



GOD'S  
LONGSUFFERING  
IS  
SALVATION



W.E. BEST

# **GOD'S LONGSUFFERING IS SALVATION**

*by*  
**W. E. Best**

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## **AUTHOR'S NOTE**

The two books entitled **GOD'S LONGSUFFERING IS SALVATION** and **THE MOST NEGLECTED CHAPTER IN THE BIBLE** are companion books. The first is a study of II Peter 3:9. The second is a study of Romans 9. Both are primarily a discussion of God's election of some to salvation and His passing by others. They are composed of sermons preached to the people of the South Belt Assembly of Christ.

## INTRODUCTION

God is longsuffering to the elect because the longsuffering of God is to be considered as salvation to them. There are many so-called controversial verses of Scripture in the Bible, but there is not one that has created debate among religionists more than II Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." This verse is misunderstood and incorrectly used by both free will and free grace theologians. The polemical nature of the verse arises not from the Greek construction but from preconceived ideas of the text. Most people who read the Scriptures form an idea of what a text means before investigating the text itself, its immediate context, and the overall context of Scripture.

The term "controversial" should never be used with reference to a text of Scripture. There are no verses in the Bible subject to debate. Controversy arises from the nature of the interpreter, not from the nature of the text itself. Since Scripture is the revelation of God's infallible mind, contention arises from the fallible nature of men. This is not to say that some things in the Bible are not "hard to be understood" (II Pet. 3:16). Peter did not say he had difficulty understanding Paul's Epistles, but he did say the uninstructed and unstable pervert the remaining Scriptures. Distorting any text of Scripture from its proper meaning is serious.

The following are questions revealing interpreters' problems in the study of II Peter 3:9.

1. Is God's longsuffering universal or limited?
2. Has God secured salvation for the elect, or does He offer salvation to all?
3. Does God's being "not willing that any should perish" deny a decree?
4. Does God decree one thing while preferring another?
5. Does God desire all men to be saved but know many will reject Him?
6. Is the reason the Lord's return seems so long in occurring because He wants as many people as possible to be saved?
7. Is there a distinction between "us-ward (eis humas)," "any (tinas)," and "all (pantas)?"

# **SECTION I**

## **THE TEXT of II Peter 3:9**

## SCOFFERS OF THE OBJECTS OF GOD'S LONGSUFFERING ANSWERED

Peter answered the charge from the scoffers (empaiktai, the nominative masculine plural of empaiktes, which means a mocker or a scoffer) that God is slow to fulfill His promise (II Pet. 3:3-4). They were saying, "...Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (v. 4). He began by answering them with history (vv. 5-7). Those to whom He wrote were then reminded that "...one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (v. 8). Peter was referring to the scoffers when he said, "...as some men count slackness..." (v. 9). This "some" who regarded the Lord's coming as delayed were false teachers. While the false teachers were charging God with delaying His coming, Peter informed the elect that what the false teachers charged as delay was God's longsuffering toward His chosen which guaranteed their salvation (v. 9). Election is to salvation: "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (II Thess. 2:13).

The scoffers were accusing the Lord of being slack concerning His promise. The Greek verb translated "slack" is bradunei, the present active indicative of braduno, which means delay or neglect. The verb is used here and I Timothy 3:15. It comes from bradus, which means slow or slow to apprehend (Luke 24:25; James 1:19). The Greek noun translated "promise," epaggelias, comes from epaggelia which means a promise, act of promising, or the thing promised. What did God promise? He promised that His longsuffering will continue until the elect are saved (II Pet. 3:9, 15). Delay seems long to men because of our time perspective. But Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 proves there is an allotted time for everything. These verses also relate to our Lord Jesus Christ. There was a time for Him to be born, to die, and to be resurrected; and there is a time for His second coming. The time of Christ's return is unknown to men, but when God's purpose has been fulfilled in bringing all the elect to repentance, He will return.

The scoffers who were saying the Lord was delaying His coming were described in II Peter 2. Peter warned those who had received Divinely allotted faith that there would be false prophets among the people and false teachers among the believers who would "bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" (II Pet. 2:1). In order for anyone to use this verse for a proof text for unlimited atonement, he must first show that the "Lord" means Jesus Christ. The word is not kurios but despoten (accusative masculine singular of despotes), and it means sovereign, master, or slave owner. One cannot prove that this is referring to Jesus Christ. In order for this verse of Scripture to teach universal redemption, one must show that redemption by the death of Jesus Christ is meant by the term "bought." It is true that agorasanta, aorist active participle of agoradzo, which means to buy or frequent the market place, is used here, but no blood is mentioned. The sovereign Lord purchased mankind in the sense of staying their execution. God is staying the execution of the nonelect for the elect's sake. All mankind would be destroyed were it not for the elect. Some of the elect are the offspring of the nonelect; therefore, God tolerates the nonelect. In order for this verse to teach universal redemption, the false prophets and teachers would also be sheep for whom Christ died. But Scripture proves that Christ gave Himself for only the sheep (John 10:11,15,16). The false prophets and teachers were not God's



elect. For this passage of Scripture to teach universal redemption, one would have to say God's elect can be reserved until the day of judgment to be punished.

The promise concerning which the scoffers said the Lord was slack refers to the second advent of Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus will not return from the Father to this earth for the purpose of establishing His kingdom until the last one for whom He died has been brought to repentance. There are two serious errors made by some concerning the return of Christ. The first is presented by dispensational premillennialists and the second by amillennialists. Dispensational premillennialists represent Jesus Christ as offering the kingdom to the Jews. Therefore, they portray Him as offering the kingdom before His death. However, the kingdom will be established on the basis of His suffering. If the Lord had offered Himself as King at His first advent, John the Baptist would have announced Him as the Lion of the tribe of Judah instead of "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). In none of His messages did the Lord Jesus offer the kingdom. His message to Nicodemus clearly showed that the Son of Man must be lifted up, and Nicodemus must be born again in order to see or enter the kingdom. One of Peter's blunders was to object to the Lord's suffering and death (Matt. 16). Christ's offering the kingdom to Israel before His death and the salvation of the elect would have been contrary to the purpose of God. Hence, dispensational premillennialists seriously err to say He offered the kingdom. The second serious error concerning the second coming of Jesus Christ is presented by amillennialists. They represent Jesus Christ as reigning now before He reveals His glory. One is as erroneous as the other.

Believers are warned against scoffers. After Peter was strengthened and reached the level of spiritual maturity, God told him to strengthen the brethren. This is what he was doing when he said, "THIS second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance" (II Pet. 3:1). Where there is grace the hearer can be stirred up by being called to remembrance of God's word. Dwelling on truth is necessary even for the strongest believers. Peter was not apologizing for stirring up their pure minds by way of remembrance. Truth is infinite, but our minds are finite; therefore, we never learn any subject as well as it should be learned because every subject from the Bible is the subject of God's infinite mind. The most elementary doctrine is virtually a summary of the whole Bible.

Believers should be mindful of the words which were spoken by the holy prophets and also of the commandment of the apostles of the Lord and Savior (II Pet. 3:2). The reason for our mindfulness of these words is that the scoffers come in the last days. They walk after their own lusts and question the promise of Christ's second advent. Christ will not come until all the elect have come to repentance. But the mockers used Christ's delay in their minds to support their liberalism. They used the term "delay" as an excuse to continue in their activities which were evil. Not only the unregenerate but also most professing Christians do not understand Christ's so-called delay of His return. They do not understand that Christ is, as it were, delaying His coming to manifest His longsuffering until everyone given to the Son in the covenant of redemption and for whom Christ died has been brought to repentance.

False prophets and teachers scoff at the Lord's promised return. But they are willingly ignorant of history and prophecy (II Pet. 3:4-7). They ignored the flood which destroyed all the people on earth except Noah and his family. The earth, which was renewed after the flood, is now being reserved with a view to judgment to come (II Pet. 3:10-11).

## THE OBJECTS OF GOD'S LONGSUFFERING

The objects of God's longsuffering are those chosen by God before the foundation of the world. God's longsuffering of II Peter 3:9 and 15 does not refer to all mankind in general but to the elect in particular from among mankind. To say Christ died for all without exception would indicate the elimination of election. One cannot deny that Peter spoke of election (I Pet. 1:2; 2:9; II Pet. 1:10). Since Christ died for the sheep, it is meaningless to say He died for all, including the goats. If Christ's death was a ransom for all the human race, as most religionists claim, all will be brought to repentance. But all have not been and all are not being brought to repentance. Many have died and are dying in their sins.

God is longsuffering to "us" because the longsuffering of the Lord is to be considered salvation (II Pet. 3:15). The longsuffering of God guarantees the salvation of all the elect. Christ did not die in vain; He died for the sheep (John 10:11, 15, 16). Since the English verb "is" in the King James Bible is not in the Greek text, we are to regard the longsuffering of our Lord as salvation (II Pet. 3:15). In verse 9, the antecedent of both "any" and "all" is the "us-ward" of God's longsuffering. (See II Peter 1:1, 2, 4; 3:9, 15.) To say "us-ward" can mean all men without exception would be hermeneutical absurdity. The following would be the results of "us-ward" referring to all mankind in general: (1) God's delay will continue as long as His longsuffering continues. (2) If the first is correct, one is forced to conclude that God's longsuffering will continue as long as He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. (3) If Christ should come before all without exception come to repentance, His longsuffering, which is regarded as salvation, would fail.

God's longsuffering is toward the elect: "...longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9). The first, second, and third person plural pronouns used by Peter identify the persons addressed.

The Greek is a more definitive language than the English. A case in point is that the Greek not only uses the personal pronoun to identify the antecedent but it sometimes incorporates the person and number of the antecedent into the verb. This makes the verb to perform much of the function of a personal pronoun. When both a personal pronoun and a verb are used together in Greek, the expression is considered definitive. Hence, the antecedent is identified with both the pronoun and the verb.

Peter's use of plural pronouns must be considered by the exegete in order that he may properly interpret II Peter 3. The first, second, and third person plural pronouns used frequently in this short Epistle should attract the exegete's attention. The first person plural pronouns refer to the elect, most of the second person plurals refer to professing believers without discriminating, and most of the third person plurals refer to the false teachers.

The first person plural pronouns in Peter's Epistles refer to Peter and those united with him in the grace and cause of Jesus Christ. They not only share the same Savior and the same exceeding great and precious promises, but they also look together for new heavens and a new earth. God's sovereign choice is set forth in the Greek verb translated "have obtained" (lachousin, aorist active

participle of lagchano, which means having received by Divine allotment) in the opening statement of Peter's second Epistle (II Pet. 1:1). Peter wrote to those who by Divine allotment had received valuable faith with him and other Christians. Hence, through the righteousness of God, we have the same blessing that Peter experienced. Peter's wish for the saints' future was that their peace might increase. It can never increase apart from the accurate knowledge of God and our Savior Jesus Christ (II Pet. 1:2).

God's divine power has gratuitously given to "us" all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of God who has called "us" to glory and virtue (II Pet. 1:3). The "like precious" (accusative feminine singular of isotimos, which means equally valuable) faith (v. 1), all things that pertain to life and godliness (v. 3), and great and "precious" (accusative plural of timios, which means priceless) promises (v. 4) have been permanently given to "us" by God. God has given "us" equally precious faith, and we are in a resultant position because of this faith which is God's gift. This denotes Christian security, because we have been freed by God from the corruption that is in the world: "...having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (II Pet. 1:4). Conclusively, the first person plural pronouns of II Peter 1:1-4 include all the redeemed in general.

With his use of the second person plural pronouns, Peter did not assume that all who read his Epistles were Christians. This is the reason Peter used subjunctive mood verbs to which the second person plural pronouns are related. The subjunctive mood denotes what is likely to but not positively will occur. We will mention two subjunctive and five imperative mood verbs with which the second person plural pronouns are related: (1) "might be" (genesthe, second person plural aorist middle subjunctive of ginomai) (II Pet. 1:4), (2) "add" (epichoregesate, second person plural aorist active imperative of epichoregeo) (1:5), (3) "give diligence" (spoudasate, second person plural aorist active imperative of spoudadzo) (1:10), (4) "shall never fall" (ptaisete, second person plural aorist active subjunctive of ptaio) (1:10), (5) "account" (hegeisthe, second person plural present middle imperative of hegeomai) (3:15), (6) "beware" (phulassesthe, second person plural present middle imperative of phulasso) (3:17), and (7) "grow" (auxanete, second person plural present active imperative of auxano) (3:18).

The third person plural pronouns in chapter two refer to the false teachers: (1) "But there were [egenonto, third person plural aorist middle indicative of ginomai] false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be [esontai, third person plural future middle indicative of eimi] false teachers among you, who privily shall bring [pareisaxousin, third person plural future active indicative of pareisago] in damnable heresies..." (v. 1). (2) "And many shall follow [exakolouthesousin, third person plural future active indicative of exakoloutheo] their pernicious ways..." (v. 2). (3) "And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise [emporeusontai, third person plural future middle indicative of emporeuomai] of you ..." (v. 3). (4) "...They are not afraid [tremousin, third person plural present active indicative of tremo]..." (v. 10). (5) "...They understand not [agnoousin, third person plural present active indicative of agnoeo]..." (v. 12). (6) "Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray [eplanethesan, third person plural aorist passive indicative of planao]..." (v. 15).

In general, the first person plural pronouns refer to the elect. Peter used the second person plural pronouns because he did not assume all his readers were Christians. Finally, the third person plural pronouns identify the false prophets and teachers.

The Lord "is longsuffering to us-ward [the elect], not willing that any [the elect] should perish, but that all [the elect] should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9). God's longsuffering toward Saul of Tarsus is evidenced in Acts 9:1-9. God was longsuffering toward him because he had been chosen by God as one of His own. God will vindicate the elect: "And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long [makrothumei, present active indicative of makrothumeo, which means is being slow to punish or longsuffering] with them" (Luke 18:7). God will see that justice is done for those He elected and gave to His Son before the foundation of the world. God is longsuffering to the elect who have been saved, and His longsuffering guarantees the salvation of all for whom Christ died.

## GOD IS LONGSUFFERING FOR THE ELECT

God is longsuffering for the sake of the elect. Longsuffering from our viewpoint is not the same as longsuffering when it is related to God. Therefore, we must be careful in our translation of the noun and verb forms of the word when it is related to God. Three words in the Greek text are variously and irregularly translated patience, longsuffering, and forbearance. This irregularity in translation creates confusion. Therefore, great care must be exercised in determining how each word is used in any text.

The noun form of patience (hupomone) is patience under trial. It is translated patience in all 32 references where it is found. The verb form (hupomeno) is a compound verb meaning to endure, stand firm, bear, or put up with. The preposition hupo means under, and meno means to abide or to remain. Hence, it means to remain under. The verb form is found 17 times, and it is translated endureth, endure, tarrieth behind, abode, patience, suffer, and patiently. Patience (endurance or perseverance) does not describe God, but it describes those to whom God has given grace. We must determine the significance of the noun for patience in the three references where it is connected with God or Christ.

1. Patience is given by God to the recipients of grace: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus" (Rom. 15:4, 5). The noun hupomone is in the ablative case; therefore, it teaches that God is the source of our endurance. Christians endure by God's grace: "...he that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matt. 10:22). Paul said, "I endure all things for the elect's sakes..." (II Tim. 2:10). "If we suffer [endure], we shall also reign with him..." (II Tim. 2:12). "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation [trial]..." (James 1:12). "Behold, we count them happy which endure..." (James 5:11). Endurance is a synonym for patience, but this type of patience is never attributed to God absolutely considered. God does not endure in the sense of holding out against any circumstances because He is the Author and Controller of all circumstances. He is sovereign. Christians endure circumstances because of the grace God has given. "The God of patience" describes neither God nor one of His attributes. It describes what God has given His born again ones ability to endure or persevere. Through the God of patience, the things we are taught from Scripture, and the comfort we receive from Scripture, we are to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus (Rom. 15:5). "The God of patience" is to be understood in the same sense of "the God of hope" (v. 13) and "the God of peace" (v. 33). God is the source of our patience, hope, and peace.

2. Our patient waiting for Christ is a prayer wish: "And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ" (II Thess. 3:5). The marginal reference calls "the patient waiting for Christ" the "patience of Christ." There is a difference between patient waiting for Christ and the patience of Christ. Here is where interpretation comes in. Is this objective or subjective? Christ is before us as the object of our hope in the King James Bible. That would be objective. Whereas, the marginal reference, "the patience of Christ," would be subjective. Is this an

objective attribute of God or Christ, or is it a subjective experience of Christians enduring trials for Christ's sake? It is a subjective experience because endurance is not an attribute of God.

3. Endurance is possible for the child of God only in Christ: "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of [en, locative of sphere, in] Jesus Christ..." (Rev. 1:9). Christian brotherhood and companionship in tribulation, the kingdom, and endurance are possible only in Christ.

The verb translated "is longsuffering" of II Peter 3:9 is *makrothumei*, a third person singular present active indicative of *makrothumeo*, which means being slow towards, being patient in bearing the offenses and injuries of others, or being longsuffering. The noun for "longsuffering" (*makrothumia*) is used fourteen times and is translated longsuffering in every place except Hebrews 6:12 and James 5:10, where it is translated patience. The verb form (*makrothumeo*) is used ten times, but only once in relation to God (II Pet. 3:9). The noun form is used five times in relation to God (Rom. 2:4; 9:22; I Tim. 1:16; I Pet. 3:20; II Pet. 3:15). When this word is used as an attribute of God, it is generally directed toward the elect. Although God endures no circumstances, He is longsuffering toward the elect. Surely there is no debate over the verb form of longsuffering in II Peter 3:9. Like the patience of God, the longsuffering of God is not His attribute, but His longsuffering is extended to the elect.

God tolerates the nonelect while His goodness is leading the elect to salvation: "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance [*anoches*, genitive of *anochē*, which means toleration of something or someone, a holding back, or a delay of punishment] and longsuffering [*makrothumias*, genitive of *makrothumia*, which means patience, endurance, or longsuffering]; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance" (Rom. 2:4). The text does not declare that the riches of God's goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering are directed toward all men indiscriminately. The text neither affirms nor denies that "O man" (vv. 1, 3) is the recipient of God's riches. The text does declare that those who despise God's riches do not know the goodness of God which leads to repentance. If "O man" refers to the nonelect, he not only despises the riches of God, but he will never know or come to repentance. On the other hand, if "O man" is an elect person, he may despise God's riches for a time, but he will be quickened and led to repentance. Saul of Tarsus illustrates this truth, and every child of God can relate with it.

Some think a distinction between forbearance and longsuffering is artificial. Others use one as a synonym of the other. However, there is a difference between them. God the Holy Spirit is not guilty of tautology, a needless repetition of an idea in different words. In the light of our present study, God's longsuffering is the source of His forbearance. God tolerates the nonelect while His goodness is leading the elect to repentance.

The longsuffering of God toward the elect is the cause of His forbearance toward the nonelect. Did not God manifest self-restraint with Saul of Tarsus during the time he was persecuting the assembly? (See Acts 9:1, 2; Gal. 1:13-17.) Why was God longsuffering with Saul? God had chosen him in Christ before the foundation of the world, and He had separated him from his mother's womb. Therefore, since the longsuffering of our Lord is to be regarded as salvation, His longsuffering with Saul could not end until he was regenerated and effectually called. On the other hand, God's forbearance toward the nonelect arises out of His longsuffering for the elect.

When God's purpose in His longsuffering toward His elect is consummated in the salvation of all for whom Christ died, His toleration toward the nonelect will conclude in judgment: "What if God,

willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory" (Rom. 9:22, 23). The text does not say God both forbears the vessels of wrath and is longsuffering toward them. God forbears the vessels of wrath. As God was forbearing with Pharaoh in His longsuffering over Israel, He will be forbearing with the nonelect until all the elect have come to repentance. As forbearance serves longsuffering, the nonelect serve the elect. Longsuffering is the source of God's forbearance. This means the longsuffering of God toward the elect motivates His forbearance toward the nonelect. Therefore, when all the elect have been brought to repentance (II Pet. 3:9), the forbearance over the nonelect will end in judgment. In His longsuffering, God spared the elect angels (I Tim. 5:21), but His forbearance toward the nonelect angels ended in judgment (II Pet. 2:4). In His longsuffering, He saved Noah, but His forbearance with the old world of the ungodly concluded in judgment (II Pet. 2:5, 6). Lot was delivered, but the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were condemned and turned into ashes (II Pet. 2:6-8). Likewise, in His longsuffering, the Lord delivers the godly out of trials; but in His forbearance, He reserves the unjust to the day of judgment to be punished (II Pet. 2:9). As God was forbearing with Pharaoh in His longsuffering to Israel, He will be forbearing with the nonelect until all the elect have been brought to repentance. God's toleration serves His longsuffering as the tares serve the wheat (Matt. 13:24-30).

The one thing that distinguishes the elect from the nonelect is grace. Grace was given the elect in Christ before the world began (II Tim. 1:9). That grace which was given in the purpose of God is actually given in time when the elect are regenerated. There is the gift of grace to the elect before time, and there is the gift of grace in time. Although the gifts of God's providence are common in the sense that rain descends on the just and on the unjust, God's grace is not common in that sense. Grace is common in the same sense that salvation is "common" (koinos, genitive of koinos, which means common or belonging equally to several) (Jude 3) to only the elect. When the elect, all of whom were given grace before the world began, are regenerated and converted, they enjoy grace that was given them in time and also in eternity.

Paul used the word "forbearance" with reference to the sins of the elect before the death of Jesus Christ: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God" (Rom. 3:25). The meaning of forbearance in this case refers to God's withholding punishment of the sins of Old Testament saints until Christ's first advent. There was no sacrifice for sin sufficient to take away sin until the sacrifice of Christ. God's delayed punishment of their sins was in the sphere of His forbearance. Some have gone too far to make a point in their explanation of forbearance in this text. They say God viewed the elect as reprobate until their redemption in Christ. Although the Lord Jesus Christ was forsaken, unlike the nonelect, He was not eternally forsaken (Matt. 27:46). The infinity of Christ's Person compensated for the eternity of punishment for the sins of the elect. Since the elect were given grace in Christ before the world began (II Tim. 1:9), they could never be viewed by God as nonelect. They are referred to as "lost sheep" and "other sheep I have, which are not of this fold" (Matt. 10:6; John 10:16).

In II Peter 3:15 and 16, did Peter have in mind Paul's use of the word "forbearance," with reference to the sins of the elect before the death of Christ (Rom. 3:25), and his use of the word "longsuffering," with reference to the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction (Rom. 9:22)? "And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking

in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction" (II Pet. 3:15, 16). Paul used the aorist active indicative of *phero*, which means bore or endured when he said, "What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering [patience] the vessels [skeue, plural of skeuos, vessel or instrument] of wrath fitted [katertismena, perfect passive participle of *katartidzo*, which means having been prepared] to [eis, for] destruction" (Rom. 9:22). The perfect passive participle describes a past completed action with a continuing state. They had not only been prepared but were in a state of ripeness for God's wrath. Consequently, like Romans 1:18, they were the objects of God's wrath. On the other hand, "...he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared [proetoimasen, aorist active indicative of *proetoimadzo*, which means prepared beforehand] unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles" (Rom. 9:23, 24). Preparation for destruction is in time; whereas, the election of grace is eternal with the assurance of salvation in time.

The only reason Jesus Christ has not returned is because there are some for whom Christ died who have not yet come to repentance. God is tolerating the nonelect until His purpose is completed in the salvation of the elect. The nonelect are here for a purpose. They will continue to serve their purpose until the last one that God gave to Christ in the covenant of redemption has been brought to repentance. Then His forbearance toward the nonelect will cease and will consummate in judgment upon the world of the ungodly. If "us-ward" of II Peter 3:9 refers to all mankind in general, God's delay would continue as long as His longsuffering continues. That would be a denial of the second coming of Christ. If Christ should come before all without exception come to repentance, His longsuffering, which is to be regarded as salvation, would fail. All have not come to repentance, and all will not come to repentance. Therefore, God's longsuffering cannot speak of all men without exception, but it speaks of all men without distinction.

God's longsuffering will continue as long as God is "not willing [boulomenos, present middle participle of *boulomai*, which means willing deliberately, purposing, or desiring] that any [elect] should perish..." (II Peter 3:9). One must beware of dualism in his discussion of God's will. If God should purpose one thing while desiring another, He would be impotent and doubleminded. That would contradict Scripture: "But he [God] is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth" (Job 23:13). God can never decree one thing while desiring another. Dualism is the foundation of every false religion. Those who affirm God's universal willingness or desire that all men without exception be saved are forced to (1) believe in universal salvation, (2) deny the Lord's second coming, or (3) believe God must change His purpose in order to conform to the will of man. If God purposed all men without exception to be saved, He will bring it to pass, because whatever God purposed to do He will accomplish (Is. 46:9, 10). Since God did not purpose to save all men without exception, Christ will return when God's longsuffering terminates. His longsuffering will conclude when all the elect have been brought to repentance. Moreover, God will never change His will to conform to the will of man. That would make God mutable and subject to man.

Many erroneously teach that God has a decretive will and a perceptive will, but that is dualism. Some believe God wants all men to be saved and has made provision for all to be accepted, but some will exercise their God-given free will to exclude God. They explain that God cannot prevent this unless He takes away man's freedom of choice. They say some will perish but not because God wills it. Others assume that God's unwillingness for anyone to perish does not express a decree that



God has willed everyone to be saved, but He longs that all would be saved (I Tim. 2:4). Does God have a decretive will and a perceptive will? Does He decree one thing but have a sympathetic desire for another? Does the word "all" of I Timothy 2:4 refer to all without exception or all without distinction?

I Timothy 2:4, "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth," must be considered in the light of its context. The first sentence of I Timothy 2 includes verses 1 and 2. The second sentence includes verses 3 and 4. The third sentence includes verses 5 and 6. The word "all" for whom supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks should be made includes kings and all who are in authority. Furthermore, "all men" of verse 1 means the same as "all men" of verse 4 and "all" of verse 6. Would you say that "all" in each of these cases means all without exception or all without distinction? The word "all" of verse 1 has to mean all without distinction. Conclusively, neither prayer nor salvation is restricted to one segment of society. Neither is the all for whom Christ gave Himself a ransom restricted to one segment of society. Paul proved this in his letter to the Corinthian Christians: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence" (I Cor. 1:26-29). The "wise," "mighty," and "noble" do not refer to all men without exception but to different segments and levels of society.

