verse Peter brings a decision to our attention: whether or not we are going to set apart Christ on the throne of our lives in the matter of our testimony--the quality of your witness. You may say, "No, Lord Jesus. I will not stay on the alert and worry about always being ready to explain why I love you--it takes too much of my time and energy to be on the alert to those opportunities all the time--I'll do it during church-wide evangelistic campaigns, like during the booth ministry at the Whaling City Festival, or when we bring in The TEAM..."

Or you may say to Him, "Yes, Jesus, you are my LORD, my King, my sovereign. And you have done so much for me...and WHAT you have done for me is SO PRECIOUS to me, that I'm really going to LOOK FOR opportunities to explain the hope you have given me!"

Notice that Peter tells his readers that what the world will demand an accounting of is the HOPE within them.

The world doesn't much care about the particulars of how we run a worship service. They aren't generally too interested in all the things we abstain from and so forth. They are even somewhat bored usually, I think, when we try to intellectually point out the theological differences between what WE believe and what THEY believe (although Paul did it often enough anyway...) WHAT raises their eyebrows, what makes them listen up is when we talk about LOOKING FORWARD to the future, about not dreading death, and about expecting Jesus Christ to actually physically RETURN TO EARTH, and that while we don't know WHEN (and we should not speculate when), we know that His return is probably imminent! THAT'S OUR HOPE!

DO BE CAREFUL I PETER 3: 15b And WHEN we have these opportunities to explain our hope, our attitude in doing so is of premier importance. Your attitude in talking about something really makes or breaks whether your listener hears you or not. The Bible is not silent about METHODS OF COMMUNICATION! We are to be clothed in gentleness and with humility (the outworking of the word "reverence.") It is not because WE ARE SUCH HOT STUFF, that that non-Christian should listen to our explanation of our Christianity...it isn't because we're the smartest people around

(and in fact I think often we are NOT [I Corinthians 1:26ff]). We are to be gentle. Our radio and television evangelists are to be gentle. If we have a Christian political candidate, he or she is to be gentle...We are to be giving these regular explanations of WHY we have hope (in really an otherwise hopeless world), out of the fact that we have been humbled--brought low before the claims of Christ ourselves, and we live in light of those claims each day!

We are to be in some ways like little children--totally non-threatening, and yet totally fascinating!

Dear ones, you and I need to take care HOW we share the Gospel...and how we explain the things we are involved with as a church. ARROGANCE or BOASTFULNESS are never honored by God, and you and I must make it a point (which, is a very loose paraphrase of "sanctify in this verse) to be careful in the attitudes we bring across when we witness.

I am very glad and proud of you in the fact that many of you DO share the Gospel and you try to give those explanations for the faith. In many churches, too many could care less about sharing the faith.

But I am convinced that we will have a GROWING NUMBER of good opportunities to share about Christ, even if we are harassed or even persecuted, as we are zealous for being the salt of the earth!

I PETER 3: 16,17 DO LIVE BY A GOOD CONSCIENCE As Peter wrote verse 16, I can't help but wonder if he was thinking back to some thirty years previous when he had denied knowing Christ, and in words neither gentle nor reverent! His conscience reminded him of his earlier failure, and he knew the importance of maintaining a good conscience in matters of testimony and witnessing for Christ. "Conscience" is defined simply as the ethical sense organ in man, the sense of right and wrong. It urges us to do right and tries to restrain us from doing wrong. Conscience is innate--it is NOT the product of environment, training, habit or education, although it is affected by all these. Ninety-nine years ago a Scottish commentator on I Peter (Robert Johnstone) wrote this about our conscience:

A good conscience is one which, enlightened by the teaching of God's Spirit, is truthful in what it says to us; vigorous in its pressure on the will. In every Christian it has defects, no doubt...But God recognizes as a "good conscience" one which aims with full honesty to do His will.

How much do you listen to your conscience? Do you ponder if the Lord is telling you something through it?

The way a person's conscience works is something like



having a sharp box in your heart. When you are confronted by a questionable situation, that box begins to turn, and its corners cut into our hearts, warning us with an inward sensation against, or for doing whatever confronts us. If the conscience is ignored time after time, then soon the corners of the box are worn down, and the box virtually becomes a sphere. When the sphere turns within, there is no inner sensation of warning or prodding, and the person is left without a conscience.

Sometimes in God's will (verse 17) He allows us to suffer for doing the right thing. Christians are sometimes tempted to feel, "Well, Lord, I did it your way for a while, and all it got me was trouble...I'm going to do it MY WAY now." Peter pronounces it better, happier, to endure the suffering for doing what is right, than to take matters in your own hands and then suffer miserably maybe for the mistake.

Dear ones, choose to honor God in your testimony. Choose to honor His Word in your relationships. Choose to make decisions which please Him, no matter the consequences--because if His smile is upon you, you cannot be in a better state!

If you are here today and have never yet really given your heart to Christ--found Him as your OWN personal savior, you can settle it today. Just ask Jesus to forgive you of your sins, and to come into your life, and He will! And you will never be disappointed!

Dartmouth Bible Church  
N. Dartmouth, MA

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.  
Lesson 16, Nov. 9, 1986

EXPOSITION OF FIRST PETER  
What Christianity Is REALLY All About  
I Peter 3: 18-22

Introduction: We are seeing today a wholesale sell-out of the distinguishing features of what historic Christianity is all about. From outside the boundaries of orthodox Christianity, we see pseudo-Christian cults masquerading as "latter-day" modifications of the real thing. A recent news feature by Tom Brokaw on the phenomenal spread of Mormonism in this country suggested that the only ones who are opposing Mormonism are the fundamentalists, painted as narrow-minded, outdated bigots. Mormonism and how it is currently being treated in the media, are really only one example of how the world has come to regard doctrinal peculiarities as secondary ONLY, if not irrelevant. And from within some quarters of historic Christianity's own family, the important doctrines, one-by-one, are being sold out and treated as quaint perhaps, but nonetheless obsolete antiques. Dear ones, the faith is being sold out, and only a return in the hearts of MOST Christians to seeing the ABSOLUTE NECESSITY of maintaining a CORRECT faith will keep the church from going to sleep in this country.

It has become popular in media circles to ridicule the precepts of historic Christianity. Singer Annie Lennox (the Eurythmics) pokes at harmartiology when she sings "I was born an original sinner/I was borne FROM original sin."

In theological circles it is considered intellectually acceptable, even progressive for a religious thinker to declare himself "Barthian," that is, a follower of the theologian Karl Barth. But what that often means is that the person has bought into Barth's belief that ultimately ALL PEOPLE would be saved and that NO ONE would really be PERMANENTLY SEPARATED FROM GOD, or judged by Him (Barth's "supralasarian universalism", Richard Gaffin, Eternity magazine, 11/86, p. 74).

Suggesting to someone that they are in fact alienated from God and disqualified from His favor, and that they in fact were BORN in this condition, is quite radical today is it not? I mean, after all there are alot of sincere, philanthropic people out there who are not Christians, are there not?