The proper exegesis of I Timothy 2:4 depends on the correct interpretation of the ambiguous word "all." No one can deny that the word "all" can have several meanings: "all manner of herbs" (Luke 11:42) and Christ will draw "all men" to Himself (John 12:32). All men without exception are not being drawn to Christ. They never have been, they are not now being drawn, and they never will be. Peter saw "all manner of fourfooted beasts," not all beasts but all manner of beasts (Acts 10:12). Furthermore, the free gift coming upon "all men unto justification of life" (Rom. 5:18) does not mean all without exception but all without distinction. Consequently, the word "all" is used in a limited or restricted sense in many contexts, as it is in I Timothy 2:1, 4, and 6.

The will of God of I Timothy 2:4 must be taken to mean what He Himself will do rather than what He wants us to do. It is incorrect to say that God is desiring (present tense) to save all men without exception. God who determined (past tense) to save some without distinction is by providence making His salvation effectual in those for whom Christ gave Himself a ransom (I Tim. 2:6). If God's will of I Timothy 2:4 means that which He wants all men without exception to do, God wants all men without exception to use His means to come to Christ for salvation. However, Christ said not only that man is incapable of coming to Him but also that men will not come to Him: "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (John 5:40). "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him..." (John 6:44).

Jesus Christ did not become a ransom for all men without exception. A ransom is of such a nature that when paid, it automatically legally frees the persons for whom it was intended. When Christ laid down His life, He became a ransom. The ransom was already secure before its subjective application in the hearts of those for whom Christ died. Nothing can change what Christ did. If a person is persuaded that Christ became a ransom for all men without exception, he is forced to believe in universal redemption. If he says that the Lord's unwillingness that any should perish means all men without exception, he will have to deny the second advent of Jesus Christ. This will

force him to the third conclusion that God changed His purpose to conform to the will of man, but that would make God mutable.

There is much discussion over two verbs in the New Testament used to describe God's will. One is *thelo*, which is used in I Timothy 2:4, and the other is *boulomai*, which is used in II Peter 3:9. Out of the 207 times *thelo* is used in the New Testament, it applies to either the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit. Out of the 34 times *boulomai* is used in the New Testament, seven apply to one of the Persons in the Godhead (Matt. 11:27; Luke 10:22; 22:42; I Cor. 12:11; Heb. 6:17; James 1:18; II Pet. 3:9). Both of these verbs are used for the first time in the same passage of Scripture in Matthew 1:19 "Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing [present active participle of *thelo*] to make her a publick example, was minded [aorist passive indicative of *boulomai*] to put her away privily [secretly]." The following are explanations that have been given of these two verbs: (1) Matthew made a distinction between willing (*thelo*) and wishing (*boulomai*), between purpose (*thelo*) and desire (*boulomai*). (2) The stronger word is *thelo*. It expresses a determination, purpose, or decree. It is active resolution, the will urging on to action. The lesser word (*boulomai*) means to have a mind, to desire, or sometimes a little stronger meaning, running into the sense of purpose. (3) The meaning of *boulomai* is to will, that is, to be willing, be disposed, be minded, or to intend. Whereas, the meaning of *thelo* is to determine, choose, prefer, wish, delight in, or desire.

People who use II Peter 3:9 as a proof text to teach that this does not refer to God's decree but to God's desire, in other words God purposes one thing while desiring something entirely different, are guilty of dualism. What is the proper distinction between what some men call God's decretive will and His perceptive will?

Great confusion is introduced into the subject of God's will when men divide God's will into decretive and perceptive wills as though His will is more than one. They say the decretive is God's will of purpose whereby He decrees all things to come to pass. It is sometimes called God's secret will. They teach that God's perceptive will is His will of command whereby He declares man's duty. It is sometimes called God's revealed will. Thus, they are persuaded that II Peter 3:9 refers to God's perceptive will which tells us what God desires to happen. Some of them have declared that "not willing" (*me boulomenos*) anyone to perish does not express a decree, but describes God's wish or desire because He longs that all would be saved but knows many reject Him.

God's will is one (Job 23:13) with decretive and perceptive aspects. The decretive aspect of God's will is God's purpose for Himself and what He will do. The perceptive aspect of God's will is His will for us and what He wants us to do. The adjective "perceptive" means having the power or faculty of perception. It refers to cognition, understanding, or immediate or intuitive recognition. The perceptive aspect of God's will declares the obedience which pleases Him. It signifies what men ought to do though they are unable in themselves to do it. God does not desire the repentance of all men without exception; He demands it in both Old and New Testaments. God commanded Israel to repent. Paul, in his message to the Athenians, told them that God commands all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30). A frequently repeated question is, why does God command men to do something they cannot do? The answer is, in the first place, the interrogators do not understand the distinction between spiritual inability and natural ability. What men are capable of doing naturally, they are incapable of doing spiritually. Contrary to the opinion that God is delaying His return because He wants as many people as possible to be saved, God can never decree to save a certain number of people from among mankind and also desire the salvation of all men without exception. That would make God, with whom there can be no doublemindedness, doubleminded.

The will of God is beyond the will of man to control. God is carrying out one purpose, by one plan, and on one principle to accomplish one goal.

The unregenerate man is doubleminded. He desires one thing while doing another. He cannot do what he desires because he is constrained or restricted by circumstances. Therefore, the sinner cannot determine anything absolutely. Although he does not recognize God, he is restricted by circumstances which are controlled by the sovereign God of the universe. The unregenerate person may boast that he will do thus and so tomorrow, but he is a fool (Luke 12:16-20). The regenerated man is in a different position from the unregenerated man. The regenerated man's will is subservient to the will of God. He may prefer one thing over another, but the ruling principle in his life is, "If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that" (James 4:15). Grace will enable the believer to submit his will to the decretive and perceptive aspects of the will of the sovereign God. During the days of His flesh on earth, the Lord Jesus Christ had both a human and a Divine will. Praying as the God-Man in the garden of Gethsemane, Christ's uncontaminated human will was made subservient to God's will of purpose for Him: "...not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39). God absolutely considered does not decree one thing while desiring another. He is not constrained by circumstances. He is the Author, the Originator, and the Controller of all circumstances for the fulfillment of His purpose.

Those who affirm God's universal willingness or desire that all men be saved are forced to either (1) believe in universal salvation, (2) deny the Lord's second coming, or (3) believe God must change His purpose in order to conform to the will of man. Which horn of the dilemma will they take? If God purposed all men to be saved, He will bring it to pass (Job 23:13; Is. 46:9-11). Since God did not purpose all men to be saved, Christ will return when God's longsuffering ends. His longsuffering will terminate when all the elect have come to repentance. Furthermore, God will never change His will to conform to the will of man. That would make God mutable.

## THE OBJECTS OF GOD'S LONGSUFFERING ARE BROUGHT TO REPENTANCE

The elect are the ones brought to repentance by the Spirit of regeneration. God is longsuffering toward the elect, unwilling that any of them should perish but that all of them should come to repentance. In II Peter 3:9, the antecedent of "any" and "all" is "us-ward [you]" (humas, accusative second person plural of humeis, which means you). God decreed that all the elect should come to repentance. The Greek noun translated "repentance" means a change of mind, and the verb form means to change one's mind. Contrary to the teaching of many that the noun "repentance" means only a change of mind or the verb means only to change one's mind, we must not forget that a man's doctrine is reflected in his translation of particular Greek nouns and verbs. The verb for repentance (metanoeo) is a compound verb. It means to understand "after a change." A mere change of mind is a repentance that needs to be repented of. Men cannot repent until they have been changed by God's grace. Men change their opinions, but God alone can change their whole personalities. God not only gives a new heart and a new spirit, but He also writes His laws in our minds and in our hearts (Heb. 8:10). Men can neither think themselves to nor be educated to repentance. Furthermore, no human can persuade a sinner to repent toward God. God first turns an individual by grace in order that he can in turn repent: "Surely after that I was turned, I repented..." (Jer. 31:19). Repentance is God's gift: "...God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18).

Persons who do not fear God have never repented. The unrepentant are described as having no fear of God: "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:18). There is fear, and there is fear of man and fear of God. There is a certain amount of fear by man of other men, but "the fear of man bringeth a snare..." (Prov. 29:25). On the other hand, God said, "...I will put my fear in their [children of God] hearts, that they shall not depart from me" (Jer. 32:40). The one who fears God has nothing else to fear. On the other hand, the one who fears not God has much to fear. He is the hopeless victim of every fear and is therefore a coward. Bravery is natural, not spiritual. Mere physical or natural bravery is blasphemy. Blasphemy is the crime of assuming to oneself the right or qualities of God Almighty, and such so-called bravery always suffers defeat. There is a difference between natural courage and spiritual or holy boldness. Holy boldness is worshipful because it knows that holy boldness comes from God alone. Therefore, the fear of God makes the Christian brave and victorious in what appears to men to be defeat. The repentant thief asked the unrepentant thief, "Dost not thou fear God?" (Lk. 23:40).

Scripture defines Christianity variantly. It is not always described by the same word. Christianity is sometimes spoken of as trust "in" the Lord, love "for" God, obedience "to" God, and fear "of" God. Reverential fear is the beginning of understanding. Reverential fear of God is a permanent principle wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, and it is a token of Divine election (Jer. 32:39, 40). This principle is constantly stimulated by the name, the word, and the worship of God. God's name is fearful: "...that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD" (Deut. 28:58). The word of God is fearful: "Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed: but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded" (Prov. 13:13). Worship is fearful: "But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple" (Ps. 5:7). The goodness of God leads one to repentance, and when one has repented, he has a reverential fear for God.

God has ordained that we should preach the gospel to lead men to repentance. God quickens one by His Spirit, but there is not an instance recorded in God's word where God has regenerated one and has not sent the gospel to him, and he repented. The sovereign God of the universe is not so weak that He cannot send someone to give the message to those He has regenerated. All that God elected to be saved and for whom Christ died will come to repentance, and they will demonstrate their repentance by having a godly, reverential fear.

The following questions emphasize the necessity for repentance: (1) Can man repent apart from the new birth? (2) Does God preserve the elect until they come to repentance? (3) Are aborted babies nonelect? (4) What about those who die without repentance? Does the Bible not say that "...except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish?" (Luke 13:3). (5) Is God's sovereignty limited? (6) What is the purpose of the gospel?

The text we have been studying shows that the Lord's will mentioned in II Peter 3:9 is the decretive and not the perceptive aspect of God's will. (1) We are called the elect (I Pet. 1:2). (2) We are called a chosen generation (I Pet. 2:9). (3) We have received like precious faith by Divine allotment (II Pet. 1:1). (4) We are commanded to make our calling and election sure (II Pet. 1:10). (5) We are called beloved (II Pet. 3:1). (6) We are distinguished from the scoffers (II Pet. 3:3, 4).

## **SECTION II**

### **THE IMMEDIATE CONTEXT of II Peter 3:9**

## PREFACE TO SECTION II

The immediate context is that which is nearest. Therefore, we will look primarily at II Peter. A few thoughts will be given from I Peter to show the importance of considering all of Peter's writings. The contrast between election and nonelection will be clearly perceptible in our investigation of the immediate context.

A comparison of I Peter 1:1 "PETER, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" with II Peter 1:1 "SIMON PETER, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" will show that they differ. The content of Peter's first and second Epistles reveal that he addressed "believers" one way in the first and another way in the second. His first Epistle was written to elevate our thoughts and strengthen us against all opposition that comes from without. His second Epistle was given to strengthen us against our enemy seducing us from within. Peter called attention to himself as "PETER, an apostle of Jesus Christ" in his first Epistle, but he added "SIMON PETER, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ" in his second Epistle. The name "Simon" means to hearken, and the name "Peter" means a stone: "...And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone" (John 1:42).

Higher critics do not believe the two Epistles by Peter should be included in the sacred canon. They think Peter, an ignorant fisherman who did not graduate from the schools of the prophets, was not qualified to write these two Epistles. Thus, they classify themselves with the rulers, elders, and scribes who opposed the teaching by Peter and John (Acts 4:5, 13). But Peter named himself as an apostle writing to the elect out of the dispersion (I Pet. 1:1, 2). There is nothing in the first Epistle that would contradict anything else in all of Scripture. Peter's second Epistle is more opposed by higher critics than his first as being part of the sacred canon. But internal evidence proves the writer of the first Epistle also wrote the second (II Pet. 3:1, 2). Since there is a second Epistle there must also be a first. Peter, the author of both Epistles, used language familiar to the Jewish people he addressed.

Simon Peter was a person who listened to truth, became settled, and therefore honored God. His settled state was revealed on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). This stable person wrote these two Epistles in order to lift those to whom he wrote above the things to which they were subjected and elevate their thinking. Those to whom God is longsuffering were clearly identified by Peter. He recorded three significant things in I Peter 1:2 concerning those to whom he wrote: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied." (1) They are elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. (2) Their election is through sanctification of the Spirit. (3) This positional sanctification, which is the fruit of Divine election, is to obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. All three Persons in the Godhead are named in this verse: Father, Spirit, and Son. Election is a family secret. It is an act of the sovereign God which is inaccessible to us except in its effects.

## PETER WROTE TO THE ELECT

Those to whom Peter wrote are elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. Two areas to be avoided in the subject of election are teaching nothing but election and teaching no election. Both are incorrect, and it might be debatable which is worse. Among the first group are antinomians, fatalists, and noncontributors to the support and proclamation of the whole counsel of God. So-called grace people who talk about grace and Christian freedom while living immoral lives are antinomian in character. Those who deny election hate this doctrine and misinterpret Scripture references that teach it.

Election is a Biblical doctrine. We are not to think of God's elect as those who have decided for Christ. We must think of them as those whom God decided to save. The elect's action is the reaction to God's act of having bestowed upon them the principle of life. The word election is used various ways in Scripture:

1. Sometimes it refers to excellency (Judg. 20:16; II Chron. 13:3; Ex. 14:7).
2. Election sometimes signifies the temporary designation of some person or persons to fill a particular office or station in the assembly or in civil life. Saul and Judas illustrate this (I Sam. 10:24; John 6:70). The disciples of the Lord also illustrate it (John 15:16).
3. Election is used in the sense of God taking a whole nation or a body of men into covenant with Himself by giving them the advantage of revelation (Deut. 7:6). The entire nation of Israel was brought into covenant relationship with God.
4. Sometimes election refers to that eternal, particular, and immutable act of the sovereign God where He selected some from among mankind to be saved by the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. This is personal election (Ps. 65:4; John 10:3).
5. Election sometimes signifies that gracious act of the Holy Spirit whereby God actually separates His chosen ones from the world by the effectual call (I Pet. 1:1, 2; John 15:19).
6. Christians are a chosen generation (I Pet. 2:9). They are chosen by purpose and by act.
7. Election is used objectively (Rom. 11:7). Paul's answer here was negative but not in such a way as to deny Israel's apostasy. Over against Israel's national apostasy, God has elected and reserved for Himself a remnant. There is sustained differentiation in the whole passage between the mass of Israel and the 7,000 who had not bowed to Baal (v. 4), between the mass of Israel and the remnant (v. 5), and between the hardened and the election of grace (v. 7).
8. Election is everywhere asserted to be God's and not man's act (Rom. 9:13; 11:5; Eph. 1:4; I Thess. 5:9; II Thess. 2:13).



9. Election is to salvation and holiness of life, not because the elect are seen to be holy. To say that salvation and holiness are the reason men were elected is to make the effect antecedent to the cause.

10. Knowledge of God infers a decree. God could not foreknow unless He decreed. If a thing is seen as being future, it is not of itself that it is future. That which is seen to exist is only the effect; but, where is the cause? If things that come to pass in time have not the reason of their own futurity in themselves, it must be in God. To say the ground of their futurity is in the things themselves is a contradiction. The same thing would be both the cause and the effect of itself. This would deny that God is the uncaused cause of all things.

11. God decrees all things harmoniously. When God decreed conformity to Christ in Romans 8:29, He decreed calling, justification, and glorification, all of which are harmonious and of equal extent. The decree of our everlasting, or eternal, state is not before calling and justification. Hence, means are connected with the decree (Acts 13:48; II Thess. 2:13, 14). The desired end and means are connected in Romans 8:28-31 and II Timothy 1:9, 10. There is only one immutable decree. It consists of but one purpose, one foreknowledge, and one good pleasure concerning the infallible ordination of God's elect to glory. It may be said that there are two acts to this decree, one concerning means and the other concerning end. But both are bound up in the immutability of God's counsel (Heb. 6:17).

12. If there is no Divine election, it would not be God who makes men to differ. To attribute election to man's faith is to ascribe to man the glory which belongs only to God. There is no such thing as God's resolving beforehand that He would have some persons to be His own and yet not determine who they should be.

13. Election cannot take place at the point of faith (Titus 1:1-2; II Tim. 1:9). If election follows faith, as Arminians teach, faith would be the cause and the effect of the same thing. However, the end and the meritorious cause of any one act cannot be the same. The Arminian teaching would be the same as saying believe and persevere in faith to the end and I will choose you before the foundation of the world. This is absurd. Election is required to make one persevere in the faith. Perseverance in the faith is not required for Divine election. Election is not of the faithful, but faith is of the elect.

14. Election is the foundation of salvation. To deny election is to deny the foundation of salvation. There is nothing problematic about election (Rom. 8; Eph. 1). Men must follow the rule of sobriety and not seek to be wise above that which is written. They must not be silent where God speaks, and they must not speculate beyond the boundaries God has given in His revealed wisdom.

15. Divine election should never be considered apart from Jesus Christ. It cannot be understood and should not be discussed apart from saving faith. Jesus Christ is the mirror of Divine election. Inquiry into Divine election can be a hazardous journey when it is attempted by the regions of one's own will. However, it is a joyous experience when one has been made to see his election in Jesus Christ. Hence, Christ is the mirror in which one contemplates his election. Election is not hidden in the sense that there are no answers to questions about it. It is hidden in the sense that apart from Christ we may not penetrate into the hiddenness of God's will. Predestination cannot be searched and found in the secret counsel of God, but it must be sought in the word of God in which it is revealed. This word of God leads to Christ who is the book of life in which are contained all the

names of those who shall live eternally. The passages that refer to the book of life indicate the depth aspect of salvation. There is a profound connection between election and the book of life.

The order is election, positional sanctification, practical sanctification, and then assurance of election (II Pet. 1:10). It is impossible to walk the way of assurance apart from practical sanctification which is the fruit of positional sanctification. Practical sanctification flows from positional sanctification, and it results in assurance of Divine election.

Election is "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (I Pet. 1:2). The order in this verse cannot be reversed without incorrectly handling the Scriptures. God's determination is eternal; therefore, the nature of this prearrangement depends on God's, not man's, choice and free will. In the Greek, "according to foreknowledge" is kata prognosin. The preposition kata denotes motion or direction from the higher to the lower, from cause to effect. It also implies domination or control over someone or something. The noun prognosin, from prognosis, means more than previous knowledge. Peter is the only writer who used this noun (I Pet. 1:2; Acts 2:23). When speaking of Christ's crucifixion he said, "Him, being delivered by the determinate [horismene, perfect passive participle of horidzo, which means having been fixed determinately] counsel [boule, which means purpose or decree] and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). The crucifixion of Jesus Christ was in God's Divine purpose. Since the perfect tense is used, it was a Divine necessity because it was His determined will. A mere previous knowledge will not work in either this passage or in I Peter 1:2.

Although the noun prognosis occurs only twice, the verb prognosko is used in I Peter 1:20 "Who verily was foreordained [prognosmenou, perfect passive participle of prognosko, which means having been foreordained] before the foundation of the world...." This verb is used variantly in Scripture: (1) It is used in connection with our advanced knowledge (II Pet. 3:17; Acts 26:5). (2) It means appointment or foreordination by God (I Pet. 1:20). (3) It speaks of God's appointment or foreordination of the subjects for future blessings (Rom. 8:29). Jesus Christ was not merely foreknown to submit to the work of the cross. He was foreordained to it (I Pet. 1:20). That which was foreknown was determined. There can be no uncertainty in God's knowledge.

The man is blind who sees arbitrariness in the freedom of the sovereign God but does not see arbitrariness in himself. On the other hand, man is blind to the truth of election when he makes it an occasion of self-justification. Paul knew the Thessalonians' election by their work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope (I Thess. 1:3, 4). One who does not produce the characteristics of those saved by God's grace are in the same category with the religious Pharisees who talked about election, but they were lost. Many give lip service to the great truths of grace whose lives do not measure up to what they profess to believe. This was a fault with the Jewish people who knew they were God's chosen nation. Our Lord battled that with the religious Pharisees while He was on earth. They replied to the Lord's statement, "ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," by claiming they were the seed of Abraham and had never been in bondage to any man (John 8:32, 33). But Christ told these same people they were of their father the Devil (John 8:44). Jeremiah encountered the same problem with the apostate Jews who claimed to be God's chosen people while they were conducting themselves like the unsaved (Jer. 7; 8). Micah also condemned this characteristic of the reprobate Jews who thought they were God's chosen people (Mic. 3:8-11). The conflict between our Lord and the Pharisees was concerning God's election. But there is a difference between God's electing a nation as a nation and His electing some to salvation from among those

people. The Bible does not present election in a way of self-exaltation but in a way of humility before God.

Contrary to self-exaltation, the regenerated person who has been brought to the knowledge of his salvation may ask the following questions: Why did God choose me? Why was He long-suffering to me until I came to repentance? Why did He give me all things pertaining to godliness in the Christian life to equip me? Why has He given me a living hope? Why has my sovereign God assured me that when I have by my finite understanding in my numbered days exhausted the way of salvation, He will give eternity to disclose to my wondering gaze the full meaning of so great salvation? God is sovereign and can do what He pleases with His own. There is no place for pride in the grace of the sovereign God.

Those to whom Peter wrote had been sanctified by the work of the Holy Spirit (I Pet. 1:2). God's purpose in election is fulfilled by the agency of the setting apart work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. This is positional sanctification (I Cor. 1:2; Heb. 10:12-14). The efficacious work of Jesus Christ on the cross is the means of the effectual work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. Those whom God has chosen do not cooperate with the Holy Spirit in regeneration. The elect sinner is quickened by the Spirit of God. He is not conscious of it when it takes place. The most common interpretation of I Peter 1:2 is that the Spirit takes hold of the chosen and brings them to the act of faith in Christ and His precious blood. Those who embrace this view assume the obedience here is not of the saint but of the sinner. They believe the Spirit brings the lost sinner to the place where "he puts his faith in the Savior." They state that the hand of faith must be energized by the Spirit. Their explanation is that salvation is the work of God, but each sinner by an act of his own will places his faith in the Savior. They admit they cannot reconcile God's choice (John 15:16) with whosoever will (Rev. 22:17), but they profess to believe both statements.

Three questions are important at this point: (1) What kind of faith does the sinner have? The answer may be determined by examining the kind of faith the saint has. The saint's faith is called "holy faith" (Jude 20) and "the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). God gives nothing unholy; therefore, the saint's faith is holy. A person cannot be regenerated by his unsanctified faith. Those who believe faith is a human condition to the new birth heretically assign to faith a subjective quality that they think God finds to His satisfaction. (2) Can unsanctified faith be the means of the new birth? Unsanctified faith cannot be the spiritual means by which we are united with Christ. (3) How can faith which is the fruit of regeneration be its cause? Faith is the fruit of regeneration; therefore, it cannot be the cause. That would be like saying the effect is the cause of itself. The faith that God gives cannot be the cause of itself. Obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Christ follow sanctification of the Spirit: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied" (I Pet. 1:2).

Those to whom Peter wrote were obedient. They had been elected according to God's foreordination through positional sanctification of the Spirit to obedience (I Pet. 1:2). Every person is a child of either obedience or disobedience. The children of disobedience have not come to know the Lord because they have not been regenerated (Eph. 2:1-3). The children of obedience are the recipients of God's grace. The preposition "unto" (eis) of I Peter 1:2, which precedes the word "obedience," governs the accusative case word used and denotes purpose. The purpose of election is obedience.

The design of election is a holy Christian life (Eph. 1:4). The purpose of predestination is that we might be conformed to Christ (Rom. 8:29). Redemption is determined for our purification (Titus 2:14). The reason for our effectual calling is that we have a worthy vocation or manner of life (Eph. 4:1). God's truth has been committed to us in order that we might be sanctified (John 17:17). Our restoration from sin is that we might be led in the path of righteousness for His name's sake (Ps. 23:3). God chastens us that we might be partakers of holiness without which no man can see the Lord (Heb. 12:10).

Obedient children gird up the loins of their minds, do not fashion themselves according to their former lusts, live holy lives, and fear displeasing God. Peter exhorted his readers to "gird up the loins of your mind" (I Pet. 1:13). This is a metaphor equivalent to the common expression, "roll up your sleeves." They should not fashion themselves according to their former lusts (v. 14). The word for "fashioning" (suschematidzomenoi, present middle participle of suschematidzomai), being in the middle voice, indicates that they should not participate in or be conformed to things to which they had been accustomed. Paul used this same word to command the Roman Christians to not be conformed to the world (Rom. 12:2). Peter commanded Christians to be holy in all manner of life because the Lord is holy. This holiness is the holiness of kind, not the holiness of equality (I Pet. 1:15, 16). We are regenerated to a holy life, and we shall be holy, not absolutely but relatively. It is a holiness of likeness. True devotion to God is holy living, living a separated life, and manifesting a holy life. Christian ethics finds its standard in a holy God and not in an unholy world. Obedient children of God pass the time of their sojourning here in reverential fear lest they displease their heavenly Father (I Pet. 1:17).

Our positional sanctification, which involves regeneration, is to obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ (I Pet. 1:2). Many explain that since obedience precedes the sprinkling of blood in this verse, the act of faith results in cleansing by Christ's blood, which is justification. They allege that justification is a removal of the guilt and penalty of sin and the imputation of Christ's righteousness. They believe the Father chooses, the Spirit energizes the sinner's faith, and the Son cleanses by His blood in response to that faith. However, this is not the teaching of Scripture.

The Greek word for "sprinkling" in this verse is the accusative of hrantismos. Every reference to sprinkling is related to the Jews. Peter was addressing the strangers scattered, the Jews of the dispersion. They were elect according to God's foreordination to obedience and sprinkling of blood. The only other places this word, either in its noun or verb form, is used is in Hebrews, which was also written to Hebrew believers.

Peter was not talking about the application of Christ's blood to us in regeneration. He was speaking of the sprinkling of blood typified in the offering of the red heifer of Numbers 19, which is God's provision for His own in their worship and pilgrimage on earth. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses and just keeps on cleansing us from our sins: "...the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth [katharidzei, present active indicative of katharidzo, which means cleansing] us from all sin" (I John 1:7). This is not the initial but the continual cleansing. Aaron, a type of Jesus Christ as High Priest, was not involved in the offering of the red heifer (Num. 19). Eleazar, a type of the common priesthood of all believers, was involved in this offering. Conclusively, the sprinkling of the blood of Christ is the application Christians make in our obedience in our Christian lives. We make application of God's provision for our walk as aliens in this world.

Verses 3-5 of I Peter 1 are important in connection with obedience: God has "begotten us again [anagennesas, aorist active participle of anagennao, which means having been born again]". We have been regenerated from above to a living hope "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Our inheritance is completed, but we are presently being secured by the power of God for that heavenly inheritance. The salvation of our souls is already completed, but our bodies have not yet been changed. The changing of our bodies will be the completion of our salvation.

Observe the distinction Peter made between "now" and "then." We "now" rejoice for only a season because of our trials (v. 6), but we shall "then" receive the end of our faith, which is the consummation (v. 9). "Now," trials are necessary. The strength of our faith is made known through testing. Every trial in the life of a Christian is for the perfection of his character. The Christian life is a life of one trial after the other. Each trial prepares the Christian for a greater one. But no trial will overtake us but that God has already made a way of escape (I Cor. 10:13). "Now," Christ is known by us imperfectly. "Then," we will know Him as we are known. "Now," we are in a state of expectation. "Then," there will be no expectation because we will be with Christ in glory. "Now," we are feeling distress. "Then," in the presence of Jesus Christ we will feel unspeakable joy.

Christians know that they will overcome because they are being preserved. We are being kept through the power of God-given faith (I Pet. 1:21). The believer is a purified person who purifies himself by obeying the truth (v. 22). This is not positional purification. We cannot do that. We have already been purified positionally by regeneration. But we purify ourselves conditionally. Faith is the fruit of regeneration, and it produces obedience. Truth excites, transforms, molds, and impels the child of God. The hallmark of Christians is relative purity. Faith sees what the eyes cannot. Hope foresees. It reaches out into the future. Love longs for what we see and foresee. By faith we stand. By hope we soar spiritually, like the eagle. By love we are at our best (v. 22). Obeying the truth by means of the Spirit results in genuine brotherly love.

## THE ELECT ARE RECIPIENTS OF EQUALLY VALUABLE FAITH

Peter's second Epistle was addressed to the ones having received equally valuable faith by Divine allotment in the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ (II Pet. 1:1). We receive only that which was assigned to us by the sovereign God before the world began. Peter continued his dissertation of sanctification in his second Epistle. Those who had been positionally sanctified in regeneration should be progressively sanctified. In II Peter 1:1-11, the following points are emphasized: (1) qualifications for progressive sanctification (vv. 1-4), (2) the path of progressive sanctification (vv. 5-8), and (3) the consummation of progressive sanctification (vv. 9-11). Between faith, which is a present possession (v. 1), and the kingdom, which is a future possession (v. 11), is the Christian's responsibility.

The qualifications for progressive sanctification are listed (II Pet. 1:1-4). These verses emphasize what we have in Christ as the elect of God. We presently have equally valuable faith with the apostles, the righteousness of God the Savior, the gift of all things that pertain to life and godliness, and priceless promises. These things are ours in order that we might share in Divine characteristics thus escaping the corruption that is in the world. Accordingly, God has qualified us for progressive sanctification in which we are involved as long as we are in time, looking to that "glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

The apostle was demonstrating that all of his addressees had received by Divine appointment this equally valuable faith. It is received by God's act of regeneration the new birth. Therefore, all Christians are equal in their standing before God. Faith is God's gift (Eph. 2:8). No one naturally possesses this faith. It is valuable because it is called "holy faith" (Jude 20). The person who has this faith as the gift of God in regeneration will embrace Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord by that God-given faith.

The apostle Paul spoke of unfeigned faith that was in Timothy (II Tim. 1:5). This was Paul's valedictory address to Timothy, his child in the ministry. There is a lot of so-called faith today that is not saving faith. Paul was thankful for the faith of Timothy which he was persuaded was genuine. Paul closed his first Epistle to Timothy by giving an example of fidelity, which is characteristic of genuine faith, in the midst of revolt.

The character of the faith of both Paul and Timothy is portrayed in the first chapter of II Timothy. Paul called to mind Timothy's "unfeigned [anupokritou, genitive of anupokritos, which means sincere, genuine, or unhypocritical] faith." (v. 5). (1) Unfeigned faith is not merely mental assent, but it is a complete trust in God (Rom. 10:9, 10). (2) Unfeigned faith is correctly placed in Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31). (3) It is the root from which all other graces spring. Without genuine faith there are no other graces. There is no root from which those graces may spring. (4) Unfeigned faith is presented in three stages: the morning, or adolescence of faith exemplified in Timothy; the noon time of faith exemplified in his mother Eunice; and the evening time of faith exemplified in his grandmother Lois.

Paul's exhortation to Timothy to rekindle his gift (v. 6) was connected with his assurance of Timothy's faith. In view of the problems of apostasy having begun and false teaching attracting great crowds in Ephesus, Timothy needed to rekindle his faith. The problems had caused Timothy's zeal to diminish. Timothy's gift was more clearly defined by the negative statement, "God hath not given [edoken, aorist active indicative of didomi, which means has given] us the spirit of fear..." (v. 7). The aorist active indicative verb focuses attention on when the gift took place. It took place at some point in past time. Timothy must not be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord nor of Paul, but he should suffer hardship with the gospel according to the power of God (II Tim. 1:8).

The apostle then reminded Timothy of the truth of the gospel (vv. 9, 10). God is the one having saved and having called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace. These things were given to the elect of God even before the world began. God calls those things that are not as though they were (Rom. 4:17). Since the gospel reaches only those who are effectually called, it must be concluded that the salvation which is effected by the call is not the salvation that preceded the call. There is an eternal salvation in the mind of God. This is what everyone whom the Father chose in Christ had even before the foundation of the world. The effectual call gives God His rightful place as the prime mover in a true conversion experience. Therefore, the effectual call is personal (Luke 19:5), without repentance (Rom. 11:29), and made sure (II Pet. 1:10).

Timothy was reminded that Paul was destined to be a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the gospel (v. 11). For this reason he was suffering hardships that anyone suffers for standing for the whole counsel of God. But Paul was unashamed of the gospel. This reminds us of Paul's statement in Romans 1:16 "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation...." Paul said he was willing to endure all things for the elect's sake that they may come to the knowledge of the truth (II Tim. 2:10).

Observe the perfect tense verbs in Paul's declaration in verse 12 "...for I know [oida, perfect active indicative of eido, which means have known] whom I have believed [pepisteuka, perfect active indicative of pisteuo, which means have believed] and am persuaded [pepeismai, perfect passive indicative of peitho, which means have been convinced or persuaded]...." Paul's knowledge was acquired by Divine revelation. Both the truth that had been committed to him and the knowledge of that truth were by Divine revelation (Gal. 1:12). He also knew in whom he had believed. This was a perfect state of believing. Furthermore, he was permanently persuaded or convinced. Hence, the emphasis here is on God's ability. At some point in time Paul had been convinced that God was able to keep, or protect, his deposit.

The deposit, contrary to the teaching of most, was not Paul's salvation. He was not discussing his salvation. The deposit was the truth God had given Paul to preach. In the face of all the false prophets and teachers, he was convinced that God was capable of protecting His truth regardless of how much it was being perverted by them. Heretics, false teachers, critics, etc., arise, but God is able to guard the truth that He has committed to His messengers for the elect who have not yet come to the knowledge of truth. Suffering for false accusations from the enemies of truth fades into insignificance in the presence of knowledge and the understanding that truth is revealed by God, and God is able to preserve His truth.

The context of II Timothy 1:12 proves that the deposit is the truth God commits to His messengers. The message that God had given to Paul by Divine revelation was given by Paul to Timothy (II

Tim. 1:13, 14). Timothy had heard it from Paul's lips. Although God is able to protect His truth for the elect, that did not eliminate Timothy's responsibility. He must guard the good deposit by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. God's ability does not allow the elect to become idle and useless.

Paul used his own desertion by his friends as an example to Timothy. In spite of the opposition Timothy received, he should be strong in the grace that is in Jesus Christ, declare the truth he had heard from Paul, and commit the same deposit to faithful men (II Tim. 2:1, 2). No matter what the criticism is of a certain verse of Scripture, God is capable of protecting His truth. The truth of God is not restricted to one verse, a few verses, or many verses. Any Christian who has a workable knowledge of all the word of God can know the truth. Paul was so devoted to truth that he stated that none of his persecutors persuaded him. In order that he might finish his life span with joy and the ministry (deposit) to solemnly declare the gospel of the grace of God, he was not pretending that his life was precious to himself (Acts 20:24).

God is able to preserve the deposit for the sake of the elect regardless of apostasy. He is able to keep His elect until the kingdom (II Tim. 4:18). He is able to preserve the kingdom for the elect (I Pet. 1:3, 5).

Every person who has God-given faith wants his faith to be continually tested, not according to the opinions of men but according to the word of God. God-given faith is genuine, fruitful, forceful, powerful, faithful, and fearful. God did not give us the spirit of timidity (II Tim. 1:7), but He gave us the spirit of awe in the presence of God and His word. Holy reverential fear is the fear that God puts in the heart of His people that they might not depart from Him (Jer. 32:40).



## THE ELECT'S ACTIVITY OF FAITH

God-given faith does not lie dormant. The Epistle to the Hebrews gives a declaration of faith's action. The excellency of faith is discussed throughout Hebrews 11. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for (v. 1). The absence of the article in the Greek from the word faith in this verse shows that faith should be treated abstractly. Hence, it is used objectively rather than subjectively. The writer was not discussing subjective faith in the beginning of the chapter. Subjective faith is not the assurance of our hope. If it were, everyone who does not have faith but claims to have it would have assurance of hope. The objective revelation of God's word gives foundation to faith. Faith does not bestow reality where there is none. Subjective faith, which is God's gift to the elect in regeneration, is only the channel through which objective faith flows. Subjective faith alone does not save.

Saving faith sees the invisible Christ. Objective faith concerning the Person and Work of Jesus Christ gives subjective faith assurance, power, and victory. There is no assurance, power, or victory apart from objective truth. Therefore, distinction must be made between the act of believing and that which is believed. There is nothing simple about saving faith. It comes from God. It is a very complex subject that must be studied in the light of all the revelation of God in order to conclude what is true faith. It is not enough for a person to say, "I feel this" or "I believe this is right." Reason corrects the senses of feeling, tasting, hearing, seeing, etc. People of the world claim that seeing is believing, but Christians are assured that believing is seeing. Reason alone will not suffice. Faith must correct reason. Reason works in us but not in the same sense that it does in the unregenerate. The unregenerate will use his reasoning to try to make anything fit what he wants to believe. But faith is given to God's elect, and that faith corrects reason (Rom. 14:23).

Genuine faith may be compared with prophecy. Prophetic things must be seen in the light of Scripture and not in the light of human reason. This is demonstrated in what John saw in Revelation 20:12 "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." Since this event was prophetic, how did John see it? John was enabled to see by faith what would happen in the end. It was future from his point of view. Hence, faith can be compared with prophecy because they both agree in object.

Both Divine revelation and nature are for the things of the future. We will not need faith when we get to glory. Faith and hope will have served their purpose. Although faith is not the full enjoyment of what we see, it is a foretaste of the reality. Faith is given to the individual when he is regenerated, thus he is given the ability to believe, the ability to lay hold of the things of God set forth in the promises of God. Therefore, our faith in God's promises is not the complete enjoyment of them, but it is a foretaste of that perfect enjoyment.

Both the prophets and John saw by faith the promises of God and welcomed them. My parents lived in the country in a house with a large yard surrounded by a fence. When I visited them, they would see me drive in and greet me before my actual arrival. This is what the patriarchs did with the promises of God. They died without having received the promises, but they saw them and greeted them from a distance. Are you greeting the promises of the resurrection, the second advent of Jesus

Christ, and the establishment of His kingdom as a foretaste of the realization of those promises? The patriarchs saw what was promised, but there was a distance between their faith in the promises and their experiencing the reality of them. There was something in the promises that God gave to Abraham and the patriarchs to exercise both their faith and perseverance. The patriarchs died in faith before receiving the promises. Some of God's promises to His children while they are dwelling on earth may not be experienced by those He calls home through death. Although believers may not be presently enjoying the reality of many things promised us, by faith we see them (Eph. 1:18, 19). We can see things we have never seen before because God is the Author of both our hearing and our seeing.

What are promises? They are the overflowings of God's love and care for His own: "Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them" (Is. 42:9). God was speaking to Isaiah when He said He declared new things. He spoke many new things to the apostles, and those things are recorded in the Scriptures. The faith once delivered to the saints has been completed. We do not have any new promises. All the promises of God to His own are recorded in Holy Scripture. That does not mean that we understand and know all the promises, but they are there and that is why we are to continue to investigate the word of God in order that we might learn His promises. By faith we see the things God has promised before they come to pass. That is the faith by which the Israelites lived and died without having received the fulfillment of those promises in their lifetime. But they had a foretaste of them.

The Hebrew believers were warned not to become sluggish but to be imitators of the ones who through faith and patience are inheriting the promises (Heb. 6:12). The patriarchs saw the coming of Jesus Christ in the distance, and that was adequate for them. Visible manifestations of God, signs, or miracles are not necessary to faith. The recipient of faith is satisfied with listening to Scripture and letting it speak to him. The person with true faith does not question the Scriptures or seek to go beyond the revelation of God's mind. Although the believer does not actually experience the promises until God's appointed time, his faith is satisfied with seeing things in God's promises. We have not yet inherited the kingdom, but we see it by faith. We see the time we shall be like Christ when we shall see Him as He is, but we do not yet experience it. Our foretaste of it is a present experience which is sufficient to every person with God-given faith.

Looking at God's promises through the God-given eye of faith enables us to experience a foretaste of the fulfillment of the promises. The promises of God are spiritual food to faith. Many Christians are anemic because they fail to feast on the promises of God. The more of the promises of God that a child of God knows and understands, the stronger is his faith. One must study the promises of God and meditate on them. Meditation causes faith to flourish. Through meditation a Christian chews and digests the promises he has been studying. Faith is the sealing of God's promises. It stands on truth and God's power. This is illustrated in Abraham being strong in faith and believing that what God had promised He was able to bring to pass (Rom. 4:20, 21).

When the believer salutes the reality of God's promises, he is not coldly affected by what he has saluted. One who is coldly affected by God's promises has only an intellectual understanding of them. The truth has not passed through his brain into his heart to arouse his affection. When the mind engages the heart, serious thoughts make way for the greeting. The welcoming is not a great fleshly demonstration, but the emotions manifest themselves in the countenance of the one in whom the truth of God has passed through his mind to his heart. The ones to whom Peter preached on the day of Pentecost heard the truth mentally and were pricked in their hearts. When Peter told them to

repent, they gladly received his word (Acts 2:41). Their reception was not cold and calculated. Their minds, hearts, and wills were affected. This principle applies to every Biblical truth. Regardless of circumstances, the hearts of those who see the promise of God, understand it, and salute it from a distance will be touched by it; and our affection will be exercised in joy.

Abraham saw the reality of God's promise of the coming of Jesus Christ and of the covenant God made with him, and he rejoiced in the reality of those promises nearly 2,000 years before their fruition: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:56). Abraham saw Christ's day by faith and realized it was a day of satisfaction of justice and cancellation of guilt. No wonder he rejoiced. In contrast to Abraham, the unsaved Jews could not understand God's promises, and they sought to persecute the Lord Jesus for saying "...Before Abraham was I am" (John 8:58). Since the promises of God are in Christ, ignorance of the Son of God closes the door to God's promises (II Cor. 1:20). The religious Jews denied the eternal Sonship of Christ; therefore, Christ answered them by using the formula for absolute, timeless existence *eimi* (I am) (John 8:58). Thus, we have the time before Abraham, the time of Abraham, and the time when Christ spoke two thousand years subsequent to Abraham. The remarkable thing about the timeless formula "I am" is that it brings the "before," "of," and "subsequent to" to coincide by using the present active indicative of the verb *eimi*. There is no hope outside the eternal Son of God.

Peter spoke of our loving Jesus Christ even though we have not seen Him. Peter was addressing the elect of God who had been regenerated and converted (I Pet. 1:1, 2). He spoke of their not having seen Jesus Christ with the physical eye; nevertheless, they were presently loving Him, presently believing in Him, and presently rejoicing in Him because they had been permanently honored by the grace of God within them. Having been honored, we are rejoicing with never decreasing gladness: "Whom having not seen, ye love [*agapate*, present active indicative of *agapao*, which means you are loving]; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing [*pisteuontes*, present active participle of *pisteuo*, which means you are believing], ye rejoice [*agalliaсте*, present active indicative of *agalliaomai*, which means you are rejoicing] with joy unspeakable and full of glory [*dedoxασμενη*, perfect passive participle of *doxazō*, which means having been honored]" (I Pet. 1:8).

Paul stated the certainty of the promise: "Being confident [*pepoithos*, perfect active participle of *peitho*, which means having been persuaded] of this very thing, that he which hath begun [*enarxamenos*, aorist middle participle of *enarchomai*, which means having begun] a good work in you will perform [*epitelesei*, progressive future active indicative of *epiteleo*, which means will complete, perform, accomplish, finish or end] it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6). What assurance! This promise of God is a reality to faith. We are assured that what Jesus Christ has begun in us He will keep on performing until its actual perfection in glory. Joy arises from the certainty of God's promises and our assurance of the fulfillment of them.

Joy is manifested two ways. (1) It is manifested in greeting the reality by calling "those things which be not as though they were" (Rom. 4:17). This is by meditation. Meditation is hugging the promise. (2) Joy is manifested by living a life of cheerfulness in duty (I Cor. 15:58; Ps. 119:50). It is impossible to be convinced of the certainty of God's promises without being transformed in life. Let us test the truth of our estate by our affections. Regardless of the way people receive us or treat us, we are responsible to God.

Valuable lessons were learned by Paul and those to whom he wrote. Paul learned that it was good for him that even his close companions abandoned him when he was tried in our vernacular, before the grand jury before he was actually brought to trial the second time. Paul went from being a prisoner of house arrest, where he had the privilege of preaching the gospel (Acts 28:30, 31), to death row to await execution for preaching the gospel. Not one of his companions stood with him when his grand jury trial came up. Nevertheless, the Lord stood with him (II Tim. 4:16, 17). The Lord was showing Paul that all props must be removed in order that he stand with the Lord alone. The ones to whom Paul wrote learned that those who abandoned the apostle Paul were committing a terrible sin. The desertion of Paul by his companions was a reflection against God who they claimed to believe and serve, and it was a reflection against the truth God had given to Paul to proclaim.

By His Divine power, God has given persons with equally valuable faith all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of Himself: "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (II Pet. 1:3). Observe in II Peter 1:1-4 that "have obtained" (lachousin, aorist active participle of lagchano, which means having received) in verse 1, "hath given" (dedoremenes, perfect middle participle of doreomai, which means having been given freely or gratuitously for himself) in verse 3, "hath called" (kalesantos, aorist active participle of kaleo, which means having called) in verse 3, and "are given" (dedoretai, perfect middle indicative of doreomai, which means has given for himself freely or gratuitously) in verse 4 are all the acts of God.

Those who have received equally valuable faith are strangers here: "PETER, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (I Pet. 1:1). Christ's "strangers" reside in a country not our own. Our citizenship is in heaven.

Since our inheritance is reserved in heaven for us, we must be preserved through our earthly pilgrimage that we may eternally enjoy our inheritance. Hence, we have double security. God's chosen ones are not gathered into one place in time. We are scattered, but in the dispensation of the fullness of time we will be gathered together (Eph. 1:10). Although Peter addressed the elect of the dispersion, the principle of his message also applies to the elect Gentiles.

## GIFTS TO THE ELECT

Peter wrote of the mutual "Saviour Jesus Christ" of the strangers (II Pet. 1:1). Connect the word "Saviour" (v. 1) with the word "Lord" (v. 2). Jesus Christ is not only our Savior, but He is also our Lord. No one can embrace Jesus Christ as Savior without at the same time embracing Him as Lord. Many make a distinction between the Saviorhood and Lordship of Jesus Christ, believing one can accept Jesus Christ as Savior but later in life embrace Him as Lord. However, when He becomes one's Savior, He at the same time becomes the Lord of that one's life.

The gifts enumerated in II Peter 1:1-4 equally valuable faith, the righteousness of God our Savior, the gift of all things that pertain to life and godliness, and priceless promises are given to us that we might become sharers in the Divine nature (v. 4). A different Greek word is used for "precious" in verses 1 and 4. The word in verse 4 is from *timios* and can be translated "priceless." The word in verse 1 is from *isotimos* and can be translated "equally valuable." Verse 4 is greatly misunderstood; therefore, it is misrepresented by many to teach the new birth. Some believe the promises include the gospel, salvation, and the free offer of the gospel. The truth that Christ died for a certain number cannot be refuted. Some call it limited atonement, others call it particular redemption, but the meaning is the same. God does not offer salvation to those for whom He did not die on the cross. A minister cannot offer Jesus Christ, and he is not admonished to do so. He preaches Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit alone applies the salvation that Jesus Christ provided for those for whom He died. When that redemptive work of Christ is applied, then the persons to whom His redemptive work has been applied will believe the message as it is preached. They will see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ through the preached word. Conclusively, II Peter 1:4 does not teach gospel regeneration.

Peter had already proved in his first Epistle that one is not born again by these priceless promises: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (I Pet. 1:23-25). "Being born again" (*anagegennemenoi*, perfect passive participle of *anagennaō*) means having been regenerated. Since it is in the perfect tense, it is a completed action with a resultant position before God. One is not born again of corruptible but "of" (*ek*, which means from, out of, or source) "incorruptible" (*aphthartou*, from *phthartos*, which means imperishable, undying, or enduring) seed.

There are three views of I Peter 1:23, the last of which is the better interpretation: (1) mediate regeneration, (2) immediate regeneration which makes a distinction between the living and abiding word, and (3) immediate regeneration which is followed by regeneration being made known by the written word.

Is the source of regeneration the written word or the living Word? Believing in gospel regeneration does not differ from believing in baptismal regeneration. The former requires someone to preach the gospel before a person can be regenerated, and the latter demands someone to baptize a person before he can be regenerated. No one can stand between the sovereign God and the soul of the

individual in Divine quickening. One must not make a god out of the instrument of his salvation. Jesus Christ is the living Seed (Gal. 3:16). But there is a difference between the incorruptible Seed, the origin of the new birth of I Peter 1:23, and the word of God which is our support of verse 25. The Divine agency for making regeneration known is given in the latter part of verse 23: "...through the living and abiding word of God" (NASB). Some Greek students believe the present active participle *dzontos* of verse 23 and *menei* of verse 25 can be taken with *theou* or *logou* of verse 23. However, *menei*, which is the present active indicative of *meno*, is used with *hrema* (v. 25), which the context proves refers primarily to the spoken word, rather than to *logos* in verse 25. It refers to that which is spoken or declared. Peter was demonstrating that having been regenerated of incorruptible seed, this new life is made known by the instrumentality of the word of God.

Those who teach gospel regeneration use James 1:18 as another of their so-called proof texts. The context must be considered to properly interpret the verse. Having decreed it, God brought us forth with the word of truth. The words "begat" (v. 18) and "bringeth forth" (v. 15) come from the same Greek verb. James described maternal and paternal acts. The paternal act in sin is when lust receives the assent of the will to yield, and the maternal act is when the lust is manifested in an act of the will. The conception is the paternal act, and bringing forth is the maternal act. Sin is already there before the act is committed. This may be illustrated by a man who looks on a woman to lust after her. He has already committed adultery in his heart. This is the paternal act. Actually committing the act of adultery would be the maternal act. The maternal act of verse 18 is the bringing forth of the principle of life by means of the word of truth rather than the conception of the principle of life by the Holy Spirit. It is bringing forth that which is already there by means of the gospel.

Bringing forth, not conception, is taught in James 1:18. Life begins with conception. God "hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (II Tim. 1:9, 10). In the exercise of His will, purpose, or decree, God brought us forth by the word of truth so that we might be certain firstfruits of His creatures. God never starts something He does not complete. Regeneration is not a matter of two wills, God's and the sinner's. However, conversion is a matter of two wills, God's and the sinner's. The regenerated sinner is converted when he hears the gospel and gives his consent. Life is brought to light by hearing and embracing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The efficient cause of being brought forth is the will of God. There must be life before it can be brought forth. The instrument God uses to bring forth is the word of truth. Election, redemption, and regeneration all precede bringing forth. The purpose of being brought forth is in order that we might be certain firstfruits of God. The word of truth has an active force upon the will that has been made willing by grace. Unless a person's will has been made willing by grace, the preached word can do nothing for him. The purpose of the word of truth which we hear after God quickens us is to decentralize us and give us a new center.

Peter identified the persons who were given very great priceless promises that by these we might be partakers of a godlike nature. The antecedent of "us" of II Peter 1:4 is those "that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 1:1). Verse 4 is a continuation of verse 3. God called "us" by His own glory (power) and virtue (excellence). Without completing the sentence, Peter continued with "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises." The Greek word for "whereby" (*dia*) can be translated

through, by means of, on account of, or by. Therefore, the meaning is that by means of Christ's glory and excellence He has given to us, the recipients of that equally valuable faith, exceeding great and priceless promises. Faith is the fruit of the precious blood (I Pet. 1:19) that was shed by the precious Christ (I Pet. 2:4). The glory and excellence of Christ's Person attracts those to whom faith has been given, and His power enables them to respond to His glory and excellence. Therefore, by these, believers are saved from the corruption that is in the world, not the corruption of the old nature that is in us. The root of this world's corruption is our own corruption/depravity.

"Promises" can be either unconditional or conditional. They are determined by the context in which they are used. Unconditional promises are our preservation, our strength in weakness, and our comfort in time of sorrow. They assure us because they are dependent on what God will do and not upon things in which we participate. Conditional promises are conditioned upon obedience by the children of obedience. The promises of verse 4 are conditioned upon our obedience. But the new birth is an unconditional promise, not conditioned upon one's obedience. Salvation is of the Lord. The word *gennao*, which refers to the new birth, when used in reference to God is always in the passive voice. This signifies that no one participates in the action of the new birth. However, these are conditional promises. There is not a reference to an unconditional promise in II Peter 1:4. Conclusively, it has no reference to the new birth. Paul made a significant statement concerning God's promises: "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (II Cor. 1:20). Our response to the "yes" of God's promises is the "Amen" of faith. The recipients of faith have been given exceeding great and priceless conditional promises that by these conditional promises we might become sharers in the characteristics of the Divine nature.