And yet dear ones, this we must do because this is what the Bible teaches...and we must resist the seduction in the world and maybe even in the Church, to sell out the doctrines of grace! We must keep before us the essence of what Christianity is really all about--THAT PEOPLE NEED TO BE BROUGHT TO GOD--and that is the point of this morning's exposition from First Peter!

You will remember that Peter is writing to Christians who have suffered FOR THEIR FAITH. We are candidates for the same, if our faith has the kind of application and visibility that God intends it to have.

"[Christianity's] doctrines are such, [that] if really believed, necessarily lead to the discharge of its duties; and its duties are such as canNOT be discharged without a knowledge and belief in its doctrines...The doctrines are embodied in the duties, and the duties are animated by the doctrines" (John Brown, Comm.II, p.123).

But the world and the devil will not long nor often tolerate "salty Christians." Peter has written to a community of evangelical Christians who didn't live in a Christianized society, but were looked at by almost all of their neighbors as weirdos! They were often misunderstood and probably allowed none of the slack that secular society allows less pronounced movements...

And in verse 17 we read that in God's sovereign providence of our lives, He will allow suffering for the sake of His name. When this happens we should cling to the fact that God has not deserted us, but has engineered for us an opportunity to testify THROUGH the suffering, by His grace.

CHRISTIANITY IN A NUTSHELL (Verse 18) Sometimes we need to sit back and re-evaluate what our religion is all about. It is easy to become distracted by church-structure, church activities, family stresses or worldly temptations away from the very hope of our faith which lies at the core of each day in our Christian lives. Peter calls us back to remember the core of our faith in this verse! By doing what Jesus did for us, He not only accomplished our salvation (for our salvation is based on His FINISHED work), but He also provided us with the perfect example!

Seeing people fold under pressure, or when they are suffering is commonplace. Often people with a high creed, so to speak, show that their creed hasn't really taken firm roots, when a seriously stressful situation comes into their lives. BUT when a person perseveres under stress, and their faith is proved out, then I think they become something of a hero! I am thinking of a woman I know in Texas whose husband left her and her four boys (one who was a newborn). The temptation must have been to become embittered AT her Christianity and at other Christians, or even at God. But she did not. In addition to the emotional hurt and anger, the confusion and the tremendous feelings of insecurity, she was now in tremendous financial trouble. But through the sufferings, the Lord stood with her, and God's people did too! And when I last saw her a year ago,

she was aglow almost in God's grace. To me, she is a hero of the faith. She had flung herself on God's lovingkindness, and remained true to the bedrock of this verse 18.

At the bottom line, Christianity is this: Jesus Christ died for sins--one time and one time only because the one time was sufficient. He did not deserve the judgement; you and I deserve what He went through. But He went through with it anyway, to satisfy the JUSTICE OF GOD. It is the fact that God IS a just God, that payment for sin is required. Jesus was perfect and He came under the full fury of God's condemnation for the unjust. Now this is what Christianity is from first to last, from start to finish. Anyone who tries to make it something OTHER than just that is clouding the faith, or at worst perverting it!

Now I think Christians have the responsibility to live out their faith in practical ways. We have certain social responsibilities which I believe God expects us to discharge. But let us never forget what it is that makes us evangelicals--it is this verse!

Now when we say that Jesus was "just" we not only mean that He was totally free of any and every sin or moral ill, but ALSO that He practiced EVERY moral virtue perfectly. He was a real person--I do not believe that He went around with a surreal glow about Him (although He DID glow awesomely on that one intentional occasion on the mountain with Elijah and Moses). But He was the kind of man you could never get tired of spending time with--He wouldn't weary you. He wouldn't bore you. Neither was He so titillating that you would need a rest from being around Him. He held every distinctly HUMAN feature in perfect balance. And I believe that <sup>His</sup> disciples must have found His presence utterly refreshing! This was "the just One" who died for us and for all who will ever trust Him.

We, on the other hand are the unjust. We are not ABSOLUTELY DEPRAVED as Satan is, but we are totally depraved, that is, every area of our being is touched and tainted with sin.

The Gospel is such a wonderfully simple thing. A person, ANY person must see that they themselves are indeed one of the lost, one of the unjust...then they must flee to Christ, and receive Him personally. Then and only then will they be "brought to God."

And the machinery by which we are adopted into God's family, the church, is Jesus' resurrection. If we ever sell out our belief in the literal bodily resurrection of Jesus, then we forfeit the means by which we can hope in going to heaven, in being saved.

Now I am persuaded that the resurrection is the most amazing historical event IN ALL OF HISTORY for man to ponder. The Bible gives us plenty of information and evidence. In fact some of the things the Bible describes about Jesus' resurrection are very hard for us to understand--for instance, verses 19 and 20:

#### THE TESTIMONY TO THE CITIZENS OF NOAH'S DAY (verses 19 & 20)

Verse 19 is one of the most difficult and yet intriguing passages in the Bible about Jesus' resurrection. But let's not forget the theme of this chapter in First Peter: **KEEPING A CLEAR CONSCIENCE IN UNJUST PERSECUTION.** Noah went about doing what he was supposed to do even though He was ridiculed for it. "Building an ark? What for? Rain? What's that? Do you SEE ANY rain, Noah? You must be 'tech'd'!" But the message that Noah had received from God was not a hallucination, it was real. God was going to start over with the human race and He was going to do it with a Christian family.

Now at some point during the resurrection Jesus pays a visit to these citizens of Noah's day--to their spirits, that is. I do not know why, except to testify ("proclamation") that God is God and that He is just. I know that this verse raises more questions than it answers perhaps, but Peter simply intends it as an ILLUSTRATION of the character of Christ--we are to have a clear conscience. Jesus leaves no loose ends. He says what must be said to any and all who need to have it said to them!

THE ARK WAS A TYPE OF CHRIST (Verses 21 & 22) When Noah and Mrs. Noah and all the little Noahs were on board that ark and saw or at least must have heard the terror beyond the closed door, they needed no further proof that God does what He says He's going to do! Their salvation from judgement was PROFOUND AND SOBERING. Peter tells us that in the same way, those who trust Christ (in this case his readers) are DRAMATICALLY RESCUED.

Notice he says that baptism is what does the saving. And then he is quick to explain that it is not the ritual (the washing with water), but the cleansing of the heart by trusting in Christ by faith alone. This is what happens when a person is baptized in the Spirit. So, if we say that a person can be saved but not YET baptized in the Spirit, we are really saying that they are not yet saved! Unless a person has been cleansed INTERNALLY by the regenerating work of the Spirit--they are not yet saved. Period. And, only then can they know a genuinely clear conscience--no lingering guilt, no lasting fear. The Spirit testifies within us that we are the sons of God. And again, it is by the resurrection that Jesus PERFORMED (not just had happen to Him) that salvation and Spirit-baptism are possible!

Finally, will you notice WHERE Christ is today (verse 22). He is not here although His Spirit is. He is at the position of authority and glory. Your best friend is the King, if you have trusted Christ and fled to Him! You and I may suffer for the faith, but remember Jesus did too and more so than we shall! Dear ones, keep Him as the answer to all your struggles. Flee to Him continually in prayer. Seek His consolation, you need no saints to intercede for you with the Christ of the Bible. He lives and makes intercession for us Himself!