The elect do not become Christians by these promises. But by these promises, given to those who have by Divine allotment received Divine faith, they share some of the moral characteristics of God and escape the moral decay that is in the world. God shared some of the characteristics of man in the incarnation in order that redeemed and renewed men might share some of the moral characteristics of God. Peter's use of the word "partakers" does not intimate the communication of the Divine essence, but he referred to those Divine qualities and dispositions which express and resemble the perfections of God. The apostle used the subjunctive mood of the verb "might be" (*genesthe*, which means may become). The subjunctive is the mood of possibility. It indicates what is likely to but not positively will occur. Therefore, he did not speak of being but of becoming godlike because God has given us the gift of all things that pertain to life and godliness (II Pet. 1:3). As soon as one has tasted of the graciousness of God he is spoiled for the world (I Pet. 4:1-6).

The Divine nature that has been given to the elect is not the nature of God Himself but godlikeness. Jesus Christ assumed a nature that had some of the characteristics of men, such as weariness, sorrow, thirst, hunger, limited traveling distance, etc. But He did not assume all of our characteristics. He took upon Himself only those that would not interfere with His impeccable nature. He became like us that the elect might become like Him. Recipients of grace have taken on some of Christ's characteristics. The characteristics we put on were lost in the fall and are renewed after the image of God in regeneration: "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col. 3:10). The present passive participle of the verb "renewed" (*anakainoo*) signifies that the change wrought in us in regeneration is a change that keeps on changing. God does not regenerate the elect to a retarded position. Retardation is of the individual, not of God. God's work of regeneration is perfect and complete. The cause of retardation is our failure to supply in our faith the seven enumerated properties of II Peter 1:5-7.

## THE PATH OF SANCTIFICATION OF THE ELECT

Progressive sanctification is the truth emphasized in II Peter 1:5-11. God has qualified Christians for practical sanctification. Therefore, we should give all diligence to supply in our faith the properties mentioned in verses 5-7 (II Pet. 1:5 NASB). Peter was not discussing the subject of our regeneration. He showed the qualifications for, the path of, and the perfection of progressive sanctification. The verb "might become" of verse 4 speaks of growth. One cannot grow unless he has life. A person would be heretical to intimate that God learns anything or that there is any growth in the essence of God. The Divine nature as it is related to God does not grow. But believers who share the godlike characteristics do grow. Thus, we may become sharers of the Divine nature, not essentially or hypostatically, in a way proper to the recipients of grace who possess godlike characteristics. There will always be "God and I." The bounds between the bestowing God and sharing believers shall never be destroyed.

Our supplying in our faith is a costly and generous cooperation with the grace God has given us. Faith which is God's gift is not added to anything. It is the foundation upon which the seven properties are built. It is not good for faith to be alone: "...faith without works is dead" (James 2:20). God is the Author of the foundation. He is the giver of faith, but many Christians are seeking to build the superstructure out of mud blocks. God-given faith must be in a person before he can build the superstructure. Love is the point to which the first six properties move. It is the capstone: "...for whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23) and "...the end of the commandment is charity [love]..." (I Tim. 1:5).

Christians are responsible to bring into our relationship with God the subsequent properties (parts of the whole) mentioned by Peter: virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. These reflect a healthy and growing Christian life. These are seven distinguishing qualities which should be brought into the faith which all the elect have received by Divine allotment. Peter used an aorist active participle, *pareisenegkantes*, to teach that we are responsible to bring in beside or alongside what God has already done for us. Believers have responsibility between faith (v. 1) and the kingdom (v. 11). Faith is a present possession, and the kingdom will be a future possession. Believers who share some of God's moral characteristics cannot just sit and rest on God's gift of faith. When the seven listed properties are added in our faith, our faith will be steadfast, our calling will be sure, our hope will not disappoint us, and our entrance into the kingdom will be richly provided for us.

### VIRTUE

The first property that we should supply in our supernatural faith is "virtue" (*areten*, accusative of *arete*, the basic meaning of which is excellence), which is moral excellence. Its meaning can be determined by observing the four places it is used. Paul wrote to "brethren" admonishing them to conduct themselves so as to demonstrate the excellencies of Jesus Christ in their Christian lives: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:8). In his first



Epistle, Peter called his addressees a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a peculiar people who should show the excellence of Christ in their Christian lives (I Pet. 2:9). In his second Epistle, he called upon those who had Divinely allotted faith (II Pet. 1:1) to make haste to manifest the excellence of Jesus Christ in their Christian lives (II Pet. 1:5).

Our lives must reflect the character of Jesus Christ. Virtue denotes the fulfillment or excellence of something. The excellence of an automobile would be that it operates without problems. The excellence of a Christian is for him to manifest the excellencies of Jesus Christ, those godlike characteristics of verse 4. One cannot manifest Christ's likeness without the godlike nature of Jesus Christ. Manifesting such excellence is impossible apart from a personal and continuing encounter with Jesus Christ by faith. This separates professors from possessors. False teachers and false believers talk about faith but manifest no Christian excellence. They manifest no self-denial. They seek to satisfy themselves and cannot say with Paul, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24). A false believer will not say he is willing to endure all things for the sake of the elect. These are arrogant people, but a true believer is concerned about pleasing the Lord.

A true believer manifests virtue, which can also mean manliness or courage, but it basically means excellence. Early Christians were courageous. There were no secret disciples in Biblical times. A secret disciple makes as much sense as a silent explosion in a powder factory. Early disciples knew their faith meant persecution, criticism, and perhaps even death. What brand of courage or manliness do we see manifested today? What God has done for us He will do in and through us, and what He has done for us and does in and through us will be manifested by us to people with whom we come in contact. We are to be able to give a reason for the hope within us (I Pet. 3:15). This first property of manliness, courage, or excellence the believer brings alongside what God has done for him would be worthless without knowledge. It would be like an air balloon without direction or a ship without a rudder.

## **KNOWLEDGE**

The second property we should supply in our supernatural faith is "knowledge" (gnosis, accusative of gnosis, which means insight, understanding, a seeking to know, investigation, practical wisdom, or Christian enlightenment). This is special or esoteric knowledge. Only those with the grace of God can understand this knowledge. It regulates and directs courage. The way of knowledge is to know our own ignorance. We must know our ignorance before we can be taught. The more a Christian knows about spiritual things the more he realizes he does not know what he should know. The horizon enlarges with each learned truth. Practical wisdom is gained by the exercise of moral excellence: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine..." (John 7:17). The first excellence to be manifested in one who has been saved by God's grace is a willingness to do God's will. The doctrine cannot be known experientially without a willingness to do what we learn. If we do not practice that to which we have been exposed, we have not learned it.

Courage preceded knowledge in Peter's list of the seven excellencies because gnosticism, which was in vogue when he wrote, was claimed as the highest prerogative. Rationalism follows this fatal principle. Knowledge is a favorite word of false teachers. The cure for false knowledge is not less knowledge. Those with false knowledge are "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (II Tim. 3:7). False knowledge can never be counteracted by ignorance.

Therefore, the cure for false knowledge is true knowledge. There is an old adage which states that discretion is the better part of valor. Discretion means the right or power to act according to one's own judgment. But how can one make correct judgment apart from the wisdom of God? A good man guides his affairs with discretion (Ps. 112:5). Five different words in Hebrew are translated "discretion," and they can mean discernment, understanding, thought, intelligence, or judgment. Such understanding is not what the world calls prudence.

Knowledge is the equivalent of sight. God gave us faith by Divine allotment, but we are to add to this faith excellence and to this excellence knowledge, which is the eyesight of faith. Courage without knowledge makes a person arrogant. Knowledge alone inflates a person with pride, but love strengthens his spiritual condition (I Cor. 8:1). Spiritual knowledge is always a means to some end, but if the end is subtracted from the means there is nothing but inflated pride. The end is spiritual growth by putting into practice what we have learned. Happiness comes by practicing what we have learned: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17). Failure to do the things learned is sin: "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).

The fact that knowledge is valor is no modern discovery. Knowledge is powerful when correctly used. Knowledge, even worldly knowledge, can be dangerous. It is power, but something to control this power must be added. Knowledge should be added in our faith, but self-control must follow on its heels. Christian freedom, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32), does not make us free to do whatever we desire. We are free to please Jesus Christ, our Savior.

## **TEMPERANCE**

The third property that we should supply in our supernatural faith is "temperance" (egkrateian, accusative of egkrateia, which means self-control or self-restraint). Paul preached the faith in Christ before Felix and "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come..." (Acts 24:25). Temperance is one of the fruits of the Spirit proclaimed by Paul (Gal. 5:23). This word, as well as the other excellencies to be supplied in our faith, was used twice by Peter (II Pet. 1:6). Self-control is the mastery of desires and passions. It prevents excesses of any kind in the life of a Christian. Self-control includes more than abstinence from alcohol. A person may be a glutton and be just as guilty of the absence of self-control. Sorrow and laughter are all right, but a person does not want to spend all his time in either. Therefore, we will gird our mirth and restrain our sorrow. The apostle Paul refused to be mastered by bodily appetites. He disciplined his body into subjection that he might not become disqualified (I Cor. 9:27).

The Christian is both the governor and the governed. The new nature within us enables us to control the old Adamic nature. From God's word, we learn we have the new nature which is capable of controlling our old nature within. Hence, we learn that by the help of the grace God has given us that we are governors and we are governed. Without Christ we are nothing, but with Him and His grace we are governors. This is what Paul meant when he said he would keep his body under subjection (I Cor. 9:27). He taught this same truth in Romans 7. There is a warfare between the outward man and the inward man. But we can thank God that we have victory through Jesus Christ (Rom. 7:25).

Knowledge, the preceding property, defends itself by the excellence of self-control. True knowledge leads to self-restraint from every inordinate desire. When the believer looks at himself in the mirror of God's word, he learns what he has been feeling in his troubled conscience concerning his imperfection but did not know how to express it. Every person in whose heart there has been a work of grace has the courage of the blind man who was made to see (John 9:25). Although the blind man could not give a satisfactory argument to those Pharisees who raised questions about how he gained his sight, he could say he knew he was blind but now he could see. The first thing one realizes after he has come to the knowledge of his salvation is that he is not perfect and will not be as long as he is in time.

## **PATIENCE**

The fourth property that we should supply in our supernatural faith is "patience" (hupomonen, accusative of hupomone, which means endurance, perseverance, or steadfastness). We are to bear up under persecution or trial. This perseverance is not a stoic quality of accepting all things as coming from blind fate. That would be fatalism. It springs from Divinely allotted faith in the promises of God. It produces in us an awareness of the providence of God. Our endurance is neither submitting to the inevitable nor the pride of not showing our feelings. It is our acquiescence to the will of the sovereign God.

The power of endurance is a necessary part of Christian character. Endurance is not insensible to either human suffering or evil. A do-nothing spirit cannot be identified with it. We await the kingdom, but our waiting is not the inaction of despondency. The endurance we bring into our faith is always conscious of the purpose of God. It is an inseparable attachment to hope which is called "patience of hope" (I Thess. 1:3). Perseverance is incompatible with despair. The Christian will not despair regardless of what he faces.

## **GODLINESS**

The fifth property we should supply in our supernatural faith is "godliness" (eusebeian, accusative of eusebeia, which means reverential feeling, piety, devotion, or godliness). Christian perseverance leads to godliness. Godly reverence must be added to perseverance. Inward excellence manifests itself outwardly. Reverence for God is expressed inwardly by worship and outwardly by service. There are many ways the Christian can serve the Lord. The Greek noun eusebeia carries the same idea as the Old Testament expression, "the fear of the Lord": "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge..." (Prov. 1:7). Eighteen different Hebrew words are translated "fear." But there is a variety of ways of looking at and expressing fear. Peter spoke of reverential fear for God. No one becomes godly by merely desiring godliness. This reverential fear is added in our faith.

Between faith of II Peter 1:1 and godliness are virtue, courage, knowledge, discernment and discernment of duty, inflexible self-control, and endurance. This order cannot be reversed. Some understand godliness in the sense of godlikeness, a moral resemblance to God. Others correctly believe that godlikeness does not express the objective sense of the original word. Godwardness better describes the original word because it reveals the state of mind toward God as the sole object of adoration, the supreme object of its trust and love, and the final source of its obligation and authority.

## **BROTHERLY KINDNESS**

The sixth property we should supply in our supernatural faith is "brotherly kindness" (philadelphian, accusative of philadelphia, which means brotherly love). (Study Rom. 12:10; I Thess. 4:9; Heb. 13:1; I Pet. 1:22; II Pet. 1:7.) Reverence toward God leads the recipients of equally valuable faith to bring into their valuable faith brotherly kindness. Every Christian has love for the Christian brotherhood. He has respect, consideration, and care for them. Brotherly love reaches to the heart of Christianity. The unity of all Christians as brethren goes deeper than either fleshly or sentimental ties. Sentimental feelings must not take precedence over the plain declaration of God's word. Creation made us all members of the human family. The new creation has made us members of the family of God. Brotherly kindness is more restricted than agape love. It is the manifestation of a practical care for the brethren. Peter had charged the disciples to love the brotherhood: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently" (I Pet. 1:22). Believers do not indiscriminately bestow brotherly love upon all who profess to be Christians. The lip must give evidence of life. Brotherly love does not require the same marks of outward consideration toward all believers. This love is not a vague sentimentalism. Furthermore, it does not level all believers to the same condition of life. More affection will be manifested for persons who are living godly in Christ Jesus. The greatest witness to the world is not a so-called Christian school or college, an assembly building, a family center, or a mission program. The greatest witness is what our Lord Himself said when He gave a new commandment: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35). Brotherly love is developed. The Biblical order of love is love for God, others, and oneself. The best things in life are outside of oneself.

## **CHARITY**

The seventh property we should supply in our supernatural faith is "charity" (agapen, accusative of agape, which means love, affection, good will, or benevolence). Love which was shed abroad in the heart in regeneration is externally brought to light by the properties which believers furnish alongside what God has done for us. Love is the roof of the spiritual edifice. The crown of Christian advancement is love: "But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (I Cor. 13:13 NASB).

There are three kinds of love, two of which are mentioned in the Greek text. (1) Classical Greek gives the word eros, which is called sexual love. It is the kind that this world in which we live has made a god. This love seeks mutual satisfaction. (2) Friendship love is called "friendship of the world": "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship [philia] of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). The word philos means dear, a friend, or a companion. It is primarily an adjective, and it became used as a noun. The verb phileo means to manifest some token of kindness or affection, to love, or regard with affection. (3) The strongest word for love is agape. This love is evoked not by what we are but by who God is. Its origin is in the Agent, not in the object. God's love poured out into our hearts gives balance and maturity to brotherly affection. God's love will never connive with or be an accomplice in sin for the sake of showing love or manifesting unity. God's love is the bond of perfectness. We do not exact brotherly kindness in such a way as to shut out the requirements of

God upon us. A knowledgeable Christian will not manifest brotherly affection at the expense of God's demand for his action.

Distinction between brotherly love and agape love is important. God's love is the source of brotherly love. Brotherly love may degenerate if God does not hold the chief place in our affections. Where God's love is preeminent in a person, everything else will fall into place. Where Divine love is in exercise, brotherly love cannot be associated with disobedience. A manifestation of brotherly love at the expense of revealed truth shuts out God in order for personal gain.

## THE EFFECT OF SANCTIFICATION OF THE ELECT

The properties of verses 5-7 were present possessions in the ones to whom Peter wrote. The effect of supplying in their faith the things discussed in II Peter 1:5-7 was, "For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren [argous, accusative of argos, which means lazy, useless, idle, or barren] nor unfruitful [akarpous, accusative of akarpos, which means barren, unfruitful, or useless] in the knowledge [epignosin, accusative of epignosis, which means full knowledge] of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 1:8). The King James Bible translation of argous and akarpous as "barren nor unfruitful" is tautological. The better translation is "idle or useless." Paul used the word (argai, from argos) in his instruction to Timothy concerning women who were disqualified for care by the assembly (I Tim. 5:13). In his message to Titus concerning false teachers, he called them "slow bellies" (argai, from argos) (Titus 1:12). The two words "slow bellies" can be translated "idle gluttons." The same Greek word in II Peter 1:8 is used for a person being idle.

Most church members who are active in their various denominations are not idle, but they may as well be as far as spirituality is concerned. Peter was not talking about that kind of religious activity. People in the average institutional church do not have time to study the Scriptures because they are busy with activities. One cannot supply these excellencies in his faith by being active in fleshly things. These properties existing and increasing in a Christian will cause him not to be idle in worthwhile things that have substance in them. When the Christian supplies these seven properties that are potentially in his faith, they will increase so that they make him neither idle nor useless in the full knowledge of Jesus Christ. Christians are known by their lifestyle. Paul thanked God for the Thessalonian Christians because their faith grew exceedingly (II Thess. 1:3).

The statement "For if these things be in you, and abound" (v. 8) denotes possession and superabundance. The "things" to which Peter referred are the things we are to supply in our faith (vv. 5-7). They are potentially in every Christian, but we are responsible to supply them and are capable of supplying them. If these things are existing and abounding in us, we will not be idle or useless. Being in possession of these things and increasing in them is conditional upon our obedience; hence, the use of "if" is correct. The "if" is understood in the light of the subjunctive verb that is used in verse 4, "ye might become" (genesthe, aorist middle subjunctive of ginomai), and the imperative used in verse 5, "add" (epichoregesate, from epichoregeo) in your faith.

When the properties of II Peter 1:5-7 are superabounding in us, they make us neither idle nor useless in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 8). This is not knowledge about Jesus Christ but knowledge of Jesus Christ. Many have been taught about Jesus Christ, but few have experiential knowledge of Him.

Observe the significance of the knowledge mentioned in verse 8. It is not the word ginosko but the compound word epignosis, which means know full well. "In the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" means a fuller knowledge of Him. This is the end to which all these properties tend. The difference between knowing and knowing full well is the difference between ginosko and epignosko. This is demonstrated in the first chapter of Romans in reference to the unregenerate.

The former is used in verse 21 "...when they knew [gnontes, aorist active participle of ginosko, which means having known] God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." When they knew about God they could not get away from that perception of God. There is no such thing as an atheist because every person knows God exists. The latter is used in verse 32 "Who knowing [epignontes, aorist active participle of epiginosko, which means having known full well] the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." Unsaved people know full well the judgment of God. These two verses demonstrate the distinction between knowing about God and having a good knowledge of God.

There is also a difference between the Christian's knowing the Lord Jesus Christ and knowing Him full well. Knowing Him full well gives us assurance. Additional knowledge includes knowing full well "our Lord Jesus Christ." His name "Lord" is in regard to Christ's dominion and power. His name "Jesus" is in reference to salvation "...thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). His name "Christ" the anointed One made salvation sure for the elect. The word "our" is in respect to Christ's appropriation of Himself to us in the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit; therefore, what Christ did for us at Calvary, He does by grace in and through us. The godlike qualities that are potentially in saints make us responsible for their manifestation and increase while we are here in time.

Anyone who has his standing before the Lord strives to increase his state. He desires to supply in his faith these properties that are available to him not that he might make his standing more sure but that he might make his condition of life more meaningful. Increasing in state causes us to become more assured of our salvation. Standing has reference to what God has made us by His grace. It is complete, and nothing can be added to it by us. But we can increase our state. Peter was revealing our responsibility in his second Epistle. State calls attention to our experience. Since it is incomplete, we are responsible to bring it to maturity.

The following are some distinctions between standing and state:

<b>standing</b>	<b>state</b>
<b>(1)</b> We are accepted in the Beloved (Eph. 1:6).	<b>(1)</b> We are to strive to be accepted of the Lord (II Cor. 5:9).
<b>(2)</b> We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ (Eph. 1:3)	<b>(2)</b> We are blessed in our deeds (James 1:25)
<b>(3)</b> We have been elected by God (I Pet. 1:2)	<b>(3)</b> We are to make our election sure (II Pet. 1:10)
<b>(4)</b> We are saved by grace (Eph. 2:8)	<b>(4)</b> We are to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (II Pet. 3:18)
<b>(5)</b> We are hidden in Christ (Col. 3:3)	<b>(5)</b> We are to abide in Christ (John 15:4)
<b>(6)</b> We are kept for Christ's kingdom (I Pet. 1:4, 5)	<b>(6)</b> We are to keep ourselves from idols (I John 5:21)
<b>(7)</b> We are ordained to eternal life (Acts 13:48)	<b>(7)</b> We are ordained to good works (Eph. 2:10)
<b>(8)</b> We have peace "with" God (Rom. 5:1)	<b>(8)</b> We are to have the peace "of" God (Phil. 4:6, 7)
<b>(9)</b> Eternal life is given to us (John 10:28)	<b>(9)</b> We should lay hold of eternal life (I Tim. 6:12)

## THE NONELECT ILLUSTRATED BY A SHORTSIGHTED BLIND PERSON

Any person who has faith will supply in that faith moral excellence, esoteric knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godly reverence, brotherly kindness, and love. Among those to whom Peter wrote who professed faith, these things were in some and not in others. Some Christians may not add them to the same extent as others. But since these things are in every child of God, he will increase them so that they will make him neither idle nor useless in the accurate knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. However, the one in whom the characteristics of faith are absent is described in II Peter 1:9.

Two views of verse 9 are taught. The first is that the blindness of II Peter 1:9 refers to unregenerated professing believers. The second is that it refers to nearsighted believers. The question is, does the cleansing of II Peter 1:9 refer to Christ's cleansing us by His blood or to the cleansing of ourselves made possible by the cleansing by Christ? There is some truth in both arguments. But which one is the teaching of this particular passage? The only way we can reach a conclusion is to look at the text in the light of its immediate context.

The formerly mentioned seven properties of II Peter 1:5-7 that are to be supplied in our faith were not present in the one referred to in II Peter 1:9. The faith itself in which to supply them was not present. Out of the many references to faith, only one refers to weak faith (Rom. 14:1), one to little faith (Matt. 6:30), two to faith growing (II Cor. 10:15; II Thess. 1:3), and one to strong in faith (Rom. 4:20). But there is no reference anywhere in Scripture to idle or useless faith. We have already observed in our study of the first, second, and third person plural pronouns used in II Peter that Peter did not assume that all his readers were Christians.

Two different Greek verbs were used with reference to the presence of the properties in some and their absence from one used as an example in II Peter 1:8-9. Peter used the verb *huparchonta*, present active participle of *huparcho*, to describe the persons in whom the properties of verses 5-7 were present possessions (v. 8). He used the verb *parestin*, present active indicative of *pareimi*, to illustrate one in whom they were not present (v. 9). The latter verb is negated by the Greek adverb *me*. These things were not in the one the apostle used as an example. Hence, there is a marked difference between verses 8 and 9.

The example Peter gave was of one who is spiritually, not physically blind. The adjective "blind" (*tuphlos*) is found 53 times in the New Testament in the Received Text and 52 times in Nestle's Text. The discrepancy is in Matthew 15:14, where the Received Text lists four and Nestle's Text lists three occurrences. It is translated "blind" in each instance. It is used to speak of physical blindness and of spiritual blindness. Physical blindness and old age can be ruled out in II Peter 1:9 because neither would harmonize with the context. The references out of the 53 that refer to spiritual blindness are under three categories: (1) It is used as a noun (Matt. 15:14; 23:17, 19; Luke 4:18; 6:39; Rom. 2:19). (2) It is used as an adjective (Matt. 23:16, 24, 26). (3) It is used as an adjective in the predicate position (John 9:39-41; II Pet. 1:9; Rev. 3:17). The blindness of II Peter 1:9 falls into the category of the adjective used in the predicate position. The Lord Jesus spoke of the spiritual blindness of the Pharisees (John 9:39-41). He did not say they were physically blind.



Most of the members of the assembly in Laodicea were spiritually blind (Rev. 3:17). They were not physically blind.

The spiritually blind person was shortsighted in the sense that he could see the things of time, which were near and pleased him. But he could not see by faith the reality of the promises of God, embrace them, and greet them from a distance. Hence, there is a difference between this person being discussed by Peter and the individuals that the Hebrew writer discussed in Hebrews 11:13. The person in Peter's example could not "see afar off" (muopadzon, present active participle of muopadzo, which means shortsighted).

He had taken forgetfulness. "Hath forgotten" is translated from one word in the Greek text, lethen (accusative of lethe). The word which follows it is labon (aorist active participle of lambano, which means having taken, received, or gotten). The two words together are translated "having taken forgetfulness." He had deliberately and willfully forgotten. There is a difference between an apostate deliberately forgetting and a Christian forgetting because it is a defect in himself. The Old Testament speaks of Israel as a nation having forgotten God. But a recipient of the grace of God cannot forget God because he has had a good work begun in him, and it will continue until the day of Jesus Christ. Forgetfulness with God is an attribute, but forgetfulness with a Christian is a defect. God casts our sins behind His back and into the depths of the sea. He will remember them no more. Hence, He forgets away our sins. The defect of forgetfulness with Christians is not willful. Although they may forget some of the details of the principles of God, they cannot forget the principles themselves.

The Psalmist said he would not forget God's word (Ps. 119:16, 61). There is no contradiction between the Psalmist's statement and the Lord's exhortation, "My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments" (Prov. 3:1). Neither is there a contradiction with Jeremiah's saying that Israel had forgotten the Lord their God (Jer. 3:21). Jeremiah spoke of the nation of Israel collectively. There was a remnant within Israel who had not forgotten God, but the nation as a whole had forgotten Him. God had a covenant relationship with the nation of Israel, but He had an elect remnant within the nation (Rom. 9:6).

Most of the Israelites, including the Pharisees during the time of our Lord, had forgotten God. They were apostates. In contrast to the apostates, Peter admonished the recipients of God's grace to remember (II Pet. 1:13, 15; 3:1). His calling them to remembrance did not indicate that they had forgotten God, but it did intimate that forgetfulness is a defect that needs to be corrected in the lives of Christians. Paul warned against this defect (II Thess. 2:5). The writer of the Hebrew Epistle advised his readers that they had forgotten the exhortation to "despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him" (Heb. 12:5). All Christians need the admonition to forget not the things of the Lord.

That which the apostate in the example used in II Peter 1:9 had forgotten was that he had been purged from his old sins. Apostates deliberately forget God and return to their own vomit (II Pet. 2:20-22). A child of God is never described by either a dog or a hog. We are sheep. We were lost sheep before we were saved sheep. Peter was dealing with false teachers and prophets in the entire second chapter. He called them dogs and hogs. A dog will return to its vomit, and a hog will return to its wallowing in the mire. Conversely, sheep turn to the Shepherd. Apostates deliberately return to those things because they willingly forget. Judas Iscariot and Simon Magus turned back on their professions. Simon Magus put his human faith in Christ and was baptized because he wanted to be a

part of the assembly and to have Peter's power (Acts 8:9-23). The one described by Peter proved himself to be an apostate because his forgetfulness was deliberate. He could not cultivate the graces mentioned in verses 5-7.

What did the apostate who was used as an illustration deliberately forget? He had "taken forgetfulness" that he was "purged" (katharismou, genitive of katharismos). The noun katharismos speaks of certain things that were purified or cleansed (Mark 1:44; Luke 2:22; 5:14; John 2:6; 3:25; Heb. 1:3 refers to Christ; II Pet. 1:9). The verb katharidzo is used in the following ways: (1) It refers to physical cleansing (Matt. 8:2, 3; 10:8), washing dishes (Matt. 23:25, 26), and purgation of the human body (Mark 7:19). (2) It is used in the sense of the ceremonial cleansing taught in the Levitical system (Acts 10:15; 11:9; Heb. 9:22, 23). (3) It is used in the sense of spiritual cleansing (Acts 15:9; II Cor. 7:1; Eph. 5:26; Titus 2:14; Heb. 9:14; I John 1:7, 9).

There is a difference between seeing and not seeing (John 9:39-41). The Jews to whom our Lord spoke could see natural things, but they could not see spiritual things because they were spiritually blind. The distinction between hearing and not hearing with understanding is illustrated in the men journeying with Paul at the time of his conversion experience. When the Lord spoke to Saul from heaven, they heard a voice (Acts 9:7). But in Paul's account of his conversion experience he stated, "...they heard not the voice of him that spake to me" (Acts 22:9). The Greek word for "hear" (akouontes, present active participle of akouo) in Acts 9:7 means hearing. Whereas, the Greek word for "heard" (ekousan, aorist active indicative of akouo) is negated to mean the voice was heard but not understood in Acts 22:9. A person can hear something with the organ of the ear without understanding what he heard.

There is understanding that is not understanding. The invisible things of God "being understood by the things that are made" of Romans 1:20 refers to the natural man who is exposed to general revelation which makes him inexcusable before God. Many things in the natural realm are understandable by one without the grace of God. The Lord Jesus said that He spoke to the Pharisees in parables that they might not understand. Conclusively, a person can understand natural things without understanding spiritual things. Spiritual things are understood only through enlightenment by the Spirit of God.

A person can be bought without being bought. Peter spoke of false prophets among the people of God who were "denying the Lord [despoten, accusative of despotes, which means master, sovereign, or slave owner] that bought them..." (II Pet. 2:1). Arminians claim that this verse teaches that Jesus Christ died for everyone. But nothing is recorded in this text or its immediate context about the Lord Jesus Christ and the blood He shed. The Greek word for Lord used here is not kurios but despotes. Peter was writing to the elect Jews, and the Jews boasted about being bought by the Lord: "Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? is not he thy father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?" (Deut. 32:6). In what sense did the Father buy Israel? He did not buy the entire nation redemptively, but He bought the entire nation for the sake of the elect within the nation of Israel. There is a sense in which God has bought the world, but not redemptively in the sense of all mankind. Jesus Christ bought the world for the sake of the treasure (elect) within it. Hence, there is a vast difference between the elect having been bought with a price of I Corinthians 6:20 and the world having been bought. The price paid for the elect was the priceless blood of the Lord Jesus Christ (I Pet. 1:18-20). Every person who professes to be redeemed by Christ but denies Him by his life is a mere professing believer, not a Christian. He deliberately forgets God.

One may be cleansed and not cleansed. He may be ceremonially cleansed without being spiritually cleansed. Peter was an apostle to the circumcision the Jews; therefore, he used terminology not found anywhere else in the New Testament. The writer to the Hebrews used similar terminology because he wrote to Hebrew believers. Hence, Peter spoke to the regenerated and converted elect Jews of the "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 1:2).

Some teach that II Peter 1:9 teaches that a baptized infant grew up and forgot the oath that was taken when he was baptized, and then his name was erased from the Lamb's book of life. The puritans of the past taught that it refers to a person (not an infant) who was baptized and went back on his baptismal oath. But the one Peter used as an example was not saved. He was like Simon Magus who believed and was baptized, but his deliberate sinning proved he was not saved.

Human reason cannot look beyond death. People may be "church members," but heaven does not come into their view. Natural men may talk about heaven, but they have no faith to greet it from a distance. Greeting heaven through the eye of faith enlarges its value to the point of incomprehensibility. However, looking to heaven with the natural eye lessens its value to the point of the pleasure of sin for a season being more important. If you have presumptuous assurance or if you have no assurance at all, your profession of faith is false. If you are hearing God's promises to His people with a natural ear, looking at them with a natural eye, and reasoning about them with human reasoning, you must conclude that God's promises have no value to you. The pleasures of life, satisfaction of your lust, and having your own way in life means more to you. But that is not true of a Christian.

Peter addressed the elect out of the dispersion, but he used one person as an example of an apostate in II Peter 1:9. The properties described in verses 5-7 were not in the person exemplified in verse 9. He was blind, being shortsighted, and having deliberately taken forgetfulness of the covenant relationship the nation of Israel had with God. He was cleansed as far as the Levitical ceremonial cleansing was concerned, but he was not spiritually cleansed. Like the majority in the nation of Israel, he was an apostate.

## THE GOAL OF SANCTIFICATION OF THE ELECT

On account of some who profess to have faith but are in reality apostates, the regenerated and converted elect must give the more diligence to make their calling and election sure (II Pet. 1:10). The goal of progressive sanctification is twofold: (1) to give the regenerated and converted elect assurance of their calling and election and (2) to enable them to experience an abundant entrance, or a richly provided entrance, into the eternal kingdom of Jesus Christ. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 1:10, 11). The conjunction "Wherefore" (dio, a superordinating conjunction, which means on account of, wherefore, or therefore) of verse 10 points to the whole of the preceding discussion of the path of progressive sanctification (vv. 5-8). The word "rather" (mallon, which means more or much more) is an adverb of preference. This indicates that Peter was stressing diligence above uselessness and idleness.

The grace of God was not designed to leave us on a level of spiritual mediocrity in ability or accomplishment. Peter addressed the persons to whom he wrote as "brethren" (II Pet. 1:10) and "beloved" (II Pet. 3:1, 8, 14, 17). This strengthened his appeal to them to spare no effort to make their calling and election sure. Three things are included in this command: (1) The benefit derived from such earnest endeavor is stability. (2) The danger which will result from disobedience to the command will be fear. (3) The reward of having a royal welcome, or a richly provided welcome, into the eternal kingdom is associated with hope (v. 11).

The benefit derived from an earnest endeavor to make our calling and election more sure is not the cause but the assurance of the evidences of grace within us. Assurance of calling and election does not mean that of ourselves we can have such confidence. Presumptuous confidence is dangerous. Assurance demands a foundation. Although true confidence is not of ourselves, it is not apart from penetrating into our innermost being and thoughts. Such introspection will reveal whether our assurance is genuine or presumptive. Introspection is the eye of faith turning inward to see oneself. By this we know experientially that we have come to know and are in a continual state of knowing that we know Jesus Christ if we keep His commandments (I John 2:3).

In I John 2:1, John was addressing the children of God. He called them "little children (little born ones)". John was writing these things, the things he had written in chapter one, in order that they might not sin. These "little born ones" were related to Jesus Christ; therefore, they had the advantage of having an Advocate "with" (pros, accusative of relationship or accusative of advantage) the Father. There would be no advantage without proper relationship. John was showing the properly related "little born ones" the advantages we have in Jesus Christ, the propitiation with reference to our sins.

By the things recorded in the first two verses, we are knowing that we have known Jesus Christ if we are keeping His commandments (I John 2:3). The apostle was stacking assurance when he declared that we can be positive of our knowledge of Jesus Christ if we are keeping His commandments. A person who continues living as he formerly did does not have faith. The apostle

added a contrapositive statement when he said that the one saying he has assurance and is not keeping Christ's commandments is a liar (v. 4). All professing Christians should examine themselves with introspection to determine whether or not their assurance is genuine. In the one keeping His word, the love of God has been accomplished (v. 5). The one saying he is abiding in Jesus Christ is obligated to walk the same way He walked. The person looking within to examine himself in the manner described by John sees himself as he really is. He can determine whether or not he is hypocritical or if he is desirous to please God. He can know if he is truthful in his profession and has the power of God or if he is idle and useless.

Christians are not only able to perform good works but they are also able to know that they have performed them by the grace of the sovereign God (Eph. 2:10). We are exhorted to bring our salvation to its maximum. Paul exhorted the Philippian saints, who had always been obedient in his presence, to be obedient in his absence and, as a result, to bring out their salvation because God was communicating in them energy and efficiency to cause them to be willing to do His will (Phil. 2:12, 13). Paul was permanently persuaded that the One who began a good work in Christians will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6). Paul who was exhorting Christians to work out their salvation with fear and trembling did so himself in his own life. He preached God's word with fear and trembling (I Cor. 2:1-5). He called our attention to the fact that God is the One operating in us "both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). The use of the present active infinitive for "to will" (thelein, from thelo, which means to be willing) and "to do" (energein, from energeo, which means to be operating) shows that God who is operating in Christians makes us willing, and our willingness will conclude in our operating for God's good pleasure.

Salvation is a process. God gives it as a gift from Himself. Then the person in whom God has worked salvation works it out. But the salvation must be there before it can be worked out. This is the same teaching as that recorded by Peter when he exhorted the children of God to supply those seven properties in our God-given faith. The faith must be there before we can supply them in our faith (II Pet. 1:5-7). Our position in Jesus Christ can have nothing added to it. But our condition requires progressive sanctification, which is a process. God has done some things for the elect which were worked neither in us nor by us. For instance, we are justified before God by the imputed righteousness which Christ accomplished at Calvary and not by our faith. No one is justified by his faith before God. He is justified by his faith before his own consciousness but not before God. Some things, like the new birth, are worked in us but not by us. God quickens the sinner. The sinner is always passive and never active in the new birth. Other things, like working out our salvation with fear and trembling, are worked in us and by us.

Paul used the present active infinitive of the Greek verbs for "to will" and "to do" in Philippians 2:13 to show that Christians are capable of performing two kinds of acts. The first kind are direct acts. They can be called voluntary. Repentance, faith, and obedience are direct acts. When God quickens us, He enables us to repent. No one will repent until God has given him the ability to repent. God does not repent for us. He does not believe for us, but he enables us to believe. God does not obey the command He has given, but He enables us to obey His command. However, these direct acts do not eliminate the energy and efficiency of God. They manifest God's power to communicate energy and efficiency to us. This is the reason Christ told His disciples they could do nothing without Him (John 15:5). No one can repent, believe, or obey without Christ's enablement. The second kind of act by regenerated persons is a reflex act. It can be called involuntary. The reflex act enables us to take notice of the genuineness of our acts of repenting, believing, and obeying. We have the power within to know we have thus acted. The genuineness of the

involuntary response depends on the spiritual enlightenment of persons performing the act. Those thus spiritually enlightened are capable of discovering the source of the direct acts.

Presumptive persons talk assurance, but their actions contradict their testimonies. They may talk about the acts of faith, but they are unwilling to have their assurance searched and tried by Holy Scripture. They display anger upon interrogation because they cannot stand the test. Such persons boast of assurance, but theirs is presumptive assurance because it has an improper foundation. The constant bombardment of messages concerning the whole counsel of God will cause such people to either scatter like a covey of quail or accuse the person proclaiming the message of heresy. The teaching of "easy believism" followed immediately by the teaching of "eternal security" results in presumptive assurance. The products of "put your faith in Jesus" lack spiritual enlightenment to see that works performed by natural faith cannot be good works. Since "easy believism" is nothing more than a human act, the reflex act can bear testimony to only that which is human. The faith that embraces Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord is not natural. It is the faith that God gives in regeneration. By this ability, one embraces Jesus Christ, and the reflex act will be genuine. The only good work performed by an individual is that work produced by one with God-given faith.

The person with presumptive assurance is not only unwilling to be tried but he has fair weather assurance. Anyone can say he has assurance when the sun is shining and everything is going well. However, the strong winds of affliction, persecution, and temptation will cause the chaff of presumptive assurance to fly away. It cannot withstand opposition because it is false logic based on human opinion. Everyone is interested in security. He wants to be assured of good health, so he goes to a doctor for a checkup. He wants to be assured of his job, so he puts forth effort to work at it. This is true in many areas of life. How amazing that when it comes to the greatest thing in the world, the assurance of one's salvation, man spends little energy to gain that assurance. He lives in time and can talk about things of time, but he does not want to study about the things of eternity. Presumptuous persons talk about assurance, but their actions contradict their testimonies. It is not enough for a person to say "I am saved" or "I believe." He must manifest a proper foundation for his belief.

Christians can be sure that the Holy Spirit is first in us before He bears witness with our spirits: "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.... The Spirit itself [Himself] beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:9, 16). This signifies that the act of the Holy Spirit in regeneration is succeeded by His act of confirmation to the recipient of grace. A consideration of four questions will help one to examine himself to be sure of his salvation: (1) Are your eyes opened to the word of God? If so, the Holy Spirit has enlightened your eyes. (2) Is your conscience awakened? If so, the Holy Spirit has awakened your conscience. (3) Does your will yield to God? If so, the Holy Spirit has enabled you to yield to God's command. (4) Is your heart at peace with God? If so, the Holy Spirit has sealed you until the redemption of His purchased possession.

Some argue that there is only one witness in Romans 8:16, but they misrepresent the Greek verb for "beareth witness." The compound verb teaches that the Holy Spirit continually bears joint testimony "with" not "to" our spirits that we are the children of God. This makes the spirit of believers the second witness in the assurance of salvation. Both the Holy Spirit and our spirits bear witness, assuring us of our salvation. Hence, the believer has a twofold witness in his assurance.

Paul substantiated our assurance of salvation by showing that "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Cor. 2:9); but in contrast, God has revealed them to us (I Cor. 2:10-16). (1) God has revealed spiritual things to us by His Spirit. (2) Those things are known by the Holy Spirit. (3) They have been communicated by words which the Holy Spirit teaches. (4) They are spiritually discerned by the recipient of grace. The Spirit's witness with our spirits that we are the children of God is not some mystical experience. It is accomplished by making the testimony of Scripture meaningful to us. Believers are assured of their identity. Born spiritually by the Spirit, we are assured of our ability to judge all things and of our immunity from judgment by man when we stand before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ.

Assurance gives believers stability: "And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him" (I John 3:19). (Study Rom. 8:38-39; Phil. 1:6; II Thess. 3:4.) Stability in the path of sanctification is the promised result of advancement in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (II Pet. 3:18). Satan can give both mechanical and psychological experiences. Many religionists have either or both. But Satan cannot duplicate what the sovereign Spirit gives. What the Spirit does is not by a voice which can be duplicated, but it is by speaking to the inner man, which is more definite. It takes place in the highest part of the personality of Christians, the spirit of renewed persons. This is the reason the Spirit of God bears witness with our spirits. God said through Jeremiah, "...I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31:33). How does one know that the Spirit of God has stamped the truth of his relationship to the Lord and those blessed promises in the Scriptures in his heart? He knows because of the harmony between objective truth and subjective experience. One's experience must harmonize with the objective revelation of the mind of God. When the Holy Spirit bears witness with a person's spirit, there is never any conflict between objective truth and subjective experience. Our assurance grows as we grow in grace and knowledge of Christ. God has made provision for the Christian to not only die in Christ but also to die in full assurance in Christ.

Subjectivism does not give assurance. The statement "I have the inner light, and the word does not matter" is subjective. It is true that we are regenerated without the gospel, but we cannot discard God's purpose in the gospel. The gospel is not to regenerate but to convert those who have been regenerated. Omission of God's purpose in the gospel leads to fatalism. God calls the regenerated by the gospel: "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Thess. 2:13, 14). Regeneration is one thing, and conversion is another. Every person God regenerates will be converted by the gospel.

Since Peter was writing to brethren, calling preceded election: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (II Pet. 1:10). The only way believers can make their election sure is to first make their calling sure. Calling cannot be made sure apart from the word of God, the objective revelation of the mind of God. This calling is the effectual call of God. It comes by the preaching of the gospel. Hoping you are one of God's elect is insufficient. The Thessalonian Christians evidenced their election by what they said and did and by the graces they manifested (I Thess. 1:3, 4). Calling is used in the sense of the evidence of election. If you cannot make your calling sure, you cannot make your election sure. Furthermore, calling is confirmed by a holy life because it is a holy calling (II Tim. 1:9), it is according to God's purpose (Rom. 8:28), and

it is in order that God may count us worthy of the station of life to which we have been called (II Thess. 1:11; I Thess. 4:7).

The origin and destiny of the elect's calling are high (Heb. 3:1) and holy (II Tim. 1:9). Therefore, our destiny is to glory and excellence (II Pet. 1:3) in Christ's kingdom and glory. Since we are called to Christ's kingdom and glory, we are not now in it: "That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory" (I Thess. 2:12). We are called out by the Spirit of God and the preaching of the word. We hear the effectual call because we have been regenerated by the Spirit. We are now heirs of the kingdom to which we have been called.

Calling that is effectual presupposes life. Hence, the call of the regenerate is something more than a general call of the gospel. Preaching is general to all nations, but the content of preaching is particular to benefit the elect who have been regenerated. The effectual call produces an intended effect. Therefore, it is personal. The Lord Jesus called Zacchaeus by name, and Zacchaeus heard His effectual call. Zacchaeus climbed into a sycamore tree to see Christ because he had been quickened by Christ. Christ's call to him was effectual because the sheep hear the voice of the true Shepherd (John 10:4, 5). Zacchaeus not only heard and was humbled but he also produced good works thus evidencing grace. The word of God effectually works in every true believer (I Thess. 2:13).

There is something determinate about God's call called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28). The Greek word for called can mean summoned or called. A summons issued by a court does not of itself empower one to appear in court. It is a general summons. It may be necessary for the officer of the court to apprehend the person summoned and bring him to court. But it is different with the elect one who has been regenerated. He has been apprehended by Christ (Phil. 3:12). Having been apprehended by Christ, he is in a position to be effectually called. One who has been Divinely summoned has what it takes to respond to that call because he has been apprehended by grace in regeneration before the call is ever extended to him or he hears the extended call.

When the Christian makes his calling sure, he knows his calling depended on his election. There is a difference between looking at the subject of election from man's perspective and from God's perspective. Peter was addressing brethren. He told them to make their calling sure. Election is eternal. Calling is in time. To be assured of our eternal election we must make sure of our calling in time. Peter was writing from the perspective of the brethren in time and not from God's eternal perspective. Assurance of our calling leads to assurance of our election. Presumptuous persons think they are fully assured and cease seeking for greater assurance. The degree of one's assurance depends on the degree of his knowledge of the word of God.

Some make the heretical statement that when the Bible speaks of the elect it speaks not of God's purpose to make men different but of the fact that they are different. This statement does not harmonize with II Thessalonians 2:13. In fact, it does not harmonize with Scripture at all. If election is to salvation, it must precede salvation. Since salvation is in time, the evidence of election is in time, but the decree itself is from eternity: "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thess. 5:9).

Another unscriptural statement about election is that Scripture tells us nothing about persons being elected except for individuals called to some special service. Those who hold this view say the analogy of Israel leads one to say that election is not to eternal life but to a condition of privilege.



Such a view is willful and blind ignorance of the word of God. Election must be viewed in the light of Divine perfection. Whatever God does He purposed to do. Therefore, what He designed to do He does. Since God does not save all men, it is evident that He did not purpose to save all men. To affirm that God purposed to save all men but saves only some is to declare that He either changed His purpose or failed to accomplish His purpose. That would contradict many passages of Scripture, a few of which are Job 23:13-14, Isaiah 46:9-10, Psalm 115:3, and Proverbs 19:21.

One should not ask himself if he is one of God's elect. The proper question is, have I been effectually called? Election is first in the order of Divine action, but the faith which God has implanted in regeneration is first in our action. Our action is in time, but God's act of election is eternal. Accordingly, we are not to make our knowledge of election the basis of our believing, but our believing is the fruit of our eternal election. Since our election preceded the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4), it preceded both our natural and our spiritual births. Some have the opinion that "calling and election" (II Pet. 1:10) means the acceptance of what God offers in His invitation. If calling is the invitation and election is the acceptance of what is offered in the invitation, it would breathe the sovereignty of men. It would mean that God will decide what to do with men after they decide what they will do with what He offers them in the gospel. Thus, the ultimate decision would rest on men rather than on God.

## THE RESULT OF THE ELECT'S FAILURE TO MAKE THEIR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE

Christians who neglect to give diligence to make their calling and election sure can expect many failures in their lives. The majority are careless and indifferent; hence, their sin of neglect is heinous. Peter had his own stumbling in mind when he wrote, "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (II Pet. 1:10). He is an example of one who had failed, but having overcome and grown in grace and knowledge he had the assurance of an abundant entrance into the eternal kingdom of God. Many of Peter's blunders are recorded in Scripture, eleven of which occurred before Pentecost and two subsequent to Pentecost. We will consider them chronologically.

**FIRST** Peter was distracted by circumstances (Matt. 14:28-31). The disciples had just experienced the unusual power of Jesus Christ as it was manifested in providing enough food from a few fishes and two loaves of bread to feed over 5,000 people with much left over. Following this, Christ ordered the disciples to get into a ship and go before Him to the other side while He dismissed the multitude. He dismissed the multitude and went alone up into a mountain to pray (John 6:15). The disciples could not continue living in the atmosphere of a demonstration of the supernatural power of Him who is the Son of God. They must be tested. The disciples' ship was tossed with waves and winds. When the disciples saw Christ walking on the sea, they were troubled. Christ assured them that it was He. Peter requested that if it were He to let him come to Christ on the water. Peter responded to the Lord's invitation to come, but he soon got his eyes off the Lord onto the boisterous wind, was afraid, and began to sink (John 6:16-21).

We can learn many lessons from this picture of our present age. Jesus Christ is absent from His own while He sits at the Father's right hand interceding for us. While we are in the world, we are tossed to and fro by circumstances, some of which are pleasant and others are trying. We will be tested for what we believe. There is a time to recognize without stopping to reckon. We are inclined to recognize the right thing and reckon with the wrong. Peter stepped out in recognition of his Lord and Master but then began to reckon with circumstances. Debating for a second when God has spoken is sinful. We must not begin reckoning with God's command when we know what we must do. We must suffer for doing the right thing rather than fail for doing the wrong thing. There is also a time to renounce without stopping to reason like Peter did in John 21:20-21. Each of us should desire to know how he can empty himself of himself. God did not promise us the rowing would be easy. We must face many difficulties. After experiencing a great blessing, it is not unusual to immediately experience a great trial. The disciples in the ship are a symbol of Christ's people in the world. The sea symbolizes peoples, nations, and tongues (Rev. 17:15). The darkness is an emblem of man's hour and the power of darkness (Luke 22:53). Whatever light is received from the world is artificial. The boisterous wind typifies all the false doctrines, the ideologies that are being propagated by the darkness of human depravity.

Christians must never run unscathed into afflictions, but we should never run from afflictions into which the providence of God has placed us. God's people must learn what it is to be without the personal presence of the Son of God. Absence makes the redeemed heart grow fonder for His

personal presence. We are as mariners on the sea of life tossed to and fro, and conditions are uncertain and unsettled. But Jesus Christ intercedes for us even when we forget to pray. Trouble is multiplied when the Lord Jesus is personally absent or when He withdraws Himself, as He did from His disobedient spouse (Song of Sol. 5:1-8). The absence of Jesus Christ from the storm tossed disciples and from His spouse speaks of Christ's bodily absence, but trouble increases when the spiritual presence of Jesus Christ is withdrawn from us because of our disobedience. In His essential presence, He never leaves nor forsakes us, but His spiritual presence is often withdrawn from us because of our sins. God cannot be absent as to His essential presence, but He can be absent in His spiritual blessings upon us.

Peter required a lesson in humility. He saw Christ walking on the water and desired to go to Him. Our sin is real to us, but is Jesus Christ real to us? When Christ walked on the sea, more of Him was visible than when He walked on the land. His Godhead was made visible as He walked on the water because it took supernatural power to walk on the water. But a mere man could walk on the land. He was defying the law of gravity, which He brought into existence, by walking on the water. Peter's desire may have been prompted by wanting to walk on the water for the walking's sake. It was easier to believe while he was in the ship than when he was on the waters. It is easier for us to believe while we are assembled for worship than it will be tomorrow when we face opposition to the cardinal truths of Holy Scripture. Peter looked at the raging waves and became fearful. He looked to the danger and not to the Savior. His faith, courage, and devotion were not so great as he thought. On the depths of the life of faith, where no unbeliever ever stood, Jesus Christ will make us realize that apart from His continual help we can do nothing but fail.

Peter was wise enough to cry out when he began sinking. But the great tragedy today is that people do not cry out when they begin to fail. The babbling brook is sweet music in the mountains, but a brook would lose its song without the rocks over which to travel. Where only sunshine is present the result is desert. Therefore, trials are necessary. Every human prop for faith will be removed while we are time.

Jesus Christ returned at an unexpected time. It was the fourth watch, which is some time between 3 A.M. and 6 A.M. Jesus Christ will come for us when the hour is the darkest. As in nature so it is in our spiritual experience, the darkest hour is just before dawn. Christ came in an unexpected way. He came walking on the water. Thus, the source of the disciples' fear and dread was now under Christ's feet. Therefore, the disciples found deliverance not in toiling but in turning to Christ. Deliverance is not found in working when we sin and get out of the will of God. It is found in turning. Christ's coming was with an unexpected blessing. He commanded the disciples to be of good cheer and to be unafraid. He did not remove the cause of the trouble but gave rest in the midst of the storm.

**SECOND** Peter took Jesus Christ to himself as a companion and began to rebuke Him for saying He would suffer, die, and be raised from the dead (Matt. 16:21, 22). This failure occurred after Peter's confession "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16), Christ's announcement of the building of His assembly (church) (Matt. 16:18), and Christ's acquainting the disciples with His sufferings, death, and resurrection (Matt. 16:21). His sufferings and death seemed to be the only thing Peter heard. Otherwise, he would not have rebuked the Lord. Can you imagine Peter taking Christ into personal conference for the purpose of rebuking Him? A double negative, a point of emphasis in the Greek, is used here. Peter was speaking as though he would never let this happen to Christ.