Dartmouth Bible Church  
N. Dartmouth, MA

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.  
Lesson 17, Nov. 16, '86

EXPOSITION OF FIRST PETER  
Differences Between Christians and Non-Christians  
I Peter 4: 1-6

Introduction: Not too long ago I sold an automobile. I had grown somewhat attached to it and it was a car that I liked to drive. But it had started to nickel and dime me to death with little things, one after another, which were bleeding me dry with small repair bills. So we put the car in the paper and on the last day of the ad we found a buyer. The gentleman and his wife came over, looked at the car and immediately wrote out a check for \$350. (I had had an offer for \$300 a week before, but the buyer changed his mind). When they came over then to pick up the car, I handed over the keys and the paperwork and watched him drive down the street. The car had been a part of me but now I was done with it and looking forward to better things! That's the approach we are to take with the sin that's still in our lives. It should not surprise you to hear me suggest that there is still sin in your lives...And we need to know how God expects us to deal with it. Its like the car that drives off down the street--you're done with it. There's something better to live for! And there are some real, tangible differences between people who are truly saved and those who are not...

Let's look at Romans 6: 1-7 for a minute. The subject of this chapter is progressive sanctification. Paul is teaching his brothers and sisters in Rome about HOW HOLINESS WORKS. He wants it clear in their minds that AFTER they have come to Christ (which he talks about in the chapters up to chapter six), then the Lord is working WITH us to make us more and more like Christ. At the moment a person trusts Christ as his personal savior, he is IMMEDIATELY JUSTIFIED before God. (His position is perfect and Jesus' perfect righteousness is IMPUTED to the believer's account. But then the process of progressive sanctification begins and it takes the rest of that believer's life.

I know it is a cliché anymore, but I still like the button you sometimes see Christians wearing "PBPWMBINFWMY," which stands for "Please Be Patient With Me, God Is Not Finished With Me Yet."

Paul is saying in verse 7, what Peter says in the first few verses of the fourth chapter of his first letter...

I. A CHRISTIAN IS DIFFERENT FROM A NON-CHRISTIAN BECAUSE HE IS PART OF GOD'S SOVEREIGN PURPOSE IN THE WORLD (I Peter 4: 1,2,6)

Do we understand the terms of membership in the Body of Christ? I do not mean that it takes a certain kind of performance to BECOME a Christian...But when a person trusts Christ and is placed by the Holy Spirit INTO the Body of Christ by Spirit-baptism, do we understand that his conversion IS A DEATH TO SIN?

From one standpoint the Christian life is the easiest thing in the world to live out, because we are not under the Law--we live under grace, under God's unmerited favor, just as we are SAVED by grace. But from another standpoint it is NOT easy because of what we are up against: the world, the flesh and the devil, all three of which are formidable opponents. But Christ is our example of how to endure suffering--He was patient and submissive to God when He underwent unjust treatment. You may be unjustly treated for your faith by an employer, a co-worker, a family member or even by some arm of the government. Look to Christ. If you are a Christian this morning, then you are part of GOD'S PURPOSE IN THE WORLD. And you need to plug into what God is doing in the world, that is, making for Himself a holy people, a holy nation.

You and I are to ARM OURSELVES with the same attitude that guided Christ! The words, "arm yourselves" is a military expression. It is the idea of the Roman soldier taking up his shield (a defensive weapon) and either a sword or a spear or pike (offensive weapons). The implication is that we are to be alert and aggressive in our purpose in this life. Aggressive about what?

Aggressive about not living your life--that is, NOT MAKING DAILY DECISIONS to live in the lusts of men. It takes a DETERMINED, RESOLVED MINDSET to make progress against sin. Some lusts are very strong and will definitely win out every time unless we take up arms against them. In short, this is war! Are you a warrior? I hope that you are. But may I say to you that it is possible to be a citizen of one country and in the prison camp of another nation! You can be on the front lines, fighting courageously against sin in your life, wrestling against whatever sins you are prone to--sometimes wounded, sometimes breaking through, but all the while slowly pushing the defenses of sin further and further back--because it is GOD'S PURPOSE that you win--or you can live in sleepy defeat, constantly losing battles, continuously discouraged.

Peter says the opposite of living like a non-Christian is to live "for the will of God." We spend alot of time praying for the Lord TO REVEAL HIS WILL about whether we should do this or that; about whether we should buy this car or that one, about whether we should work on this job or on that job. We wait for God to give us a mystical-warmth-in-the-head; a special revelation about decision-making. Now I'm all in favor of that; I like mystical feelings too. But let us never forget dear ones (as I fear we too often do) that in the Scripture the will of God is revealed on so many matters! You do not have to pray about whether to

leave your husband or not, ladies. Men you do not have to pray about whether to invest your money a certain way, men and women, if the best interests of your family are hindered! Don't pray about whether to pursue an immoral relationship or not. God has already spoken to us about these and many, many other issues...It remains for us to PURPOSE TO DO HIS WILL! That is the test of whether you and I are in fellowship with God! I tire of talk from a Christian, "I'm tired of doing God's will. I need a break from doing God's will." My friends, there is nothing noble about that. It is not possible to "burn out" in doing God's will and walking in the Spirit. The Spirit does not burn us out. Other Christians may burn you out, but don't make God pasy for it!

If you are a Christian this morning, you are different from every non-Christian you know. I don't care how much you love them. It doesn't matter how sincere they are, or even how good a life they lead: you are different from them. If you are a Christian this morning, you are different from all non-Christians because you are part of God's sovereign purpose to put the Gospel into effect.

The world is doing alot of things: education, rearming and disarming; rearming and disarming; rearming and disarming; industrializing and then cleaning up the environment; space exploration and development of undersea resources; crime prevention and rehabilitation; wonderdrugs and drug abuse; immigration and emmigration; cultural exchanges and technological advances; energy conservation and nuclear debates...Is God interested in any of these things which so captivate the lives of so many people? I do not think that He does not care...But what is HIS PROGRAM? What is the program of the most intelligent Being in the universe?

Verse 6 is what God is excited about! Rescuing people from sure judgement! God is just and make no mistake about it, He will not allow sin to go unpunished. Do you remember Lyndon Johnson's pet project, The Great Society? You and I and all Christians are part of God's "Great Society!" That makes us different. That gives us a different purpose in life. Even if you haven't figured out your purpose in life in the employment arena, take courage, you are part of a greater purpose!

CHRISTIANS ARE DIFFERENT FROM NON-CHRISTIANS BECAUSE THEY ARE SPIRITUALLY PROGRESSIVE (I Peter 4:3)

Conversion to Christ is a death to sin. That means that you start seeing the powerful effect of having the Holy Spirit in you as you grow in Christ. Sometimes YOUR growth is more evident around you than it is to you! I bet if we took a survey this morning and you wrote down something on a piece of paper about the person on your right: something in the Christian life that YOU have seen that person make indisputable progress; they may



not be perfect in that area, but there is no doubt in YOUR mind that they have made progress...there would be alot of encouragement!