The apostle was inspired at one moment to speak the truth, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). But shortly thereafter, he was motivated by Satan to speak against God's eternal purpose that Christ should die and arise from the dead. Christ was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, but Peter said, may God prevent this from happening. Peter was a friend of the Lord, but too often friends are more concerned about our physical welfare than they are about the will of God being accomplished in our lives. Such concern is motivated not by the Spirit of God but by the spirit of Satan. Sentimentalism is a manifestation of instability. Our speech and actions can be motivated by either the Spirit of truth or the spirit of Satan. Peter either did not hear all Christ said or the gloom of trial caused him to overlook the resurrection. Christian progress is hindered by immaturity, which is manifested by a believer of little faith expressing his own ideas of what he thinks is right. Peter began impulsively to rebuke Christ, but the Savior did not allow him to proceed in such improper freedom.

Jesus Christ "turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matt. 16:23). The Lord Jesus turned away from Peter in disgust. Peter's language was that of Satan when the Devil tested Jesus Christ in the wilderness (Matt. 4). Satan was trying to persuade the Lord to bypass Calvary, and that is exactly what Peter was doing. Peter was a stone out of his proper place, and he became a snare. Peter was thinking the thoughts of men, not the thoughts of God. Consequently, he reasoned the sentimental opinions of men rather than speaking the mind of God.

The heinousness of Peter's statement is emphasized by the time of its occurrence. Christ came to His own and His own received Him not. The climax is reached when the Lord said, "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed" (Matt. 16:4). Jesus Christ left "them" the Jews. Observe the following divisions in the first chapters of Matthew: (1) The King was presented chapters 1-4. (2) The principles of the King were related chapters 5-7. (3) The powers of the King were demonstrated chapters 8-12. (4) The parables of the King were given chapter 13. It is indicated at the close of chapters 12 and 13 that the King would not be received. In the next chapters of Matthew, other parables demonstrate the setting aside of Israel. The kingdom was taken from Israel and given to a nation bringing forth fruit (21:43). The prophecies follow in chapters 24 and 25.

Beginning with Matthew 16:18 and in the verses following, there is the first mention of the assembly (church) and the cross. After Christ's announcement concerning the assembly (church) He would build, He talked about the cross which would be the foundation of the assembly (church). At the time when Jesus Christ proclaimed His death (16:21), Peter who had but a short time before spoken by inspiration of God now spoke by inspiration of Satan. The Spirit of God placed these two utterances on the same page of Holy Scripture to show that Peter could not be the foundation of the assembly (church).

Peter learned his lesson, and the sufferings of Christ became his constant theme and confidence. His first Epistle is filled with thoughts on suffering: (1) the prophetic character of suffering (I Pet. 1), (2) the patient or enduring character of suffering (I Pet. 2), (3) the propitiatory character of suffering (I Pet. 3), (4) the practical character of suffering (I Pet. 4), and (5) the pastoral character of suffering (I Pet. 5).

After rebuking Peter for reprimanding Him, the Lord told His disciples He had a lesson for all of them (Matt. 16:24-27). "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me" (v. 24). The believer is commanded to deny himself at once and take up the cross and follow Jesus Christ in a completed action. That completed action is the beginning of a cross-bearing life that never ceases. "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (v. 25). Christ wanted His disciples to know they may have to suffer death for His sake. How many Christians are willing to lose their positions, possessions, and so-called influence for the cause of Jesus Christ? There is a future reward for Christians. This is discussed in verses 27 and 28 and must be studied in connection with II Peter 1:11.

**THIRD** Peter desired to place Moses and Elijah on the level with Christ: "Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias" (Matt. 17:4). The one who took Christ to himself and reprimanded him was chosen to experience on the mount of transfiguration a foretaste of the coming kingdom. This teaches us that God does not judge us by what we are doing in the present but by what we shall do. The Lord Jesus knew what Peter would become and chose him not on the basis of his present mistake but on what he would become. Peter was mistaken to want to place men on the same level with Jesus Christ.

**FOURTH** Peter was complacent and had a mercenary spirit: "Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" (Matt. 19:27). This is within the context of our Lord's discourse with the rich young ruler. The Lord Jesus told the rich young ruler to sell all he had and come and follow Him. When the young man was presented with the law, he went away sorrowful. After this discourse, Peter asked what the disciples would have for leaving all to follow Christ? The disciples went from despair over the Lord's acquainting them with His suffering and death to being gripped with a spirit of complacency. The Lord answered by saying, "Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28). The disciples' reward will be granted when the Lord Jesus Christ sits on the throne of His glory. They will be rewarded with the privilege of judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Beware of the person who is supposed to be a representative of the Lord but is more concerned about monetary gain than about preaching the truth.

**FIFTH** Peter did not want Christ to wash his feet: "Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head" (John 13:8, 9). The apostle went from one extreme to another. The Lord had laid aside His garment, girded Himself with a towel, and begun to wash the feet of the disciples. Peter objected to having his feet washed: "Lord, dost thou wash [present active indicative of *nipto*, which means washing, not bathing] my feet?" (v. 6). The Lord explained that what He was doing the disciples did not understand at that time but they would after His resurrection (v. 7). The disciples knew He was washing their feet, but they did not know the symbolical lesson of Christ interceding for them at the Father's right hand. Peter told the Lord He would never wash his feet. Christ answered that without His washing Peter's feet the apostle would have no fellowship with Him. Peter then went to the opposite extreme and requested the Lord to wash him all over (v. 9). The word "washed" of verse 10 is not the same as that in verse 6. In verse 10, it is the perfect passive participle of *louo*, which means having been bathed. Peter had been

bathed regenerated and received pardon but he needed to be cleansed from his daily contact and defilement with sin.

**SIXTH** Peter was unwatchful: "And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What could ye not watch with me one hour?" (Matt. 26:40). He slept when he should have been watching while the Lord was in the garden of Gethsemane. We must be constantly on guard, watching and praying that we enter not into temptation.

**SEVENTH** Peter acted in the energy of the flesh: "Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear" (John 18:10). The time had come when our Lord would be betrayed. He would be taken before the Sanhedrin to be judged, so the time of His suffering had come. When Peter saw what was taking place, he reacted by cutting off Malchus' ear. No doubt he intended cutting off his head, but the providence of God prevented it. The Lord had to undo what Peter had done in the energy of the flesh.

**EIGHTH** Peter denied that he was Christ's disciple: "And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not" (John 18:25). Matthew recorded a threefold denial by Peter (Matt. 26:69-74). After his denial before the first maid, he went out to the porch where another maid saw him and "said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth" (Matt. 26:71). Peter denied it with an oath (v. 72). His third denial was before those who stood by. Peter began to curse and swear that he did not know the man (v. 74). One lie requires many to cover it up. Peter found he could not run from it. No child of God can tell a lie and get away with it long. His speech will betray him. Peter went from denial by placing himself under an oath to denying with cursing and swearing. There is a difference between Peter and many assembly members today. As soon as the cock crowed, Peter "remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice, And he went out, and wept bitterly" (v. 75). Contrarily, many assembly members manifest no remorse when their sins have been pointed out to them from the word of God.

**NINTH** Peter was self-confident (Matt. 26:33-35). The Lord told the disciples they would all be offended because of Him (v. 31). "Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended" (v. 33). The Lord then told Peter he would deny him thrice before the cock would crow. "Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee" (v. 35). The whole society in which we live is built on self-confidence. But this characteristic should be abhorred in any person.

**TENTH** Peter followed the Lord afar off: "But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end" (Matt. 26:58). The implication is that he was not in fellowship with the Lord. Anytime a Christian follows at a distance he is out of fellowship.

**ELEVENTH** Peter was concerned about what John would do and did not consider what he would do (John 21:20-23). The Lord had shown Peter what death the apostle would die: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not" (v. 18). The Lord spoke this, signifying the death by which Peter would glorify God. He then commanded Peter to follow Him (v. 19). Stretching forth the hands (v. 18) is connected with crucifixion. History indicates that when the time came for Peter's crucifixion he did

not want to be crucified like his Lord. The Lord was teaching Peter that he would glorify God by a martyr's death. In the meantime, he must follow Jesus Christ. "Follow me" were Christ's first words to Peter when he first began following Him as a disciple after his regeneration, and He repeated the same command after telling him by what death he would glorify God. Peter's reaction to the lesson was a blunder: "Then Peter, turning about seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him [John] saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do" (vv. 20, 21). Peter's problem was wondering what would happen to John. He was not to be concerned about what would happen to John. That was none of his business. He should be concerned about what he himself would do.

This stumbling by Peter has special significance to me. Through study in His word, the Lord convinced me of the error of denominationalism, and I was preparing the people to whom I ministered for departure from the Southern Baptist Convention. In the meantime, about thirty preachers, including me, were meeting once a month to discuss the doctrines of grace and the heresies known to us in the denomination. Some of them were contemplating departure. One Sunday night over twenty-five years ago I was preaching from this passage of Scripture when I realized I was preaching to W. E. Best, not to the congregation. I was trying to prepare the hearts of the people to depart from the convention, but I had not made that final step. I had to stop and say, "This is for me; I must get out," and I did. Only two other preachers departed soon thereafter, but they soon found the convention offered them "a greater opportunity for crowds." I am thankful to God for revealing His will for me in this passage of Scripture, regardless of what others did. The lesson in this is that we are to follow the Lord, not what relatives, friends, or associates do. We are responsible for what God would have us to do. Following Christ must continue until He comes.

**TWELFTH** Peter was prejudiced against the Gentiles (Acts 10:1-44). This mistake occurred after Pentecost. Peter, a Jew, was shown in a vision that the barrier between Jews and Gentiles had been broken down. God was preparing him to go preach the gospel to Cornelius, a regenerated Gentile. When Peter was told to rise, kill, and eat of all manner of beasts that he saw in the sheet in his vision, he said, "Not so, Lord: for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean" (v. 14). The voice spoke to him a second time telling him not to call that which God has cleansed common. The sheet containing all manner of animals was lowered and raised three times. Thus, Peter was reminded of his threefold denial of the Lord before the cock crowed. The apostle was mistaken to say, "Not so, Lord." None of us is without fault in the matter of incorrect speech. The old Adamic nature remains in every Christian, and it frequently manifests itself. Although it is crucified, it struggles hard and is long in dying. Peter did not fall into the same sin of rebuking the Lord (Matt. 16:22), but he fell into the same kind of sin. His language was the same kind. Although Peter experienced a conversion before Pentecost and manifested great spiritual strength there, his Jewish prejudice crept out. He was a Jew, but he would preach to a Gentile. If God has done a work of grace in a person, whether he is black, yellow, white, red, or brown, he deserves the message of God.

**THIRTEENTH** Peter was hypocritical (Gal. 2:12-14). This stumbling also occurred after Pentecost. Paul opposed Peter to the face because he stood condemned. Peter was continually eating with the Gentiles, but when certain Jews came from James, he began to slowly withdraw for fear of the Jews (v. 12). In this manner, he manifested hypocrisy. The result was that "other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation" (v. 13). Paul rebuked Peter before them all for his hypocrisy.

There is no doubt that Peter had his own failures in mind when he said, "make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (II Pet. 1:10). His life prior to Pentecost proves his instability. To be a Christian is one thing, but to be a stable Christian is another. Peter became a stable Christian. Hence, he was qualified to command Christians to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ (II Pet. 3:18). His stability was manifested on the day of Pentecost. God used him in a magnificent way. Subsequent to Pentecost two mistakes by Peter are recorded. This proves that no matter how stable we become we are still subject to failures, perhaps not as many or as pronounced but failures nevertheless. We never reach the place of perfection in this life. Another lesson we do not want to overlook is that regardless of failures we have made, are presently making, and might make, there is still hope for a richly provided entrance into the eternal kingdom. Peter experienced this. Therefore, he was inspired to write about it. He had a foretaste of that entrance into the kingdom in Matthew 17.



## **SECTION III**

### **THE OVERALL CONTEXT Of II Peter 3:9**

## **PREFACE TO SECTION III**

The overall context of Scripture is replete with illustrations of God's longsuffering toward the elect in order that they might be regenerated by the Holy Spirit and then brought to a conversion experience through the hearing of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. (1) We have observed the high points of the text of II Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2) We have dealt extensively with the immediate context. (3) We will now see how the interpretation we have given of this passage harmonizes with the overall context of Scripture.

Predicting the future is common at the beginning of a new year. Economists, psychics, and scientific futurists boldly proclaim their predictions concerning the new year. Do you have a prediction? What about the economy, the stock market, unemployment, the trade deficit, inflation, taxation, etc.? I have a prediction based on Biblical facts, not fancy. The time of its fulfillment is not known to man. My prediction is that God's longsuffering will continue until all the elect have come to repentance. Since God's toleration of the nonelect serves His longsuffering for the elect, when all the elect have come to repentance, God's judgment will fall on the world of the nonelect.

The preaching of the gospel is necessary in order to bring the regenerated elect to repentance. The gospel must be universally proclaimed in order that those for whom Christ died might hear. We are accountable to give God's message indiscriminately. The Holy Spirit regenerates, but conversion comes as the result of hearing the truth proclaimed by God's people.

## THE NECESSITY OF PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO BRING THE ELECT TO REPENTANCE

Around the following questions, we will show that II Peter 3:9 harmonizes with all the revelation of God's mind: (1) Why preach the gospel if God the Father elected a certain number to be saved? (2) Why preach the gospel if God the Son died to effect the salvation of a certain number given to Him by the Father? (3) Why preach the gospel if God the Holy Spirit quickens only those elected by the Father and ransomed by the Son? (4) Why preach the gospel if we cannot promise sinners that whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God?

**FIRST** Why preach the gospel if God the Father elected a certain number to be saved? The Father's election of a certain number to be saved is emphasized in John 17, where this truth is stressed by the Son of God Himself in His high priestly prayer: "...that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him" (v. 2). "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world..." (v. 6). "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine" (v. 9). "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me..." (v. 11). "...Those that thou gavest me I have kept..." (v. 12). "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (v. 24).

The Greek verb for "gavest" (John 17:6, 12) and the Greek verb for "given" (John 17:2, 9, 11, 24) come from the same Greek verb, *didomi*. It means to give someone something of one's own accord. The Father of His own accord gave certain ones to the Son. Two inflected forms of this verb (*didomi*) are used to speak of the elect in John 17. The aorist active indicative refers to a finished action in past time. It may be translated, "All that have been given Him [Christ] as a permanent gift." The other inflected form is the perfect active indicative, which is a completed action with a resulting state of being. This is called the dramatic perfect, an action that was completed in the past but is brought vividly into the present as a visible result. Theologically, the consummative form is not used because the elected disciples had not yet been glorified. God the Father gave Christ, the God-Man, universal power but a special purpose. The principle of general means and a particular object is witnessed in creation, providence, and redemption. Therefore, the Father's election, the Son's redemption, and the Spirit's application are of equal extent. The redemption by Christ is as extensive as the grace of God the Father. As grace is not experienced by all, redemption did not include all. The Bible does not speak of the possibilities of Christ's work but of things that are real and certain. God's eternal purpose and its accomplishment in time are of the same extent.

The Lord Jesus did not procure forgiveness for those who can never be forgiven. He did not satisfy justice for them. Christ died absolutely for some, not conditionally for all. Christ's intercession includes no more than those for whom He died (John 17:9). Hence, redemption and intercession are of equal extent.

God gave the elect to the Son before the foundation of the world. The following Scriptures reveal things that took place before the foundation of the world: (1) The glory of the Son was with the

Father (John 17:5). (2) The Father loved the Son (John 17:24). (3) God purposed to save some by His grace, and grace was given us in Christ (II Tim. 1:9). (4) The plan to save sinful man was ordained by the wisdom of God (I Cor. 2:7). (5) God promised eternal life (Titus 1:2). (6) The Lamb was slain in God's purpose (I Pet. 1:20). (7) Some were elected to be saved (Eph. 1:4).

The greatest proof for the inspiration of Holy Scripture is Divine election. Since man despises election because of his depravity, he would have never mentioned election. Salvation must be viewed electively by the Father, vicariously by the Son, and personally by the Holy Spirit.

**SECOND** Why preach the gospel if God the Son died to effect the salvation of a certain number given to Him by the Father? The Son's giving His life for only the sheep is emphasized by Christ: "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). He stated that He has other sheep who are His by covenant relationship with the Father other than those among the Jews: "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10:16). Caiaphas prophesied "that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (John 11:51, 52).

**THIRD** Why preach the gospel if God the Holy Spirit quickens only those elected by the Father and ransomed by the Son? The Spirit of God quickens the elect thus applying the redemptive work accomplished by Christ to their hearts in regeneration: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8).

**FOURTH** Why preach the gospel if we cannot promise sinners that whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God? Those who question thus use I John 5:1 as a proof text. "WHOSOEVER believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him." This verse is not a promise to sinners. It is a statement of fact. Without Divine election, "whosoever" would be unheeding because Christ said, "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (John 5:40).

The gospel is God's good news concerning God's purpose fulfilled in Jesus Christ. This is the reason for Paul's unashamedness of the gospel: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). The gospel is the power of God to salvation, not to regeneration. A universal testimony must go forth concerning the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. The gospel must be preached to every creature. The message is to be indiscriminately proclaimed because God's elect are scattered abroad among the nations of the world. Since God's messengers do not know who are the elect, we cannot discriminate. Saul of Tarsus was saved from Judaism because he was chosen by the Father and given grace before the world began. Discrimination is the work of the sovereign Spirit. The messenger's responsibility is to obey God. There should be no ifs and no questions on our part when it comes to obeying the revealed will of God regardless of what it is. Abraham's obedience is a classic Biblical example of this. When God ordered Abraham to offer up his son, he did not reason with God that His command was inconsistent with His promise that Abraham's seed would be called in Isaac. He obeyed without question. He was willing that God reconcile His promise with what He had commanded His servant to do.

Our knowledge of first things determines our ability to understand other things. Without an understanding of God's sovereignty, will, purpose, and election, we are not in a position to understand other things. God's purpose is as eternal as Himself. His purpose is founded in sovereignty, ordered by infinite wisdom, ratified by omnipotence, and cemented with immutability. As the bread was set on the table of showbread, to call attention to what God had done for the Israelites, God has set forth His eternal purpose so that when we have knowledge of His purpose, to an extent, we can understand other things.

The Greek word for purpose is used intellectually (Acts 11:23; 27:13; II Tim. 3:10). When used intellectually, God's purpose means His will, His intention, or His purpose. God's purpose is not the same as the execution of that purpose. His purpose is eternal; its execution is in time. To purpose to create is not the same as creation itself. God's purpose to save is not the same as salvation itself, but there can be no salvation apart from purpose.

The Greek word for purpose is used to speak of God's eternal purpose concerning our salvation (Rom. 8:28; 9:11; Eph. 1:11; 3:11; II Tim. 1:9). God purposed to save some (Eph. 1:4; II Tim. 1:9). In order to save some, which is the first step, He purposed to redeem them; hence, the second step in the chain of events from God's purpose until they reach glorification is His purpose to redeem them (I Pet. 1:18 ff). The third step was His purpose to regenerate those He purposed to save and sent His Son to redeem (John 3:8; Titus 3:5). The fourth step is that He purposed that those He purposed to save, sent His Son to redeem, and sent His Spirit to regenerate will believe (Acts 13:48). The fifth step is that He purposed that they might be holy (I Thess. 4:3-7; Heb. 12:14). The sixth step is that He purposed to preserve them (I Pet. 1:5). The seventh step is that He purposed that they shall be glorified (Rom. 8:30).

God's purpose being eternal means that all parts are in the mind of God, but they are one intuition. However, there is succession in its realization. Although succession is related to time, that does not destroy the idea of God's purpose. As there is a logical order in the Godhead, there is also a logical order in God's purpose. The logical order in the Godhead is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The logical order in God's purpose is His purpose, the redemption by Christ, regeneration by the Holy Spirit, believing by those the Holy Spirit has regenerated, a holy life manifested by the regenerated and converted while here in time, their enduring to the end, and their glorification. The ability to form an idea of a thing as a whole before it is executed in the order which its intention requires is not beyond the range of finite minds. We must never refuse the revealed on the basis that much is concealed. We must act on that which God has revealed. As we act upon the revealed, we will begin to understand the things that are concealed.

In the past, the Father chose us as His own, the Son purchased us with His own blood, and the Holy Spirit regenerated us thus enabling us to embrace the glorious gospel concerning the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. In the present, the Father gives us the position of sons, the Son reveals God's will to us, and the Holy Spirit seals us until the redemption of the purchased possession (Eph. 1:13). In the future, from our perspective, the Father will receive us as perfected in Christ, the Son will inherit us as His perfected ones, and the Holy Spirit will claim us in perfected possession. All these truths can be viewed from Ephesians 1:13-14 and related passages of Scripture. We must not overlook all the things that take place between God's election of some and His glorification of them (Rom. 8:30). Our calling presupposes Divine quickening. Our justification before our own consciences presupposes justification before the sovereign God.

Divine election gives God's ministers courage in their preaching of the gospel: (1) God's purpose cannot fail (Is. 46:10). God did not purpose that all men come to repentance, or they would all come to repentance. (2) God is taking out of the peoples of the world a people for His name (Acts 15:14). (3) God alone can give the increase (I Cor. 3:6). (4) God's election sustains God's ministers. That is why Paul said, "...I endure all things for the elect's sakes..." (II Tim. 2:10). (5) God's word shall prosper in the thing to which He sends it (Is. 55:11). (6) God's word accomplishes that which He pleases (Is. 55:11). (7) Our labor in the Lord is not empty (I Cor. 15:58).

## **GOD'S MESSAGE IS APPLICABLE TO ONLY THE ELECT**

The parable of the sower, which harmonizes with II Peter 3:9, proves that God's message is not for everyone without exception (Luke 8, Mark 4, Matt. 13). The various soils where the seed was sown portray that three out of the four represent persons for whom God's message was not intended. In contrast, the good ground describes a hearer who has been regenerated by the Spirit of God; hence, he hears the word of God and brings forth fruit. All people who have been born and shall be born are born into the categories of unresponsive, superficial, preoccupied, or prepared hearts. God intervenes by regenerating the elect and preparing their hearts for the reception of the word of God.

### **Seed By The Way Side**

The way side soil represents the unresponsive, impenetrable heart: "...some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up" (Matt. 13:4). God had not prepared this heart to receive the word. The continuous force of the present tense Greek verbs in the explanation of this soil must not be overlooked. The word itself may penetrate one's physical ear without his hearing or understanding it. While in that position, the evil one continually comes and continually seizes what one is hearing and not understanding. Therefore, the word has no permanent residence in his heart. The person hearing physically but not hearing spiritually has been described (Matt. 13:12, 13). The individual who has faith and understands will become fruitful, but he who does not have a hearing ear and does not understand what he hears will have what he heard and did not understand removed by the evil one.

Those who hear and understand are easily identifiable. The hearing ear is of God (Prov. 20:12). The person with uncircumcised ears is insensitive to spiritual things. The hearing ear is the fruit of regeneration; therefore, the person who hears the truth of the gospel believes and understands what he hears. Hearing and understanding are the gifts of God. Many assume that anything can be understood by those with higher education. But the Spirit of regeneration is necessary to understand spiritual things. The person who hears and understands obeys what he has heard and understood. The evil one cannot take away the truth that is heard, understood, and obeyed. The gospel is not only the power of God to one's salvation but it also effectually operates in every believer (I Thess. 2:13). That which has been God's power to his salvation is active in him who believes.

Contrary to the heretical statement that man must not be passive but cooperative when the word of God is preached to him, a sinner cannot be cooperative when the gospel is proclaimed to him. However, he is responsible because he is a creature created by God, but he is the author of his own depravity. He cannot, in his own strength, cooperate with God until he has been quickened by the Spirit of the living God. The unregenerate sinner is passive in spiritual things (I Cor. 2:14). The Greek verb *gennao*, which means to beget or to be born, is used passively in these verses: John 1:13; 3:3, 6, 8; I John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18. The compound verb *anagennao*, which means having been brought forth or having been born again, is used passively in I Peter 1:23. Hence, the sinner must be born of the Spirit of God before he can become active when the truth is proclaimed to him. To expect a person dead in sin to be cooperative in spiritual things makes as much sense as a

physically dead person cooperating with the mortician in the preparation of his body for showing and burial.

The wicked one seizing that which was "sown in his heart" of Matthew 13:19 has troubled many. The truth taught here is that the word was heard intellectually but not understood spiritually. The word was in the heart but not as truth that grips the renewed heart. Unsaved people can be affected to an extent by the preaching of the gospel, but hearing words intellectually and being moved emotionally is entirely different from hearing those words as truth that grips the renewed heart. When the renewed heart has been captivated by the truth, it cannot turn from truth. Ezekiel described the stony heart and the renewed heart (Ezek. 36:25-27). Hearing the word does not produce the same results in every heart. The problem lies in the nature of the heart, not in the nature of the truth. This proves that the message of God does not quicken. Jesus Christ was the Master Preacher, but the majority to whom He spoke were not quickened.

The heart is the seat of the intellect, emotion, and will. The unsaved person himself has intellect, emotion, and will. All three must be engaged in a genuine conversion experience. That which is heard and understood affects one's emotional being. The regenerated person hears, he understands, and his will becomes operative. He seeks to do the will of God. He obeys what he has heard and comprehends.

There is absolute rejection by the way side hearer, the person with an unresponsive heart. Absolute rejection by some is exemplified in Scripture: (1) This was the reaction of some to Paul's message to the Athenians: "And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked" (Acts 17:32a). (2) Procrastination is another example of absolute rejection: "We will hear thee again of this matter" (Acts 17:32b). They were willing to carry their politeness to the extent of hypocrisy. (3) Hostility toward the word is a manifestation of absolute rejection (Acts 13:44-52). (4) Arminianism reveals absolute rejection. When Paul "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee" (Acts 24:25). Felix was an Arminian. He thought everything was under his control. He would accept Paul's message when he chose.

Absolute rejection of God's word is prompted by various things: (1) The stony (depraved) heart causes one to reject God's word. (2) The wisdom of the world considers the word of God absurd. In other words, the word of wisdom is considered to be foolish by the wisdom of the world (I Cor. 1:18-31). (3) The heart is so dull and unfeeling that it is without logical, sensible deductions (Matt. 13:15). (4) Inability to repent and believe is the reason one absolutely rejects God's word.

In contrast to the depraved person's rejection of the word of God, the new heart is warm and receptive to it: (1) A warm, receptive heart stands in awe in the presence of God's word (Ps. 119:161). (2) The regenerated heart trembles at the word (Is. 66:5). This trembling is the fruit of reverence and godly fear. (3) The renewed heart bows to the authority of Scripture (John 14:21).

The following seven questions with their answers pertain to the way side (unresponsive) hearer: (1) Was the way side hearer given to know the mysteries of the kingdom? He did not have this gift (Matt. 13:11). (2) Was the unfeeling heart the fulfillment of prophecy? Yes, it was prophesied by Isaiah (Matt. 13:13-15). (3) Can the evil one seize God's word from the heart of one who has been given to know the mysteries of God? No, because God's word is hidden in the heart of the regenerate, and the truth of God's word cannot be seized from the renewed heart by Satan (Ps.



119:11). (4) Can the word have any spiritual effect on the unregenerate heart? No! It can have no more spiritual effect than the seed that fell by the way side (Matt. 13:19). (5) Are God-appointed ministers responsible for the success of sowing? No! They are responsible for the sowing but not for the success. (6) Does this parable prove that regeneration precedes hearing and understanding? Yes! The heart must first be prepared by God before one can hear and understand (Matt. 13:11-13). Cornelius and Lydia were prepared by God before they heard the preaching of the word. (7) Does election prove that some will never hear and understand? Yes! The parable of the sower illustrates this truth which is taught in II Peter 3:9.

### **Seed On The Stony Ground**

The stony ground represents the superficial hearer or believer: "Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth" (Matt. 13:5). Luke said they believe for awhile (Luke 8:13). Both Matthew and Mark said that he had no root in himself and endured only a short time (Matt. 13:20, 21; Mark 4:16, 17). This is an important lesson concerning those who make a profession of faith without possessing the grace of God. When the word was preached, this hearer whose heart was unprepared immediately received it. But he just as quickly turned from it. This kind of reception depicts the shallowness, fickleness, and superficiality of the hearer.

The hearer concerned only with the obvious or apparent always looks for something new. The Athenian religionists Paul addressed spent their time in nothing but telling or hearing some new thing (Acts 17:21). They desired new experiences whether or not they were based on God's word. Charismatics and many other Arminians may be classified as casual hearers looking for new experiences. These hearers who quickly apprehend certain features receive the word with joy. Their joy is only temporary. It is not the joy given by God in a true conversion experience which brings forth fruit. Every person possessing the grace of God brings forth fruit (John 15:1-6). He is one who has true, lasting joy: "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:11). The joy of the surface hearer is not genuine because it is not God-given. It is temporary because it is of the flesh. Only the emotional aspect of this hearer's nature operates separate from his intellect and will. The seed received in stony places is the Bible's greatest description of most converts today. They are converts not to the truth of the gospel but to another religious experience. Religious institutions abound with superficial church members. Such converts are influenced by entertainment centers, marriage counselors, singles groups, etc., in religious institutions. All these activities, none of which can give spiritual joy, are used to persuade people to make decisions. However, the word of God needs no support. It needs only proclamation by faithful men of God, and hearts that have been prepared by the Holy Spirit will be receptive to the truth when it is given.

Concerning the cursory hearer, Matthew said, "Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended" (Matt. 13:21). He does not have the root of the matter in him; therefore, his so-called joy is short-lived. "They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away" (Luke 8:13). The circumstances were conducive to believing. This hearer would reason that believing would cost him nothing. His flesh was aroused. He saw others moving and did likewise. Although he did not know why he believed, he received a sense of joy in it. There is faith and there is faith, and there is joy

and there is joy. A person should never tell anyone to put his faith in Jesus Christ. If he puts his faith in Jesus Christ, it will be temporary faith.

Short-lived or temporary faith is not the faith of God's elect. The teaching of Scripture and the experience of every child of God is that the person who believes with God-given faith will believe not only under certain circumstances, but he will also continue believing regardless of circumstances (I John 5:1-13). There are five present active participles of the verb *pisteuobelieving* in I John 5 (vv. 1, 5, 10 [twice], 13) indicating that the one who believes with faith given by God continues believing. The faith by which a regenerated person lives is not a temporary faith based on circumstances. Those who possess this faith will not draw back. They persevere because God preserves them. The writer of Hebrews said, "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (Heb. 10:38, 39). This is a Divine interpretation of the stony ground hearer. God has no pleasure in those who draw back. They had only transitory faith and soon turned from it. With many there is a spontaneous shallow acceptance of the word of the gospel, but there is also a readiness to draw back under trial because either the intellect or the emotions only have been reached. Therefore, ministers must not count all who profess faith as possessors of salvation. They need to be careful about counting their chickens before they hatch. A hen cackles when she lays an egg in expectation of a baby chicken, but her cackling may be premature. The egg may be infertile. Many professors of faith are infertile.

Fair weather believers fall away in the time of trial: "They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away" (Luke 8:13). Matthew said the plant that immediately sprang up was scorched (Matt. 13:6). Mark said it was scorched and withered away. Matthew spoke of tribulation (Matt. 13:21) which means affliction or persecution. Pressure refers to distressing circumstances. A common diagnosis among psychologists and psychiatrists is peer pressure. Apart from the grace of God, no one can stand against pressure. In the light of pressure or unusual circumstances, this one who had no root in himself fell away. Some claim he fell from grace. But he was never in grace from which to fall. A person who makes a profession of faith will encounter all forms of persecution. With every step he takes, someone will be in hot pursuit.

One will soon manifest whether or not his faith is genuine. He who has spurious faith is vain, and his faith is dead: "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead" (James 2:20). This is a good commentary on the stony ground hearer. A person with empty faith can talk endlessly about nothing.

While some beheld His miracles and believed, Jesus Christ would not commit Himself to them (John 2:23-25). He knew that behind the facade of believing there was no root in them. Therefore, He would not entrust Himself to them. Neither Christ's works nor His gospel can produce saving faith. The one who has not seen and yet believes is blessed (John 20:29). Many believe the gospel produces saving faith. The ministry of the word does produce conversion and progressive sanctification, but the word itself does not generate the capacity to believe on Jesus Christ with a saving faith. The word does not unstop deaf ears or open blind eyes. Knowledge of natural things brings natural faith into exercise. On the other hand, the knowledge of spiritual things will bring spiritual things into exercise. By the word of God, the regenerated person has an experiential consciousness of life (II Cor. 4:13). There is no exercise of saving faith apart from the truth of the gospel. The gift of faith is awakened by the word of God.

The Person and Work of Jesus Christ constitute the object of the gospel. Many argue that the life is in the seed and comes forth out of the seed, as illustrated by the parable of the sower. However, what happens to the visible part of the seed when the hidden principle of life is released? When a seed is planted in the soil, the principle of life comes forth, but the visible part of the seed rots and goes to the dust of the garden. Can the principle of eternal life be so encompassed in the word of God that when the word is preached and the life goes forth into someone, the word becomes a nonentity? God's word is settled in heaven, and it cannot decay. Hence, the comparison that some make between the gospel and the seed cannot be made with the word of the gospel. Christ was showing in this parable of the sower that the seed of the word bears fruit in one soil and not in other soils.

Many who believe the gospel produces saving faith use Romans 10:17 as a proof text. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." This verse begins with a logical inference in the use of a particle of transition. The Greek word *ara* could be translated "then." After this particle of transition, *pistis* describes the person who actively hears. It is followed by *ex*, which means out of, and here we have the description of the occasion for faith to be displayed. The latter part of the verse shows that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. It is not "the word of God" in the Greek but "the word of Christ (Christou)." Specifically, the hearing is "through" (*dia*) the message of Christ. The verse has no reference to God's word of command, as God's word of command, "live" (Ezek. 16:6) or "they that hear shall live" (John 5:25). Conclusively, this verse has no reference to the word of command, but it refers to the message concerning Christ. Before anyone can receive the message concerning Christ, he must have the capacity to believe. The source of faith is regeneration by the sovereign Spirit of God. The individual who has had faith implanted by the Spirit exercises that faith. That faith is first revealed in the conversion experience of one who has heard and embraced the gospel. The gospel finds permanent abiding lodgement in his heart because he has been given a good heart. That person's working faith is then advanced in progressive sanctification.

The superficial hearer is being caused to stumble (Matt. 13:21). Immediately the superficial believer sees the problem his faith causes him on his job, with his friends, with his associates, and with his family; therefore, he disapproves of the authority of the word which he claims to embrace. He is unwilling to take up the cross daily and follow Christ. His natural rational conclusion is that it costs too much, too many friends are departing, and promotion on the job is impossible. Consequently, he falls away.

Some questions with their answers concerning this parable will emphasize that this stony ground hearer was a mere professor of Christianity for awhile: (1) Was his joy the kind Christ gives? No! It was the joy of emotion prompted by circumstances. (2) Did the seed germinate and manifest itself? The seed did germinate and a plant sprang up momentarily, but it did not germinate in prepared soil. The germination took place only in the emotional part of the heart; therefore, it soon withered because it could not stand the test. (3) Would an unregenerate person be persecuted? Yes! Did Judas not receive the same persecution with the other disciples until the time he left and walked out? Professors of Christianity are persecuted, but they are soon offended. (4) Does the stony ground hearer represent the saved who make little progress? No! He was superficial and only his emotional nature and his intellect were temporarily influenced.

The stony ground does not represent Christians. It describes casual hearers, a category into which most religionists fit. Attention has been called to the fact that the seed sown on the ground that was

full of rocks was not seized by the evil one. That is true, but it does say the hearer had no root in himself. It also says the plant endured for awhile; it was short-lived. Luke said the hearer believed for awhile. Mark said when the sun was up, the plant was scorched.

### **Seed On The Thorny Ground**

The thorny ground portrays the preoccupied heart: "He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful" (Matt. 13:22). A preoccupied heart is unprepared and cannot receive or understand the word. Preoccupied hearts, represented by the thorns, smother the word and bring forth no fruit. These persons hear the word, and it enters their minds but does not reach their affections or their wills. The care of this age or the deceitfulness of riches choke what has been heard.

One of the two things Matthew listed that crowd out the word of God is the care of this world. The preoccupied hearer is so anxiously interested in the things of the age that there is no room for the word of God. He is anxious about things pertaining to his earthly or physical life. He is drawn in different directions, not knowing which way to go. Jesus Christ does not occupy an equal place with others or things in the affections of those who have been born of God. He has the preeminent place or none at all. One cannot serve God and mammon equally. Religionists want the world and God, but Christians desire God at the expense of everything else. This involves value judgments. God will take second place to no one or anything: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 10:37-39). The apostle Paul counted all things but loss that he might be found in Christ (Phil. 3:7-11).

The philosophy of this age is antagonistic to the truth of God. It has many forms, such as intellectual, social, moral, political, economic, and religious, all of which have their philosophies. Pressure from these affects those without grace who are subjected to the word of God. Any one of these philosophies is capable of crowding in and throttling the word that has been sown upon the heart occupied with the care of this age. Our Lord was not describing a Christian who needs help to resolve his conflict between the Lord and some human philosophy. He described a person with an engrossed heart. In such a heart, there is no room for a lasting and serious consideration concerning any eternal verity. Some suppose the thorny ground hearer describes the Christian backslider. Those with this supposition fail to see that people who live for time are always anxious and worry about something that is short-lived. Obviously engaged hearts have not been prepared by God to receive the word.

The second of the two things Matthew listed that crowd out the word of God is the deceitfulness of riches. Both the care of this age and the deceitfulness of riches are portrayed in the parable of the rich farmer (Luke 12:16-21). An individual's heart will be where his treasure is. The love of riches and the pursuit of God's will in love are at the end of opposite directions. The purpose of deceit is to deceive by causing one through the use of trickery to accept something or someone as true although it or he is false. This method of deceit points to some defect in the true while promoting supposed excellencies in the false.

God, through the apostle Paul, warned the Roman saints of deceit by those who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine they had learned: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly [own interests]; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rom. 16:17, 18). We must be constantly on guard because people with their fair speeches can deceive the unsuspecting. Fair speaking and flattery go together. The man of God who is being used of God neither flatters nor is he flattered. Such a person is not trying to deceive anyone, and the truth he preaches warrants him no flattery. This is also true of an individual Christian in the will of God who understands Biblical doctrine, human nature, etc. A Christian is not out to deceive anyone, and whatever truth he bears witness to warrants him no flattery. He is simply doing God's will. Men of God will receive no flattery from persons who are doing God's will. Flattery does not come from an honest and sincere heart. There is a difference between flattery, which is an insincere compliment, and commendation, which is the sincere approval of what one is doing. Christ and the apostles gave their sincere approval of what many were doing, but they never insincerely complimented anyone.

Paul's enemies in pointing to the supposed defects in his person and ministry illustrate deceit by trickery. The apostle was maligned within and without the assemblies (II Cor. 11-13). Accusing fingers were pointed at Paul. Can you not hear the false prophets and teachers questioning, if Paul is one sent by God why does God not remove his thorn in the flesh? (II Cor. 12:7-10). Since Paul's apostleship was questioned, he necessarily defended his office by giving the qualifications of an apostle (I Cor. 9:1-5). His accusers constantly contrasted him with the false teachers' eloquence and charm. Religion is judged by the world's standards; therefore, false teachers seek to be successful in the eyes of the religious world. The weapons used against the apostle Paul were carnal. They consisted of human eloquence, powerful propaganda, charm of personality, and clever organizations.

Riches in themselves deceive. They promise what they cannot give. They cannot give joy, lasting peace, and satisfaction. Among the five aspects of love enumerated in Paul's two letters to Timothy is the love of money: (1) the love of self (II Tim. 3:2), (2) the love of pleasure (II Tim. 3:4), (3) the love of the world (II Tim. 4:10), (4) the love of money, which is the root of all evil (I Tim. 6:10), and (5) the love of the appearing of Jesus Christ (II Tim. 4:8). The love of the appearing of Christ is the only cure for the love of self, pleasure, the world, and money.

Material possessions are equally irrelevant at our entrance into and our exit out of the world. Those who have been ensnared by riches have become helpless dupes in the grip of clever deception. Hence, they are pierced with self-inflicted pain of disillusionment. There is no place for spiritual things in such a preoccupied heart. A person's heart is with his treasure. Distinction must be made between lawful and unlawful desire for material things. A lawful desire for money to provide the necessities of life is correct. The essence of the Christian faith is for the believer to provide for his own family. To fail in this is worse than an unbeliever (I Tim. 5:8). An unlawful desire for money may be explained by the parable of the rich young farmer. He had plenty but wanted more. The difference between the believer and unbeliever is self-evident. The believer does not fulfill his obligation to his family to the neglect of the Lord. On the other hand, the unbeliever has no place in his heart for the Lord because he is preoccupied with the care of this age and the deceitfulness of riches. Solomon, one well qualified to give advice, warned that "Wealth maketh many friends" (Prov. 19:4). He also spoke of friends for commodity: "every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts" (Prov. 19:6). When the gifts cease, the man's friends cannot be found. Riches will profit

nothing in the day of God's wrath (Prov. 11:4). The only riches that do not deceive or disappoint are in God: "Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness" (Prov. 8:18).

Mark added "the lusts of other things" (Mark 4:19) to Matthew's account. His statement includes some things not mentioned in the care of the eye or the deceitfulness of riches. Mark referred to unlawful desires. Luke added "pleasures of this life" (Luke 8:14). The pleasures of this life are to be considered from two points of view: (1) legitimate and (2) illegitimate. Legitimate pleasure is produced in men by grace. At the announcement of the birth of Jesus Christ, a multitude of the heavenly host joined the angel making the announcement and said, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14). Paul prayed for the Thessalonian saints that "God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (II Thess. 1:11, 12). In Luke's description of the seed that fell among the thorns being choked with cares and pleasures of this life, he used the Greek word that speaks of the sensual pleasure of the natural man. There is pleasure in sin (Heb. 10:8), but the pleasures of sin are short-lived. On the contrary, the pleasure God gives lives forever because it is the fruit of grace.

Some believe the rocky and thorny soils represent Christians. They affirm that each received the word and grew but later succumbed to opposition. They explain that although they were saved, they were not learners and therefore not disciples. However, a Christian not being a disciple is impossible. How can the unsaved be disciples and some of the saved not be disciples? Those who turned and ceased to follow Jesus Christ were called disciples, but they were unsaved (John 6:60, 66). They were not followers of Christ but of what Christ offered. A disciple may be either true or false.

### **Seed On The Good Soil**

The good soil describes the whole heart: "But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" (Matt. 13:23). The whole heart is opposite to the hard, hollow, and halfhearted hearts represented in the first three soils. At regeneration the whole heart is renewed, not just some corners of the heart leaving some of the corners for things the individual himself might desire. The whole heart has been touched by grace. God does not do anything halfway. Hence, the heart is no longer hard, shallow, or preoccupied. God gives the elect a heart to know Him: "And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart" (Jer. 24:7). The whole heart means all the heart, which is all the intellect, emotions, and will. Those who seek God with the whole heart are blessed: "Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart" (Ps. 119:2). The Psalmist sought the Lord with all his heart (Ps. 119:10). He said he would observe the law with his whole heart (Ps. 119:34). He declared he would praise the Lord with his whole heart in the assembly of the upright (Ps. 111:1) and show forth God's marvelous works with all his heart (Ps. 9:1).

Since all hearts are depraved, how does one out of four represented in the parable of the sower become the permanent residence of the word which has been preached? Did this one have something in himself the others did not have? No! The prepared soil was like the other three in itself. Therefore, the difference is found not in the soil but in the One who prepares the soil. God did

something for the last soil that He did not do for the other three. He made the difference: "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why doest thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (I Cor. 4:7). Not until after God has given one a new heart does He request, "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways" (Prov. 23:26). The benefactor becomes the petitioner in this text. What infinite condescension that God should ask His own to give Him his heart. There is nothing in Scripture about a sinner giving his heart to God. God does not want that old hard, shallow, or preoccupied heart. He wants only the prepared heart, which He alone has prepared.

God did not request a portion of the heart. A person gives his whole heart or none at all. The heart carries the whole man with it. Thus, giving the heart is giving one's understanding, emotion, and will. God is the supreme Object of the new heart. This means a son of God loves what God loves and hates what God hates. God has a right to the heart because He created, redeemed, and made it new by regeneration.

Paul told the Corinthian Christians that the Macedonian Christians first gave themselves to the Lord and then gave of their means: "And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God" (II Cor. 8:5). You will notice that this was done through the will of God. Everything is false if the order is changed. One does not give his time and money and then his heart, but he gives his heart and the other things follow. The Macedonians were sons; therefore, they did not give themselves by an act of an unredeemed will. Their wills as well as the emotional and intellectual aspects of their natures had been redeemed. The giving of themselves did not add anything to their position in Christ. Their giving themselves was self-dedication. Persons who do not give themselves to the Lord invariably find something by which to justify their own disobedience or to cover up the fact that they reject God's message. Therefore, they do not fit the category of the good ground. But they will find their category in one of the first three soils mentioned by our Lord.

The following things, which involve our intellects, emotions, and wills, are the basis upon which Christians give themselves to the Lord: (1) God gave Himself in Christ for us. (2) The Spirit of faith indwells us. (3) The love of God is poured out into our hearts. God never receives the homage of a divided heart. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24). False gods can bear a divided heart, but the one true and living God cannot and will not. Furthermore, false believers can bear a divided empire. One may assemble a congregation of people with superficial, preoccupied, and divided hearts, but God is neither heard nor loved in such a congregation. False teaching will be applauded and the teacher himself will be praised in such a gathering. True teachers of God's word do not open the front door to Jesus Christ and the back door to the Devil. An assembly of wholehearted hearers may be compared to the tabernacle, the place where God met with the nation of Israel. As there was no place in the tabernacle for an idol, there must be no place in our hearts for an idol (I John 5:21). Wholehearted believers live for a single Object, God. As Christ Jesus is our one life, He is our one way (John 14:6). External religion depends upon the excitement that created it, but Christians motivated by the fear of displeasing their holy and righteous God live on when circumstances are seemingly against them. They continue to hear, understand, and bear fruit.

The soil, which represents the heart, determines the outcome, and the fruit reveals the character of the heart. A Christian's heart is revealed in the good soil. Those whose hearts are not revealed here

are evidenced in the other three soils. The characteristics of the good ground differ from the other three of this parable. This is the man who is hearing. He is hearing because he desires to hear. The desire is continuous, not intermittent. Every Christian desires truth and more truth because he has been given a new heart; thus, he can identify with spiritual things. This man is also understanding. He thoroughly perceives the word of God. Furthermore, he is continually yielding fruit.

The following are seven characteristics of one who has a prepared heart: (1) His heart was prepared by the Holy Spirit in regeneration. (2) The person whose heart has been prepared in regeneration hears after a different manner and to a different purpose than others. (3) He understands or perceives thoroughly. (4) He keeps the word that he hears. (5) He continually produces fruit. (6) He continually produces fruit with perseverance. The word spreads from one person to another. (7) There are different degrees of fruit, but there is fruit. Where there is no fruit there is no life, because the Lord removes every dead branch. Fruit is the proof of life. Fruit does not refer to works but to life.



## THE ELECT BRING FORTH FRUIT

God's elect who have been regenerated receive the message, are converted, and bring forth fruit. The subject of fruitbearing is taught in John 15. This is one of the great doctrinal and practical portions of Scripture. The demands of discipleship are allegorically imposed upon the disciples of Jesus Christ. Truth is revealed that duty may be performed. Duty is performed because truth is believed. Hence, every doctrine has its practical "therefore," and every law has its practical "because." Doctrine provides the foundation upon which precepts rest. Where there is no doctrine there is no guidance. Therefore, Scripture cannot be taught without teaching doctrine. The 66 books of the Bible show the importance of doctrine. Let us follow the rungs of the ladder upward from the Pentateuch which is the foundation, to the historical books which show organization, to the poetical books which depict aspiration, to the prophetic books which describe expectation, to the Gospels which portray manifestation, to the Acts Of The Apostles and all the Epistles which present realization, to the Revelation which is the culmination. A definite knowledge of doctrine is absolutely necessary in the system of Christianity. Where there is no doctrine there is no Christianity. One does not evidence that he has salvation until he is interested in and is influenced by doctrine. Not until then is he equipped to give the message of God to others that the regenerated elect may be brought to the knowledge of their salvation.

The relationship between chapters 14 and 15 of John is vital to the proper exegesis and understanding of fruitbearing in chapter 15. (1) Jesus Christ is viewed as the true Priest in chapter 14 and as the true Vine in chapter 15. The Lord Jesus was walking among the disciples at this time. He is the God-Man, and only in that capacity could He pray and ask something of the Father. In the capacity of Priest, He prayed, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever" (John 14:16). (2) Israel had been appointed priest and vine (Hos. 4:6; Is. 5; Ps. 80:8-16), but she forfeited both through disobedience. Israel was imperfect, but God had His true Priest and Vine who would appear and exercise both offices at God's appointed time. (3) Chapter 14 tells about the gift of the Spirit "to" Christ's disciples: "Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:17). "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (v. 26). Chapter 15 demonstrates the activities of the Spirit "in" the disciples. This is the reason they could produce fruit. (4) Believers, as the common priesthood of believers, live a life of fellowship with Christ in heavenly places (ch. 14). Believers live a life of fruitbearing in earthly places (ch. 15). (5) The Epistle to the Ephesians fully explains chapter 14. Chapter 15 is elucidated in the Epistle to the Philippians. (6) The Holy Spirit indwells believers (ch. 14). The Holy Spirit works through believers (ch. 15). (7) The pronoun "me" is found many times in chapter 14. The pronoun "ye" is outstanding in chapter 15. (8) The grace of God is unfolded in chapter 14. Responsibility is stressed in chapter 15. The secret of fruitbearing is revealed when we understand that since we are in Christ, we are to bear fruit.

Christians are motivated by love to keep Christ's commandments: "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). The one continually loving Jesus Christ will keep His precepts unreservedly, neither doubting nor questioning what Christ has commanded His people to do.

Obedience motivated by love is better than a sense of duty. The one continually loving Jesus Christ will keep His precepts impartially without picking and choosing one command and passing by others. He loves God's law in its entirety. The one constantly loving Jesus Christ will keep His precepts cheerfully because he considers being under the law of Christ a privilege (Rom. 8:2). Pleasure is derived from pleasing the Savior, and pain ensues from offending Him. The one keeping on loving Jesus Christ will keep His precepts perseveringly regardless of the cost to himself.

Christians are not only motivated by love to keep Christ's precepts, but they are also given ability to keep them by the presence of the Comforter. The Comforter maintains our hearts in those blessed affections which were formed by the gift of God's love. The presence of the Spirit is very intimate. Three prepositions in John 14:16-17 emphasize increasing intimacy from one to another and the enhancement of that intimacy in the absence of the Lord Jesus Christ: (1) The preposition "with" of verse 16 means among: "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another [allon, accusative of allos, which means another of the same kind, of the same nature, or another Person in the Godhead] Comforter, that he may abide with [genitive of meta, which means among] you for ever." Jesus Christ was among the eleven fruitbearing disciples, from whom Judas at that time had been removed by the Father. He was the Comforter who comforted the disciples while He was among them. He was going away; nevertheless, He would send the second Comforter who would be among them forever. (2) The preposition "with" of verse 17 means alongside: "Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with [para, which means alongside] you." (3) The preposition "in" of verse 17 speaks of the Holy Spirit's indwelling believers for fellowship and fruitfulness: "...and shall be in [en] you." The first two prepositions are used with present active verbs, but the last one is used with a future middle verb. The disciples would experience an intimacy they had not heretofore experienced. Another Comforter promised would be of the same nature as Jesus Christ and God the Father, each of whom is God. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit is one God. The fulfillment of the promise of another Comforter has made the relationship between God and His own more intimate. However, the intimate relationship of the Holy Spirit's presence among, alongside of, and indwelling Christians will be consummated by the personal and unmediating presence of Jesus Christ at His second coming.

The following are some of the blessings enumerated in John 14 that are derived from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. (1) Christians are not left as orphans. We have another Comforter: "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever" (v. 16). The Spirit is the earnest of Christ's presence until He returns to complete our redemption (Eph. 1:13, 14). This teaching was the first introduction of the disciples to the full experience of the new covenant. (2) We are able to see Christ by the indwelling Spirit: "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more, but ye see me" (v. 19a). We see Him through the eye of faith (I Pet. 1:8). The world is deprived of this sight. The next time the world sees Him will be in the day of terror. (3) We have Christ's own life as a pledge: "because I live, ye shall live also" (v. 19b). (4) We have our ignorance of the vital union with Christ dispelled: "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you" (v. 20). (5) We have God's love manifested to us, and our love reciprocates: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (v. 21). Love motivates every child of God to obey the precepts of Christ. Our love for Him returns with a high estimation for Christ's authority and precepts. True love submits to what honors Christ. (6) We have instruction: "These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all

things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (vv. 25, 26). The Holy Spirit "shall teach," a future active indicative Greek verb which indicates that He would continue to teach these apostles all things and bring all things to their remembrance. Those things the Holy Spirit would teach the apostles and bring to their remembrance have been recorded for our benefit. (7) We have peace: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (v. 27). The Greek verbs for leaving and giving peace are both present active indicative, signifying that they are factual. The "peace I leave with you" is peace with God which is positional. The "peace I give unto you" is the peace of God which is conditional (Phil. 4:7).