Peter says Christians are different because they are SPIRITUALLY PROGRESSIVE, they are changing spiritually. A non-Christian can only get worse. He can only go down. I am not a cynic, but I am persuaded that without Jesus Christ in a person's life, TRULY, GENUINELY, there is no real hope for that person's future. All human accomplishments and achievements are ultimately meaningless.

Peter tells us that we've done enough pursuing of sin. Some of you have debauched backgrounds. Some of you never did all the mean, nasty things that others did. But Peter says enough time has gone by for sinning: NOW its time to live for Christ. Do you want to live for Christ? Do you want to feel the power of the Holy Spirit in your life...I do not mean like a side-show ("Look at the tricks I can do!") Real Holy Spirit-power is seeing your life change to become more like Christ! THAT'S WHAT THE HOLY SPIRIT is doing today--and being like Christ in this context is to suffer in the flesh and yet not sin. Sure trials will be yours, some severe. And the writer to the Hebrews says (12:3,4):

For consider Him who endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you don't grow weary and lose heart. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin...

And Paul gives us his testimony when he says in Galatians 2:20:

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I NOW LIVE in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.

In short dear ones, a Christian who is characterized by sensuality and selfish, uncontrolled desires, getting drunk (I don't care how cool it looks in the Miller commercials!), and partying, and who gives his life over to allowing ANYTHING on the throne of his or her heart other than Christ--is an absolute contradiction to the direction the Lord is moving Him in the Spirit!

**A CHRISTIAN IS DIFFERENT FROM A NON-CHRISTIAN BECAUSE HE LIVES WITH A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE (I Peter 4:4,5)**

A Christian has a different persepctive on entertainment! Can you see that in this verse? I was saved when I was about half-way through college. I went from a partyer to a church-goer. I can still remember most of the names of my non-Christian party going friends and I pray for them still. But when I trusted Christ the desire to party and indulge the flesh with all those other people failed me. I wanted then and I want now to "get a better rush" if I can frame it that crudely...

I never have liked being bored. I didn't like it before I came to Christ, and I don't like it now. It surprised Pete and Joe Paul and Wendy and Sue when I wanted to spend several hours a week in meetings with other Christians (instead of partying) and didn't like to drink and smoke dope any more...

Non-Christians are given to indulging the flesh. The bottom-line of the abortion issue is not what to do with a problem pregnancy, it is that there ARE problem-pregnancies! There didn't used to be so many!! Why are there now??? Has God changed? No. Society has changed. For the worse.

Brethren, you and I are different. And in this area of the country at least, we are a minority. I'm afraid we must prepare ourselves mentally, psychologically and spiritually to suffer, so that when suffering comes we may be able to keep a godly viewpoint. We may be called fanatics and we may be thought foolish. So be it. So was Jesus.

But a person can never be so lost that you cannot be saved! You cannot out-sin God's love. He has paid it all on the cross, in His Son. He saves people who KNOW they are sinful and who KNOW they need forgiveness. He saves anybody the moment they turn to Jesus Christ for forgiveness. The result is a changed life! It is exciting! It is wonderful!

Dartmouth Bible Church  
N. Dartmouth, MA

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.  
Lesson 18, 1986

11/23

EXPOSITION OF FIRST PETER  
*Basic Christian Activities*  
I Peter 4: 7-11

Introduction: There is a common belief among men that sooner or later the world as we know it will come to an end. Evolutionary thinkers gravitate towards an endless cosmology (the branch of philosophy concerned with the origin and structure of the universe)—perhaps there was some kind of definable beginning (the "Big Bang") but they would suggest that there is no way of predicting any kind of universal END to the physical universe.

Biblical thinkers (who interpret the Bible at face value) however, know that there is definitely an end coming to the world. It will not be brought about by the hand of man. The world belongs to God and its end will be brought about by Him.

Peter is trying to encourage Christians who have suffered for their faith, and who maybe have wondered, "Is there ever going to be any justice?" In a society where Christianity was looked at as an oddity, the Christians had to stick together! They had to remind each other, "YES! The day will come when the Lord Jesus will tie everything up."

He is saying that the time has come to be alert and live for Christ--this is true for all Christians of every era. Jesus is going to come back a second time! We need to live our lives NOW in light of that.

Many of the doctrines that we hold precious are not UNfamiliar to non-Christians. Many non-Christians that I know understand something of the doctrine of Christ. They know we hold the Bible to have a unique authority, and some even understand justification by faith alone. BUT I think that the doctrine of the second coming of Jesus Christ is one which bewilders many non-Christians! In fact, I don't ever remember even HEARING about such an idea before the last weeks before I was saved. It is a most marvelous doctrine, and one often thought incredible by non-Christians!

Peter briefly mentions Jesus' inevitable return to the earth in II Peter 3:10-12. Let's look at that passage...

In the Bible almost without exception, when the coming of the Lord is mentioned, it is followed by exhortations to godliness and holy living on the part of Christians...it is not a doctrine given to us just to fascinate our minds. It is given to us to comfort us, to give us a tangible hope for the future, and to really challenge us about the decisions we are making in our lives now.

Peter told his readers that the end was at hand. I think he had in mind the consummation of the ages (at Jesus' second coming), AND also perhaps that the end of Judiasm in Palestine was imminent. Israel was on the verge of a national holocaust at the hands of the Romans. When Israel was no more, Peter knew that Christianity would lose its pseudo-accepted status under the Romans as a semi-Jewish sect. That would make Christianity illegal. And it would make it all the more necessary for Christians to fall back on BASIC CHRISTIAN ACTIVITIES. They did not have many of the luxuries for planning activities that we have. I do not think the early Christians were able to spend much time enjoying leisure time together the way we can (but neither do I think that they were stone-faced Stoics either!)

But when things are tough, Peter says, get back to the basics. Christians, get back to doing the kinds of things that make Christianity what it is!

BASIC CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY #1 Prayer. Christians need to be a people who devote themselves to prayer. Without prayer there is discouragement, loss of perspective, weakness and selfishness. WITH prayer, there is strength, hope, alertness and spiritual vitality, EVEN THOUGH EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES MAY BE VERY HARD.

When we are calm and collected in spirit ("sober"), we are able to keep a cool head with our emotions under control. And with this kind of stability, we can pray more effectively. Dear ones, prayer in our lives is ESSENTIAL to spiritual growth and for any revival to come to the church. It is the means God uses to bring HIS purposes about and to work His plans through us.

"Our tendency is to think humanly, running about in endless church activity, dissipating our energy on various activities..." Jack L. Arnold

The measure of a Christian's maturity, I believe, is in the quality time he spends in private prayer and in praying with other Christians. It is important for us to KEEP emphasizing this as a church. You and I need to KEEP working to increase the amount of time we spend in private prayer. Perhaps if each of us adopted another Christian in the Body as a prayer partner, and we developed this companionship, we would see more revival in our hearts too!

The glitz and novelty of the newly-found Christianity wears off quickly. Sometimes when a person first finds Christ, they are wowed by all the new activities open to them, by the acceptance they enjoy by a whole bunch of different people, etc. But sooner or later they "sober up" and see the need to buckle down and develop a real commitment to the basics of the faith. Let's you and I major in the basics!

BASIC CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY #2: The Practice of Love (VERSE 8). In our passage this morning, the phrase "one another" is used three times: 8,9,10. Christians cannot afford to be indifferent or unconcerned about how they handle their relationships in the Body. The priority for us needs to be to handle them "in love." Notice that it is a "fervent" love! This means exercising love NOT JUST ONCE but many times. If a brother or sister offends you and you must forgive them, do it many times. Do it without number. And if someone offends you THE SAME WAY, OVER AND OVER AGAIN, employ the kind of love that Jesus employs with you!

It is inevitable in any church that there will be disagreements from time to time. This should not surprise us. It is HOW WE HANDLE DISAGREEMENTS that shows how much love we have, not whether we have them or not!

I think Peter has in mind the universal problem of conflict in the church, because in verse 8 he states that real love, the kind that the Holy Spirit produces, covers over alot! It overlooks much! It doesn't keep records! Let's cultivate this in our fellowship dear ones...My friends, look around you. There are undoubtably a few at least that you don't always see eye to eye with. You may not always see eye to eye with a deacon, or with me or with someone else's spouse or child. Let it slide. Keep being kind. Keep starting over! For the goal of all Christian love is the happiness of those upon whom we exercise it, and their well-being.

Peter tells us to keep the fire going. He says don't let any torrent of bitterness or prejudice or selfishness douse that fire!

One application I see for us is to never be ashamed of one another! If someone testifies to suffering for Christ, or in some way because they are trying to live for Christ, and it involves some tale of hardship or awkwardness, let us purpose to not feel shame! Let us have the mind of Jesus Christ, who is not ashamed to call us His brothers!

BASIC CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY #3: Hospitality (VERSE 9). Commentators agree that Peter has in mind here hospitality TO STRANGERS. It is good to open our homes to our family members. It is good to open them to our best Christian friends. It is good to open them to new Christians that have started attending our church. But Peter has in mind the kind of self-sacrificing hospitality that opens one's own living space to people you don't even know!

Now I know there all kinds of objections we may be tempted to raise:

- a. What if the person is not trustworthy?
- b. What if they're not as clean as I am?
- c. What if they make eyes at my son or daughter?
- d. What if I'm just not emotionally up-to-par right now?
- e. WHAT IF I HAVE TO TAKE A RISK?

In the first century most public inns were filthy, immoral dives and both Christians and respectable non-Christians tried to avoid them. Hospitality by Christians was fast becoming an issue of necessity: traveling Christians NEEDED each other (even those they had not yet met) much more profoundly.

I like what Dr. Arnold says here: "Hospitality is a ministry. Anyone can do it. God says open homes are a priority on His list of important things to do while you wait for Christ to return. We are to open our hearts as well as our homes to strangers. Perhaps you feel your home isn't nice enough--you would like to get a new sofa or some new drapes, but if we keep looking for excuses we will never open our homes...He wants you to venture out and start with what you have [and most of us have much!] Make your home available to others! Anyone can start there. Perhaps you are saying, "It costs too much to have people over for dinner." Then don't have them for dinner, have them for popcorn, or ask them to bring a little food."

Dear ones I am happy to observe that we have been working on this in our church. A year ago Renee and I housed and fed Bobbi for almost six months. Several months back the Carllysles opened their home (not without some fear) to a whole bunch of people they didn't know, and started a weekly fellowship group. For the past two months the Graham's have opened their home and their hearts to our refugee friend from Romania. Let's press on this thing! God is excited about it! Its how He wants us to pass the time until Jesus comes and ties everything up!

BASIC CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY #4: The Continual Use of Spiritual Gifts (VERSES 10,11).

Now if you're going to say just one thing about spiritual gifts, it better be this (Peter implies): USE THEM! Use them again. And keep using them.

Now the gifts of God are without recall. But there is some application of the saying they used to say in seminary to us about the skills we acquired in the original Biblical languages, Greek and Hebrew: "When you get out into the ministry, don't let a skill become rusty--USE IT OR LOSE IT!

We cannot forfeit a spiritual gift. But we can forfeit our effectiveness. A psiritual gift is not a talent, I think, it is more of a burden and desire and a developed skill to do it with practice. Peter says USE IT. Use it now and use it next week. Use it in five years and keep using it in 30 years.

What we have, we have because of God's grace to us. Two gifts are mentioned. Teaching and serving. They are both to be employed with certain "operating instructions". Teachers, at whatever level, (and anyone who teaches at all), should bear in

mind that it is a high responsibility--we need to be correct and careful in what we say publicly. By virtue of our conviction that we have the Holy Spirit personally residing within us, we need to listen to Him through the Word when we speak. Serving is to be done in the strength of the Lord, which He will continually supply. If we will trust Him, He will always refresh our efforts to serve one another. The person GIFTED to serve, which is what we have in deacons needs to constantly seek the Lord personally to refuel!

Dear ones, Jesus is our King. What we accomplish, we accomplish for HIS glory, never our own. This is what it means to have Jesus AS LORD, as well as Savior. Let's live in light of the LORD Jesus's second coming, and always concentrate on the BASIC ACTIVITIES of the Christian life!

Dartmouth Bible Church  
N. Dartmouth, MA

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.  
Lesson 19, Jan. 18, '87

EXPOSITION OF FIRST PETER  
UNDER FIRE, PESSIMISM or OPTIMISM?  
I Peter 4: 12-19

Introduction: Sometimes we bring it upon ourselves...there are definitely times when we present our Christian lives or convictions in such a way that the world says, "Get away from me, I don't want to be like you!" We blow it by being obnoxious, insensitive or seriously inconsistent in some other way (like showing favorites, being prejudiced, dealing unfairly...) and we can understand WHY the world says "No" to Christianity. There are also some times when a Christian does lash out--maybe in retaliation for bad treatment. Peter is going to say something about this...

But today we want to consider what our attitude should be in those times when persecution comes, when it comes on us just BECAUSE we name the name of Christ and just BECAUSE we hold forth the true Gospel and the Word of God. Many times Christians are persecuted simply BECAUSE of their "creed", that is, because of JUST WHAT THEY BELIEVE and TEACH. The Gospel message is offensive to the unsaved mind in the sense that it INCLUDES THE IDEA OF TOTAL INABILITY of everyone to get to heaven by their own efforts--we are not to compound that "offensiveness", we are not to make it harder for someone to come to Christ by behaving inappropriately (by being vengeance filled or retaliatory, for instance).

Now please don't read into this that I am suggesting that Christians are to always be pacifistic. Whether that is true or not stands on different ground--HERE we are talking about our response to PERSECUTION.

Defining "Persecution", and Our Appropriate Response (Vss. 12-14)  
Now probably only we twentieth-century free-world Christians need a working definition of what "persecution" is. I do not know that if Peter were sitting here listening to this exposition of his letter would much like these few minutes--he might say, "Define it? Man, don't you know? EVERY Christian who lives godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution!--I didn't know hardly ANY Christians who WEREN'T persecuted!" But we do need to know what Peter is writing to his readers about...

Persecution is any kind of hostile treatment by others, that comes because of our following Jesus Christ.

Under the Roman emperor Nero, Christians in Rome were severely hurt because of their faith in Jesus. Many were even killed for their faith. Peter stresses MENTAL READINESS as persecution for



the Asian Christians to whom he was writing was drawing near. He tells them not to be surprised at having to suffer for naming the name of Jesus Christ.

The NASB translates it "the fiery ordeal among you." Literally rendered it could read "*the among you burning.*" Peter may be speaking metaphorically. OR he may have believed that the Roman officials out in the provinces were likely to follow their emperor's example and stake-burn Christians in Asia Minor too. Christians were blamed for the burning of Rome, and some were covered with pitch and used as living torches to light the imperial gardens at night...Such persecution should not take Christians by surprise as though something strange were happening. (Raymer, B.K. Comm.)

But if Christians (first-century, or we) suffer, even severely for the faith, we should rejoice in it! The reason is that if you suffer for the faith, you have a real share in God's purpose in the world: Christ enters His glory after suffering first. You can be in no higher standing than to be considered a participator in the sufferings of Christ! All Christians have the Holy Spirit, but there is a special blessing in being *insulted* ("reviled") for the name of Christ. Anything that we suffer for the name of Christ is a privilege, not a penalty (Raymer).

Now I think that persecution is not completely foreign to us here. You may have a family member that really hates the fact that you have turned your life over to Christ. Your changed life-style may really annoy them. You should not harass THEM with the Word of God, but even if you do not, you may experience some real hostility to your love of the Lord Jesus. The persecution may take the form of psychological abuse and verbal abuse besides. Depending on what you do for a living, it is not impossible to suffer insult or worse harassment on the job because you name the name of Christ.

There is another kind of harassment we must endure with love. We cannot expect non-Christians to understand the nature of grace. Sometimes as Christians we DO fall into sin; we compromise what we believe. The world may get wind of this. But they do not understand that "if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9). They can become very critical of us when we do blow it. Dear ones, let's not blow it, though! Let's resolve to make decisions out of obedience to Christ! And one of those decisions should be NOT TO RETALIATE FOR PERSECUTION.

#### OPTIMISM UNDER PERSECUTION (Verses 15, 16)

As Christians we can be optimistic about our future. No one else in the world can have the hope that we have! No one else can have the PERSPECTIVE and DETERMINATION that we can have!

On March 11, 1830, a little British girl was doing her lessons with her tutor, and the lesson that day had to do with the royal family. As she studied the genealogical chart in the book, she became aware of the astounding fact that she was the next in line for the throne! At first she wept; and then she looked at her tutor and said, "I will be good." The fact that little Victoria would one day be queen motivated her to live on a higher level; and the fact that you and I are already children of God should motivate us NOT TO RETALIATE if we find ourselves persecuted.

But persecution is never an excuse for lawlessness. Physical violence was not to be met by murder, Peter tells them. Confiscation of property was not to be compensated for by theft. No matter what their trials, Christians were not to respond in any way that would justify punishing them as criminals. Even interfering in other people's affairs is out of place for the Christian.

I see in all this the possibility of becoming CYNICAL or pessimistic. But if our eyes are on Christ, and we realize that HE is Lord of the world, and therefore Lord of the circumstances that I find myself in, I can have an OPTIMISTIC outlook! Dear ones, are your eyes on Christ? When you feel insulted or harassed in a worse way, because of your following Jesus, do you keep your eyes on Him? Remember, God has said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay."

#### MORE REASON FOR OPTIMISM (Verses 17-19)

God is involved in the world, personally and because this is HIS creation. He began a plan for this world, He is carrying it out now and He will bring it to His chosen conclusion, in His own time. This is what we sing in the song, "In His Time." He deals with us as individuals and He is dealing with the Church as a whole, and He is dealing with the rest of the world too. I believe there is an increasing emphasis in the arts today (you look for it) which is subtly telling us that God is UNinvolved with the world, or at least disinterested in it.

These verses tell us that the persecutions that Christians undergo are not random happenings. They are part of God's plan to discipline His church. When we suffer some persecution, it draws our eyes and our hearts towards Him. We are not so self-sufficient, so comfortable.

Notice that in verse 17, trusting Christ is a matter of obedience. Those who reject Christ and His free offer of eternal life are first and foremost DISOBEDIENT to God. God places demands on people. In order to escape the fire of judgement, a person must respond to the Gospel. He must obey the command to trust Christ. If the fireman yells "Jump into my net!" The person must jump!

I can think of no greater illustration of verse 19 than what we recently read in the Book of Esther, where Esther says,

Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, "Go, assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa, and fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens also will fast in the same way. And thus I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law; *and if I perish, I perish.*"

Note please that physical prosperity is not always in the will of God. In fact Peter says that sometimes it is God's will that we suffer--NOT because He enjoys watching it, but because he knows what is needed to purify us and to refine our faith.

Notice also that our Creator is always faithful to us. He will never turn His back on us. Is this not high motivation to "do what is right" in our lives? Are you willing to turn your life over to Christ, even if you have to suffer some for His name? The Greek word for "entrust" ("commit", NIV) is *paratithesthōsan*. It is an accounting term and it can also be translated "deposit." Are you willing dear ones, to deposit your life, and whatever circumstances you are pressured in right now, to your God. Is He capable of overseeing your decisions in such a way as is best for you? Let's take a couple of minutes and pray about this...

Dartmouth Bible Church  
N. Dartmouth, MA

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.  
Lesson 20, Jan. 25, '87

EXPOSITION OF FIRST PETER  
The Work of Shepherding  
I Peter 5: 1-5

Introduction: This is a sermon to me! As we get into today's Scripture passage, you will see that I am really preaching to myself! This is what a theological seminary education should boil down to. We begin the last chapter of Peter's first letter with an exhortation to pastors. Peter has addressed those in Asia who were suffering. He has addressed the husbands. He has addressed the wives. He has written to the whole Body in general and exhorted them to keep fervent in their love for one another and to watch out for one another, especially in light of the very real possibility of persecution. Now he turns to his readers' pastors, to encourage and exhort them.

The pastoral office is unique in the world. In no other organizational position is there the weaving together of needed skills, sensitivities and qualifications that there is found in the Biblical office of pastor. There are of course many ideas in the world today of what constitutes "effective leadership."

A pastor friend of mine told me recently that his most senior church officer is a man from a military career. The gentleman feels that there is virtually no difference between church leadership and battalion leadership. The hierarchy and the accountability should be the same.

Other churches adopt the practice that their leaders should be the most successful in the business community. So, the Board of Elders is made up of doctors and scientists and senior marketing directors. These are supposedly the respectable ones in the church, and therefore they will naturally rise to the "top" of the church...

This morning we are not going to consider Paul's words on leadership which deal largely with QUALIFICATIONS. Rather we are going to look at the Apostle Peter's words to the men (an assumption I am making) in the churches WHO WERE ALREADY SERVING AS ELDERS. Peter's words are not WANT-AD stuff: WANTED: A FEW GOOD MEN! They are FRONT-LINE DISPATCH type-stuff: ACHTUNG! ALL ELDERS WILL NOW HEAR THIS! He is writing to men ministering on the front lines. They are words on HOW TO carry on the ministries which they are already entrusted with.

Dear ones, it is good for you to know what is God's will for your elders. In the work of shepherding, it is easy to lose sight of God's oversight of the overseer. It is easy to feel pretty significant in that "I exercise influence, even control in the lives of a fair number of people!" That influence is easily

abusable, and every shepherd of God's people needs to keep Peter's exhortation before him if he is going to have a ministry which is worthy of the Lord Jesus!

Now let's consider exactly to whom Peter is speaking (vs.1). He is speaking to "the elders" (Greek: *presbuteros*)--in fact in the original Greek text, the word "elders" occurs FIRST in the sentence. The elders are the leaders of the local congregation. They are the ones entrusted by God with the responsibility to lead the flock. In the New Testament a "plurality" of elders is always the case. The eldership was an institution back to the early days of Israel and it existed both nationally and locally in Israel. The Jerusalem church adopted the practice, and Paul and Barnabas applied it on their missionary journeys. Here, Peter addresses the elders in the context of suffering and persecution. That a church HAVE confident pastoral leadership, especially when there is extraordinary suffering or persecution, is very important to the church.

By the way, have you noticed that I am using the words "elder" and "pastoral" interchangeably? I do that on purpose because an elder IS a pastor. The word "pastor" is our English version of the Greek word "shepherd." An elder is an overseer who shepherds the sheep. He is not just a trustee, as the Bible portrays it. He must be a person willing to serve the people, WHERE THEY LIVE. He must be available to take off after a sheep who strays. Shepherding involves provision of food for the flock, protection of the flock from wolves, supervision and discipline of the flock in their regular activities, and instruction and direction of the flock. These are the things that a pastor, a shepherd, an elder must do, and be faithful in.

Notice, that Peter calls himself their "fellow-elder." He aspired to no further title (except "apostle"). He knew that God had charged him with the shepherding of certain Christians, but nowhere does he mention that he is in any way responsible for ALL Christians. He is simply a "fellow-elder."

Peter also says that both he and those to whom he is writing are fellow "witnesses to the sufferings of Christ." This is part of the common calling that all shepherds share--we do what we do because we sense a strong allegiance to what Jesus went through. This really leaves little room for luxury in ministry. If the leaders of a church have the right priorities, their motivations for DOING the ministry come not from what they will get out of it but from being keenly aware of what JESUS went through!!!

The shepherds, the elders in a church are those most of all who should keep their "eyes on the prize."

The exhortation Peter gives these men is that they are to *shepherd the flock* (vss. 2,3) in three ways. Dear ones, you can hold me accountable to my calling in these ways! And as we consider other men for the office of elder, ask yourself, "Does he look like someone willing to live like this?"

First, the ministry of shepherding is to be VOLUNTARY. No one should ever be pressured into it, or made to feel guilty to get him to serve in this office. This requires us to be patient and wait upon the Lord. A man must have a real desire to work with people--not a naive kind of idealism--but a proven willingness to take the hard with the fun, in ministering to people. There is also the sense that since the RISKS and RESPONSIBILITIES are greater than in any other office in the church, only those who volunteer for such "duty" should be recognized as elders.

From a practical standpoint, this is what I look for in an elder, before he is made an elder--does he go after ministering to folks BEFORE he is given the title? THAT is voluntary shepherding.

Second, there is to be an EAGERNESS which is almost an EXCITEMENT. A shepherd should be motivated by the fulfillment of helping people in their spiritual lives and NOT by how much money he can make in the business of people's souls. An elder is to find delight in the job itself, not in the paycheck.

Third, the best kind of leadership is by example. An elder should not expect the flock to give to some cause which he is not willing to give to.

Some fathers (maybe some mothers too) may tell their kid, "Kid! You do it because I say so, and I'm your father, and that's all there is to it..." How much better the kid obeys when he sees some CONSISTENCY in his father's life, and a good example!

An elder should never try to get his way just by the pure weight or authority of his title! Some men are good at controlling others, at influencing or manipulating people to get them to follow them. But that is not a godly motivation in shepherding people. An elder (who is functioning spiritually) will draw satisfaction just by seeing the Lord use him--not from any other compensation, psychologically or financially.

Now verse 4 intrigues me. Jesus is the Chief Shepherd. At His second coming there's going to be some kind of an awards-ceremony. Those leaders in His Body who had carried on their ministries with the right motivations will be rewarded with "the crown of glory." Notice it is an *unfading* crown of glory. Even our sun is fading, although we may not be able to tell. This is a reward which never loses its beauty and fascination. I don't know what it is though. But I know it is something!

Any reward which Jesus Christ offers at His second coming

is priceless. I have found that sometimes a Christian's reasoning for allowing themselves to fall into one sin or another, is that, "Well, I'll just lose some of my rewards," as if what the Lord gives is just so much trinkets! Dear ones, know that the Lord highly values your faithfulness to whatever ministry you have! His rewards, and your faithfulness are not just things to casually forfeit, like the \$1.49 "Hot Combo" coupon on the Dunkin' Doughnuts bag!

In verse 5, Peter tells the young men to place themselves under the oversight of their elders. I think this implies chiefly the idea of TRUST. Trust your elders with your loyalty--not blind loyalty, of course. But subject yourselves to their instruction and perspective. Now in our church where I am the only one holding the office of elder (I hope that changes before too many months pass...) we must be careful with pastoral authority. Never does the Lord intend the people to be in wholesale-subjection to one man. But as the Lord provides men whom YOU people trust, you must treat them with the respect that goes with their responsibilities.

In conclusion, Peter uses a Proverb (3:34) to exhort us all to live humbly with one another. This has so many applications! We will consider some next week around the Lord's Table. But here Peter's language implies conscious DECIDING to be humble and NOT SELF-PROMOTING with one another. How many people have left churches, and splintered the fellowship, and brought brief to churches simply because they did not get their own way.

Dear ones, the more we are filled up with Christ by communing with Him and walking with Him daily, the less we are spilling over with SELF! That's the bottom-line to being Christlike: looking to Him for reward, crucifying SELFISHNESS.

If you are not a Christian, you are not in God's flock and not in His fold. How can you get in? How can you become a precious sheep who belongs to God? Trust Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd, who laid down His life for the sheep that they might live. True sheep hear Christ's voice which bids them to believe on Him. They believe that Christ died for their sins and they bow to Him as Lord. They begin to follow Christ, giving allegiance to the Chief Shepherd.

"But you do not believe, because you are not of my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand."

John 10: 26,27

Dartmouth Bible Church  
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EXPOSITION OF FIRST PETER  
Cross-Country Christianity  
I Peter 5:6-14

Introduction: If you are here this morning and you have been saved--that is, you have received Christ as YOUR Savior personally--how long do you plan to be a Christian? How long do you expect your dependence on Him to last? Now it may surprise you that I would ask such a question, especially in light of our conviction here that once a person is truly regenerated, he cannot lose his salvation. But we must face up to the fact that from time to time professing Christians do "give up" on living for Christ.

In our last message from Peter's first epistle, I would like to consider the Christian life from the standpoint of the cross-country runner. When I was in high school I stood in awe of those folks who ran cross-country...five, ten, even fifteen miles a day. And since high school I have known several who made it their practice to run 20 and even more miles a day. The COMPARISON with the Christian life is that you must pace yourself. You must look at the finish line and plan your strength in such a way as to make sure that you can finish. There are some things WORKING AGAINST the long-distance runner, and there are some things working against you finishing the course in your Christian life too. The runner faces fatigue. He faces possible injury. He must be concerned about dehydration. The course that his running takes may be a factor in terms of the lay of the land. For the Christian too, there is the element of fatigue--of growing weary of Christian activities, of dealing with other people's personal difficulties; of growing weary of fighting your OWN weaknesses. The Christian too, like the long-distance runner must accept the possibility of injury; many are there who have been hurt by other people--they opened up some, made themselves vulnerable to another person, and they get injured. Some Christians, it is sad to say, never seem to recover from an injury (this is why I think we see some older Christians who, though saved, have grown bitter and negative; a contradiction to their faith no doubt, but nonetheless true. The Christian too can get "dehydrated" in a sense, if they cease to be fed. This is why I am something of a hard-liner on how we do children's work here. Some of you are willing to miss the ministry of the Word in order to provide our kids with good programs, but if you cease to be fed, you will sooner or later become discouraged: "dehydrated" as it were.



Like the cross-country runner, the Christian needs to plan for the long haul...to view his or her Christian life in light of the fact that it is a lifelong race...*I think this is what was in Peter's mind as he closed this letter: some last minute EXHORTATIONS, IN LIGHT OF THE CROSS-COUNTRY PERSPECTIVE.* In other words, "If you're going to still be a disciple of Jesus Christ AT THE END OF YOUR LIFE, here are FOUR things you need to concentrate on!"

First, dear ones, you and I need to REMAIN HUMBLE (vss.6,7). Verse 6 ties into what Peter just said to the "younger men", and really everyone in the assembly in verse 5: You're Christians; you should look like Christ, HUMBLE...not full of pride and arrogance or vengeance. Here he tells the people to actively live a humble life--especially in view of suffering.

Do you live your life with the idea in the back of your mind that a gracious and mighty God is IN CONTROL OF YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES? Do you depend upon the PROVIDENCE OF GOD to set up your life with your best interests at heart? That is the attitude Peter is saying Christians should have to make it to the end of the race...

Think about the way in which a person who needs medical treatment chooses and consents to become a patient of a particular surgeon, and thus submits himself under his "operating hand," in the hope of enjoying the promised benefit in due time. Alan Stibbs, Tyndale Comm's.

Verse 7 is one of my favorite verses in the whole Bible! You can throw every care and concern and depressing circumstance onto Jesus--He cares, my friends, He really does! The modern skeptic can't do that, because he doesn't believe it. The Buddhist can't do it. Most modern American liberal Protestants can't do it because they've LOST THE BELIEF IN A PERSONAL, INVOLVED GOD! But you dear ones, can cast everything on Him--What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear! Live your next year in light of that! Live your next forty years in Christ in light of that!

The SECOND thing you and I need to concentrate on, if we're still going to be a disciple of Jesus at the end of our lives, is to REMAIN ALERT TO SPIRITUAL REALITIES (vss. 8,9). The devil would just love for us to forget all about him. There's nothing he would rather see than for us NOT to pray for his hindrance; for us NOT to resist his foul and destructive work in our midst. We need to realize first that he is a formidable foe, and that his work is utterly destructive. We need to not go soft on matters of the occult. The devil and demonology are not just fascinating, they are consuming!

Can you see the absurdity in walking through the jungle and pushing aside a foliage branch only to stand face to face with a hungry lion...maybe you weren't prepared

for him, your rifle is still on safety...and the lion looks you over, licks his chops, rears back on his haunches, about to spring, and you say, "Hmmm, isn't this a fascinating experience I'm about to have--its really cosmic!"

My friends, the devil wants to eat you. He wants to eat your children, your spouse, your church and your country. And Peter tells us to RESIST HIM, by being confident in Jesus' power and name! And Peter says the way to resist him is to REMEMBER that you are not alone in your spiritual struggles--especially if you suffer for the faith. Remember that what you are going through for Christ, is also being experienced by many, many brothers and sisters in Christ around the world, and it is all in God's control and plan.

Now, as a minister of the Gospel, I do not go looking for opportunities to confront demons. We are to resist him, not go out on "recon" looking for him. His work is near enough in our society!

James tells us to "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." That involves being AWARE and AWAKE and NOT SLEEPY about his maneuvers. This is where our materialism puts us to sleep. When we are concentrating our lives on the acquisition of material things ("Everyday Toys" as our brother Jon terms it), we become distracted as to spiritual realities. We become lulled into thinking that reality is whether my computer is state of the art or not...whether my sound system puts out the best possible sound or not...whether my car looks sufficiently impressive! And the devil moves about with little resistance or trouble when the church is so sleepy. Resist him my friends, and he will flee from you--and you will more joyfully make it to the end of your life with your love for Christ intact!

The third thing to concentrate on, as a spiritual cross-country runner, is to remember, after all, THAT GOD IS YOUR ROCK! (vs.10) Verse 10 is not a wish, its a promise! Peter is not saying that God MAY do these four things. He is saying that your God is the Lord, and that you can be encouraged by the fact that it is HIS job to perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

You have need of those four things...a) We go around saying, "Well, I'm not perfect, after all." INDEED, you are not--but you need to be, and He will finish it! (Phil.1:6) He started the work of conforming you to Christ on the day you trusted Jesus to be your sin-bearer; He will also finish it, fear not! b) confirmation that He is your refuge, strength when you require it and establishment or grounding is what we need. These are on God's job description, because He has sovereignly promised to help us in every way. When we fail, we can never blame the Lord!

Lastly, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins (4:8, verses 12-14). If you maintain affection for your brothers and sisters in Christ, here, in the

community and around the world, you will be strengthened to finish the course! Verse 14 is Peter's last exhortation--it is a beautiful picture of affection between people who are "only visiting this planet." We aren't really citizens of this world, we are citizens of the world to come because we have jointly trusted in the Lord Jesus, the Lord of both this world and the world to come.

You and I will no doubt meet opposition to this claim of citizenship; but have courage, you will be exalted and seated with Christ at the proper time (vs.6). My friends, no matter what befalls you in months and years to come, do not grow cold or become unfaithful to your Savior. Maintain your walk with Him, for He will never disappoint you or forsake you.

Peter's last words in this epistle are a benediction of peace on all Christians. Are you a Christian? If not, you can have the spiritual peace which you need and maybe long for. It is not an imaginary state of mind. Jesus' peace is a fruit of having His Spirit reside in your body. It is the fruit of having your sins, all of them, past, present and future, paid for and no longer being at war with God, but even in His adopted family! May you trust in His grace and in His Son!