Benefits are derived from union with Christ by persons who are positionally in Christ and not merely in the sphere of Christ's influence as was Judas Iscariot. Several unions with reference to our union with Christ are mentioned in Scripture: (1) Our eternal union goes back to our having been chosen by the Father and given to Christ in the covenant of redemption. (2) Our legal union took place at Calvary where Christ shed His blood and we were crucified with Him there. At that time we were justified before God on the basis of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ to all the elect. (3) Our actual union took place when we were regenerated. The eternal union and the legal union made the union of regeneration sure. Our union of conversion is the realization of the eternal, legal, and actual unions. Those having the three preceding unions with Christ are qualified to bring forth fruit.

Chapter 15 begins with a doctrinal statement concerning a vital relationship existing between Christ and His disciples. Judas, who was nonelect, was no longer present, and Christ was speaking to the eleven true disciples. Therefore, the contents of this chapter have a primary emphasis and meaning to the disciples. Furthermore, the truth taught here has the same meaning to all Christians. Christ is the genuine Vine of whom the Father is the Husbandman, and the disciples are the branches. Observe the relationship between Christ who is the Vine and the Father who is the Husbandman/Proprietor/Cultivator. Christ must be viewed as the God-Man, the Mediator, in this chapter. "I AM" of John 15:1 in the King James Bible does not do justice to the Greek. The personal pronoun "I" comes from ego, which means I, and eime follows it, giving it the meaning of "I Myself." In other words, there is no other. "I Myself am the genuine Vine of whom Israel was only an imperfect shadow."

The doctrinal statement of the Lord Jesus in John 15:1-3 shows Him as the genuine Vine, the Father as the Husbandman, and the branches who should be fruitbearers. Does His statement that He is the genuine Vine refer to Him personally as the eternal Son, Himself and His body (the assembly), or His mediatorial work? The emphasis is on the personal ministry of Jesus Christ and what He accomplished while here on earth; therefore, it refers to His mediatorial work. The word translated "true" is from the Greek word alethinos. This same adjective is used to speak of Christ as the true Bread that has come down from God out of heaven and of true worshippers who worship God in spirit and in truth (John 6:32; 4:23). The word "husbandman," which speaks of the Father as Proprietor/Cultivator, shows that the Father does work in the earth as Cultivator.

The Lord Jesus did not manifest disrespect for the Father by beginning with Himself: "I Myself am the true Vine." One might think Christ would have mentioned the Father first since He is the first Person in the Godhead. However, the Son and the Father are one in essence, nature, purpose, and power. The unity in the Godhead is taught here. The Father and Son are one in purpose, not in

Person. As the Vine and the Husbandman, they are one in essence. Christ and His brethren are one because of redemption (Heb. 2:11).

A branch may be either fruitful or unfruitful. The Proprietor/Cultivator takes away every branch that does not bear fruit: "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away..." (John 15:2). The verb "taketh" is a present active indicative of *airo*, which means I am removing a branch that is without life. The Father "purges" (present active indicative of *kathairo*, which means I am clearing away by pruning) the fruitful branches: "...every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." Fruit, which is life and not works, is the test to determine whether one possesses salvation. As Judas did not bear fruit in the sphere of Christ's influence, mere professors of salvation do not bear fruit in the sphere of Christian influence. Professors are not without works. They work for recognition, but they are without fruit.

There is a twofold link with Jesus Christ: (1) the vital union which the new birth alone produces and (2) the link in a mere subordinate sense. The first produces fruit, but the second is fruitless. The first is inward, but the second is merely outward. Every kind of link with the visible aspect of the assembly and the assembly's Head, Jesus Christ, does not secure safety. Two kinds of branches indicate that there are different kinds of connections with Christ. Therefore, one can be in Christ without being a Christian. The Father prunes the fruitful branches in Christ that they might bear more fruit and eventually much fruit. The Son cleanses the fruitful branches through the word. They have already been cleansed through blood. Conditional, not positional, cleansing is taught here. Life in Christ is salvation, life with Christ is fellowship, life by Christ is fruitbearing, and life for Christ is service.

Many stumble over the teaching that every branch in Christ that does not bear fruit is removed by the Father. Can anyone be in Christ or in God without being a Christian? Scripture answers in the affirmative. The preposition "in" (*en*) of verse 2 is in the locative case. The locative case may be the locative of time, but this has no reference to time. It can also mean the locative of place, but that does not apply here because Judas was not in Christ as to salvation. A person in Christ for salvation cannot get out of Christ (Col. 3:3). The locative case can also mean the locative of sphere, and that is the teaching here. Judas was in the sphere of Christ's influence.

There is a sense in which every individual is in God: "...In him [God] we live, and move, and have our being..." (Acts 17:28). Many who were not of Israel were in God's covenant with Israel: "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Rom. 9:6). Many are in the sphere of Christian profession who are not possessors of grace. This was evidenced when the Lord Jesus washed the feet of the disciples. Two kinds of washings were taught in answer to Peter's refusal to have his feet washed: "...He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all" (John 13:10). The word "washed" (*louloumenos*, perfect passive participle of *louo*) means having been bathed or cleansed all over; whereas, the word "wash" (*nipsasthai*, aorist middle infinitive of *nipto*) means to cleanse a part of the body. Judas had not been cleansed, and he was among them. Judas was in the sphere of Christ's influence, but he was fruitless because a prepared heart is necessary in order to bear fruit (John 13:21-27). There was a relationship between Christ and Judas as far as office was concerned. Judas was chosen to the office of apostleship (John 6:70; Acts 1:16-21). But he had no intimate spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ.

The eleven disciples had been thoroughly cleansed by Christ's blood; hence, they could be cleansed through the word Christ spoke to them: "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken

unto you" (John 15:3). Like John 17:17 "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" this is progressive cleansing. Fruitbearing branches are not perfect; therefore, we need pruning. Every Christian has zeal, but he must be careful lest his zeal turn into recklessness. Every fruitbearing person has joy, but he must guard against that joy being turned into pride. Meekness is a fruit of one who has passed from death into life, but it can be made an excuse for cowardice. Gentleness is a characteristic of a fruitbearing branch, but gentleness can become silly compliance with everyone's whim.

God plants His vines in the midst of fiery trials. Nevertheless, they bring forth fruit, which proves their discipleship. The Father cuts off the nonbearing branch and casts it into the fire. But He prunes the fruitbearing branch. Fruit is the proof of discipleship. Fruit partakes of that godlike nature. The person who has fruit has character. Fruit speaks of what we are in Christ. Fruit is for the Owner the Father not for the branch. Fruit is borne silently and without noticeable activity. The excitement of public meetings and the restless activity of external service cannot take the place of fruit. It is produced by the Holy Spirit who abides in the true branches of Jesus Christ.

## THE ELECT ABIDE IN CHRIST

The regenerated and converted elect abide in Christ because they are intimately related to Him. This intimate relationship is taught in their vital union with the Godhead: "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you" (John 14:20). (1) The mystery of the Godhead is the first intimate relationship "I am in my Father." No one can rest on Christ's redemptive work or worship God in Christ unless he knows what is meant by God being in Christ. The verse states "ye shall know," not "ye shall know how," Jesus Christ is in the Father, we are in Him, and He is in us. No one knows how Jesus Christ is in the Father or how Christ is in us, but the regenerated and converted elect know experientially by the testimony of Scripture that this is true. We know what it is to enjoy the working of God's grace, but we do not know how it works. The why and how are hidden in the secret aspect of God's will. (2) The mystery of the incarnation is the second intimate relationship "ye in me." The relationship of Christ and His sheep is the fruit of the hypostatic union. (3) The mystery of redemption and regeneration is the third intimate relationship "I in you." Redemption is legal: "ye in me." "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). Regeneration is actual: "I in you." We are in Him in redemption. He is in us in regeneration.

Abiding in Christ is not seeking a new position but remaining in the fellowship of the position already obtained: "Abide in me, and I in you..." (John 15:4). "Believe on Christ" is the message God has for those who have been regenerated. "Abide in Christ" is His message for those who have been converted. There is no stream without a fountain, and there is no fountain without a stream.

Vital union and the source of spiritual life are emphasized in John 15:1-3. This is the doctrinal position, which is followed by a practical imperative to abide founded on the doctrinal position. The Lord commanded the positionally and conditionally cleansed disciples to abide in Him (v. 4). He was speaking of fellowship. As a branch cannot bear fruit separate from the vine, we cannot produce fruit without remaining in fellowship with Jesus Christ. Since Jesus Christ is the Vine and we are the branches, only those remaining in fellowship with Him produce fruit. Apart from Him we can do nothing.

Abiding in Christ is an imperative for Christians. It is an inexhaustible expression. Abiding in Christ is thinking what He thinks. This is possible by heeding the exhortation, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). Abiding in Christ is to will as He wills. Christians must be continually renewing our minds that we "may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:2). As we abide in Christ, we recognize that apart from His grace and strength we can do nothing to honor Him, but we can do all things to honor Him in the One empowering us: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

Three prerequisites to abiding are believing, loving, and obeying. "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). The whole revelation of the Divine will constitutes the laws of Jesus Christ with regard to what Christians are to believe, do, and suffer. Keeping the commandments is to make them the rule and reason of our faith and conduct. However, keeping them perfectly is an

impossible attainment by any Christian. Those who have made the most progress toward conformity to the precepts of Christ are the first to confess with Paul, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:12). "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin" (Rom. 7:14). Furthermore, they say with the apostle John, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (I John 1:8). On the other hand, the cry of all believers is the same as Peter's, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee" (John 21:17).

A common exhortation today is to know who you are. Self-estimation may be on one of three levels: superabove, subbelow, and saneScriptural. Those on the super level have a superiority complex. Those on the sub level have an inferiority complex. Those on the sane level have the Scriptural view of themselves. We fulfill our obligation to God only to the same degree that Christ's words abide in us. The recipient of grace has been given power to abide: "...I in you." Christ abides in saints to the same extent in which we dwell in Him. John gave further enlightenment on Christ's abiding in us and our abiding in Him: "And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us" (I John 3:24). Christ abides in us through His word (John 15:7). A believer's abiding in Christ signifies that he is maintaining fellowship in his permanent residence and Christ is providing the spiritual means for him to produce fruit.

The following are four results of abiding in Christ: (1) Prayer is effectual: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7). When the words of Christ abide in an individual, he will never ask for anything he desires for himself personally. (2) Joy is celestial: "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (v. 11). Earthly things cannot make any contribution to that joy, and circumstances cannot diminish it. It comes from God and is Christ's joy. (3) Fruit will be perpetual: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain..." (v. 16). (4) The hatred of the world against Christians is ineffectual: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore, the world hateth you" (v. 18-19).

Solomon's Song exemplifies the truth that Christ's abiding in us is determined by our abiding in Him (Song of Sol. 4:16-5:8). Fruitfulness in the Christian life is pleasant to the Beloved Christ (4:16). The Bridegroom accepted the bride's invitation (4:16; 5:1; Rev. 3:20). The bride became intoxicated with love (5:1). But she soon became backslidden. The first sign of her backsliding was her sleeping (5:2), the second was her putting off her coat (5:3), and the third was her washing her own feet (v. 3).

Sleep may be caused by apathy, unconcern (unaffected by the sowing of tares), and watchlessness. The spouse was half asleep. She said, "I sleep, but my heart waketh." The difference between a backsliding believer and an apostate is that the believer's heart remains awake but the apostate's heart has never been awakened. The backsliding spouse soon forgot the communion she had experienced (4:16; 5:1). The Bridegroom called her His sister, which denotes relationship, His love, which denotes salvation, His dove, which speaks of the indwelling Spirit, and His undefiled, which depicts her position in Christ.

The spouse putting off her coat indicated that she put off practical righteousness. In contrast Paul said, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection" (I Cor. 9:27). Christians are already clothed with the righteousness of Christ, but we are responsible to put on practical righteousness by repenting and awaking to eternal issues: "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13:11-14).

The bride's washing her own feet denotes self-cleansing. All Christians intermittently try self-cleansing when they seek to justify themselves for wrongdoing or excuse themselves for failure to do what they should. Such excuses are inexcusable. Until backsliders are convinced by the application of truth, they will justify themselves because they do not see themselves as God and fellow Christians see them. In her backslidden condition, the spouse took off her shoes, thinking a life of ease would not defile her. Backsliding results in loss of fellowship. The backslider has neither the joy of full wakefulness nor the comfort of complete rest. A backslidden Christian is miserable. Although he seeks to justify himself, his backsliding is soon detected in his countenance and conversation.

The Bridegroom's knocking (Song of Sol. 5:2) is not His knocking at the door of an unregenerate heart. Many erroneously exhort an unsaved person to open the door of his heart to Christ's knocking. They inform him that the latch is on the inside and he must open his heart and let Christ in. However, this invitation is never addressed to an unregenerate person. The Lord Jesus knocks at the door of Christian hearts by His word and by His providential dealings with us. When the believer who is in a backslidden condition does not heed the word of God, God in His providence chastens him.

The spouse did not hasten to open the door to her Beloved. In effect, the Bridegroom used the language of Christ to the sleeping apostles in the garden of Gethsemane: "Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest" (Matt. 26:45). More than knocking, giving the word of God, and providence is necessary to affect the backslider. The spouse's Beloved "put in his hand by the hole of the door" (Song of Sol. 5:4). "My beloved extended his hand through the opening, And my feelings were aroused for him" (NASB). Her Beloved's extending His hand through the opening signifies He did an internal work. One may preach the word of God to backsliders, but it will be to no avail until the Lord Jesus Himself does an internal work. In response to her Beloved's internal work, her feelings in her were moved for Him. We cannot expect response to the word without the internal working of the Holy Spirit, Christ's Agent on earth during His absence. God alone can revive His work. Men may be temporarily persuaded by men, but God's internal work endures. The bride arose to open to her Beloved, and her "hands dropped with myrrh," and her "fingers with sweet smelling myrrh upon the handles of the lock" (Song of Sol. 5:5). He had left evidence that He had done an internal work.

Her beloved had withdrawn Himself (5:6). The Lord withdrew from her because of her backslidden condition. She had already withdrawn and was following afar off. The following results followed the Bridegroom's withdrawal: (1) Fellowship was lost: "my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake" (v. 6a). (2) Her prayers were unanswered: "I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer" (v. 6b). His words must abide in



us, and if His words abide in us we will ask what He wills for our lives, not what we personally want. (3) Her testimony for her Beloved was interrupted: "The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love" (vv. 7, 8). She was lovesick for her Beloved. Here is the difference between backsliding and apostatizing. Christ must have first place in our lives. He will take no other. The spouse could not rest until fellowship with her Beloved was restored. There must be self-judgment by the backslider before the Lord Jesus will return in fellowship. As the magnetized needle will not rest until it find its pole, the Christian will never rest until he finds the rest of sanctification in Christ. Christ dwells in us to the same degree that we abide in Him.

## JESUS CHRIST MEDIATES FOR THE ELECT

Jesus Christ prayed for the elect, the ones the Father gave Him. All the elect are the Father's by covenant relationship. Our Lord's high priestly prayer is recorded in John 17. The first eight verses are introductory to His prayer. Christ's prayer was heard and answered (John 11:42; Heb. 5:7). He was always in the will of God. Christ's pleading included the following: (1) the circumstance the hour has come (v. 1), (2) His relationship to the Father (v. 1), (3) His commission to give eternal life to the ones God has given Him (v. 2), (4) His authority God has given Him authority, the nature of which is to rule (v. 2), (5) His devotion to glorify God in fulfilling His will and purpose (v. 4), (6) His finished work finished the work the Father gave Him to do (v. 4), (7) His glory the glory He was having with the Father before the world began (v. 5), and (8) His perfect obedience manifested God's name to the elect and gave them the words that God had given Him (vv. 6-8).

This chapter (John 17) excels all the chapters of the Bible in doctrinal content. The words therein were spoken by our Lord as though His death and resurrection were already accomplished. This is a foretaste of the holy of holies, the place where our high Priest is now interceding for His own. The characteristic timelessness stands out as the Lord Jesus anticipated His age-long intercession in glory. The climax to our Lord's earthly life was reached. He no longer spoke "to" His disciples, but He spoke "for" them.

Seven things that have been given to Jesus Christ as Mediator are recorded in John 17: (1) He has been given a people: "...as many as thou hast given him" (v. 2). (2) He has been given eternal life for the purpose of communicating it to those whom the Father gave to Him in the covenant of redemption: "thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him" (v. 2). (3) He has been given power over all flesh of mankind in general and the corrupt principle of man in particular: "...thou hast given him power over all flesh..." (v. 2). (4) He was given a work to do, and He has finished the work the Father gave Him to perform: "...I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (v. 4). (5) The Father's name has been given to Jesus Christ that He might manifest it to those whom the Father gave to Him: "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world..." (v. 6). (6) He was given words that He might give them to His people: "For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me..." (v. 8). (7) Glory was given to Him that He might give it to His own: "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them..." (v. 22). These seven things were given to Jesus Christ as Mediator that He might communicate them to His people.

This prayer in John 17 is the only recorded prayer of our Lord. Jesus Christ is God, and God cannot pray to God. Jesus Christ did not pray in the capacity of God absolutely considered. He prayed as Mediator, Representative of the elect. Christ's prayer is as applicable for Christians today as it was to the disciples when the Lord uttered the words. Scripture records many instances where He went aside to pray. For instance, He went into the garden of Gethsemane to pray. But those prayers are not recorded.

The Lord Jesus prayed this prayer in John 17, but you will not find anywhere in the Scriptures that He continues to pray at the right hand of the Father. The Biblical language is that He is interceding

for us at the right hand of the Father. He prayed in His humiliation as Mediator. He prayed in the capacity of a Mediator who had humbled Himself, had taken upon Himself the form of a servant, and would be obedient to death. This speaks of condescension. He is Mediator now, but He is the exalted Mediator, not the humble Mediator walking among the sons of men. He intercedes for us because He is our Mediator.

It is important to observe that the Greek verbs used in our Lord's prayer were all in the present tense. He even spoke of His death as having already been accomplished (v. 4). At the time He prayed He had not actually died; but from the standpoint of God, it was already a finished act. In His Mediatorial character, He continues to intercede for His own. His impeccable nature has been glorified; therefore, He sits at the right hand of the Father making intercession for His elect.

The reverential desire of the Lord Jesus was manifested in that He lifted up His eyes to heaven. As Mediator on earth, He was in subjection to the Father; and as Mediator today in heaven, He is in subjection to the Father. He addressed God as "Father" (v. 1), "O Father" (v. 5), "Holy Father" (v. 11), and "righteous Father" (v. 25). When the Lord prayed, He never asked the disciples to pray with Him. The disciples could not pray with the Son of God because they could not pray in the same capacity in which He prayed. The Lord Jesus always prayed alone. Do not make the mistake of calling Matthew 6 the Lord's prayer. Jesus Christ could never say, "forgive me my debts [opheilemata, accusative plural of ophilema, which means debts, sins, or guilts]." He never had any. He approached God as His Father. He made a distinction between the way He approached the Father and the way we approach Him. He is the eternal Son of God. We are the sons of God by regeneration. The Mediator must mediate between God and man, and only the God-Man can thus mediate.

Jesus Christ prayed for the elect. He made a great announcement: "I pray for them" (John 17:9). He gave an explanation: "...they are thine....And all mine are thine, and thine are mine..." (vv. 9, 10). This proves that those whom the Father gave to the Son and those for whom Christ died are the same people. Jesus Christ did not die for every person without exception, and He intercedes for only those for whom He died. They are of equal extent. The elect of God are portrayed in this passage of Scripture. Although the word "elect" itself is not found, reference is made seven times in this chapter to those the Father gave to the Son. Two different inflections of the Greek verb *didomi*, with reference to those the Father gave the Son, are used in John 17. It is used twice in verse 6 as an aorist active indicative verb. The other five references are the perfect active indicative form of the verb *didomi* (vv. 2, 9, 11, 12, 24). The perfect tense can be used in various ways, but in this instance the dramatic perfect, which is completed action in the past brought vividly into the present as a visible result, is used. It could not be used consummatively, because the elected disciples had not yet been glorified. They had been brought vividly into actual existence. The Father had given them to the Son, and the Son was paying the price for them. They were His by right of redemption. They were the Father's by right of choice, and now they are brought into public view.

Jesus Christ told the disciples He would return to the Father (John 17:11, 13). His hour of crucifixion was come, and then He would return to the Father after having finished the work the Father sent Him to perform. As the Representative of the redeemed, He would take His place at the right hand of the Father. As our Representative, He saves us to the uttermost. Christ's prayer has never gone unanswered. He intercedes, and that is our security. Jesus Christ is the pledge of the Father's love to us. He is the seal of this salvation which we have, and He is the earnest of the glory which we shall have. Without the resurrection, exaltation, and work of Jesus Christ at the Father's

right hand, the old rugged cross would be poor theology. The Lord Jesus Christ in His glorious resurrection out from among the dead passed from humiliation into exaltation, from incarnation to transfiguration, from trial to authorization, and from anticipation to realization. Hence, our hope goes beyond what Christ did 2,000 years ago to what He is now doing for us. Our hope lies in the future, knowing that He shall make us like Himself. Because of what Christ has done, is doing, and will do, we shall be delivered from a state of imperfection to a state of perfection, from a state of humiliation to a state of glorification, from a state of testing to a state of verification, and from a state of anticipation to a state of realization.

Believers are in the world but are not of the world (John 17:14-16; 15:19). God has a purpose in our being in the world. There are not only lessons to be learned but also responsibilities to be discharged. We learn not only our weakness but also the strength of our enemies. We learn the dignity of being identified with Christ. As He is not of the world, we are not of the world. We learn that our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20). We experientially learn the fellowship of sufferings (Phil. 3:10). Our dangers are great because the world hates us. We learn that the world is our place of training and service (Rom. 1:14). The language of obedience does not say, my soul is weary of the struggles and warfare of life, and I wish that God would just take me home. That is suicidal language wrapped in religious words. We are here for a purpose until God removes us. God is dishonored by that honor which is ascribed to Him beyond His own prescription. We honor Him by proclaiming only that which He has given in His word. The purpose of God is made known by the results. Christ did not pray that the elect might be healthy in body. Our chief good is spiritual, not temporal. Christ prayed that the elect might be kept while they are in the world. We require keeping. Saints are kept because none of them is lost (v. 12). The evil that can hurt the soul shall never come near the dwelling place of God's elect.

Christ prayed that believers will be kept away from the evil one (John 17:15) while they are in the world. God will keep the feet of His saints (I Sam. 2:9). The Lord will strengthen and protect us from the evil one (II Thess. 3:3). We are kept by the power of God through faith to salvation which is ready to be revealed in the last time (I Pet. 1:5). How is Christ's prayer answered? We are not kept from outward tribulations, distresses, or persecutions (I Cor. 4:9-13). We are not secure from spiritual conflicts. That is why we have the armor given us (Eph. 6). We are not protected from trials or testings (I Cor. 10:13). We are not guarded against humiliating failures (Luke 22:31, 32). We are not kept from physical sufferings (I Cor. 12). We are not kept from actual sin. We continue to contend with the old nature (Rom. 7:14-25). The elect are kept in the power, wisdom, and faithfulness of God. We have been quickened by the Spirit. We possess the grace of God, and we shall be crowned with glory. Jesus Christ is the Captain of our salvation leading us safely and successfully to glory (Heb. 2:10).

A solemn exception in Christ's prayer is that intercession is not made for the world (John 17:9). There is a contrast here between the world and the elect. Someone may question this by referring to Christ's praying that the sin of those who abused Him might not be laid to their charge (Luke 23:34). But on the cross, Christ prayed as the perfect Man, and Luke portrays Jesus Christ as the perfect Man. In John 17, Jesus Christ prayed His mediatorial prayer of intercession for the elect. Christ's refusal to pray mediatorially for the world does not contradict what the Scriptures say concerning our praying for the lost. Paul prayed for the lost (Rom. 10:1). But do not forget that Israel will be saved. Hence, Paul was not praying in vain but in accordance with the will of God. Christ's mediatorial acts are not to be the standard for you and me.

The reason Christ prayed for His own is that He is glorified in them (John 17:10). Glory is manifested presence. The glory of Christ is the manifestation of what Christ is. As the glory was in the tabernacle and temple, it is in God's people today. God is glorified more by keeping, protecting, and preserving us while we are in the world than if He should take us out of the world. God is glorified more in enabling us to overcome our enemies than if we were removed from our enemies.

Jesus Christ prayed for His own that they might be with Him where He is and behold His glory (John 17:24). There was a glory given to Christ. The glory that was given to Him in the incarnation and that He received from the Father, He bestows upon the elect. Jesus Christ cannot give His essential glory. The essential glory of God and the glory that God gave to Christ as the incarnate One, as the Mediator between God and men, must be distinguished. God's essential glory is incommunicable. He is Deity and we are humanity. He is the infinite God, and we are finite creatures. The essential glory could not be received by Christ because it was His essentially. His glory as Mediator was received, but it too was incommunicable. But the glory given to Him relatively is the glory of grace and truth (John 1:14, 17). He gives that glory to the elect, and as the result, we will behold the glory He had with the Father before the foundation of the world (John 17:24). The glory of John 1:14 is that glory which was beheld by faith in time. The glory of John 17:24 is that glory that shall be beheld by sight in eternity.

The glory given to Christ which is received from Christ and is beheld by faith is revealed in the glorious titles given to Jesus Christ Prince of life, Prince of peace, King of glory, everlasting Father, Bridegroom, Savior, Redeemer, resurrection and life, etc. The glory given to Christ was not for Himself. He did not need it. It was given to Him for the recipients of grace. His accepting such glory as was given to Him was actually a condescension. The glory given to the elect is the fruit of His sacrifice, His conquest of the world, the flesh, and the Devil, His glorious resurrection out from among the dead, and His ascension to the right hand of the Father. The glory which the redeemed shall behold by sight is the everlasting kingdom. We shall then coexist with Christ. He is now coexisting with us in the assembly, but we shall coexist with Him eternally in the kingdom. He now condescends to come down to us, and where two or three are gathered together agreeing, He is in our midst. But the time will come when He will take us up and we will coexist with Him eternally. Christ's glory refers to His dignity when exalted and reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords.