

A HOLY LIFE IN HARD TIMES



2/73 APRIL
MAY
JUNE

ADULT SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

THIRTEENTH SABBATH OVERFLOW OFFERING

June 30, 1973 — Inter-American Division

Two boarding academies, two senior colleges, and one hospital will benefit from the Thirteenth Sabbath Overflow Offering for Inter-America. The four educational institutions have been established with great sacrifices, and are struggling with tremendous problems. They are already overcrowded. Hundreds of other young people wish to attend but cannot be accepted.

The Mexican Pacific Academy, the Linda Vista Academy, and the Montemorelos Vocational and Professional College are located in Mexico; the Colombia-Venezuela Institute (ICOLVEN) is in Colombia, and the Antillean Adventist Hospital is in Curaçao, Netherlands Antilles. The two senior colleges were authorized to offer the ministerial course on the senior college level in 1968, and the first graduates received their diplomas in 1969. This upgrading to the senior level has imposed a heavy financial burden on the Inter-American Division, and on the Mexican and the Colombia-Venezuela Unions, to provide the necessary buildings, equipment, books, and teachers that are needed to fulfill the requirements of a four-year college program in theology. It was because we knew that we could depend on our faithful Sabbath School members around the world to help us fulfill our pledges to our young people that we have had the courage to initiate these projects.

There are other needs also. We recently purchased a hospital at a very attractive price because the former owners believed they could depend on the Seventh-day Adventist Church to serve the community through the operation of this hospital. Now we must not let them down. Part of your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will go to the Antillean Adventist Hospital, to help purchase the most needed equipment.

We express to you our heartfelt thanks for your contributions to Inter-America on previous Thirteenth Sabbaths. We have great confidence in your sacrificial response to the needs of God's work in the Inter-American Division this Thirteenth Sabbath.

Tulio R. Haylock
Sabbath School Secretary
Inter-American Division

A Holy Life in Hard Times

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The first epistle of Peter is the subject of the lessons for this quarter. While it is Peter's letter, it should be noted that Silvanus was his secretary (ch. 5:12) and was probably responsible for the good quality of Greek language in the epistle. However, "it is possible to see in the use of words and expressions a general resemblance of style between the epistle, Peter's sermons, and his personal characteristics."—"SDA Bible Commentary," Vol. 7, p. 547.

It was mainly directed to Gentile Christians in the area of the Roman Empire which is now known as Asia Minor. The message of the letter indicates that the people it was written to have experienced and are expected increasingly to experience, opposition and persecution for their faith.

Some of the social conditions during his time differed widely from those of today. Yet many of the conditions were similar to those of our time. The technical, intellectual, and artistic achievements of the Roman Empire were unrivaled. Her commerce enriched the world. A highway system served as the arteries of trade and culture. The arts of architecture, banking and investment, agriculture, medicine, and sanitary engineering were practiced.

In private life the rich had luxurious homes which often included such features as marble or mosaic floors, columns of alabaster, and walls decorated with brilliant murals and laden with costly stones. Handkerchiefs were in common use, and teeth were brushed with powder or paste. Many homes had bathtubs. A wide range of cosmetics was used by Roman women—perfumes, creams, oils, pastes, soaps, and mascara. Beauty accessories were also available. These included tweezers, scissors, razors, files, pumice stones, brushes, combs, hairnets, and wigs. Leisure-time activities formed an important part of Roman life. People played chesslike board games and frequented clubhouses, art galleries, libraries, reading rooms, and music halls.

Food supplies rivaled those of ours today. They included grains, dairy products, vegetables, fruits, and nuts. The rich ate meat. Pork was a favorite dish. Sausages, in portable ovens, were hawked through the streets.

Against this environmental background Peter cautions the followers of Christ to be careful in their behavior. He urges them to avoid the lusts of the flesh. The wide range of counsel which Peter gave in the first century is applicable to church members today. It is one of the finest and noblest calls to live a quality Christian life. Those who seek comfort in the midst of tears and sorrows may profit by a careful study of this book. Those

under persecution and unusual trials find his message meaningful. Peter has written some of the most tender and encouraging words in Christian literature. He probably wrote this epistle when age had diminished his strength and he had learned a lesson—not of self-reliance, but of confidence in Christ. None can doubt Peter's conversion when they carefully study his first letter. There is directness and force in his writings. Peter's Spirit-inspired thoughts not only fascinate the mind, but bring conviction that man cannot live by "bread alone." The epistle is characterized by a spiritual power, a depth of feeling, and a plainness of speech that tends to elevate and motivate the heart to a deeper spiritual experience with Christ.

"The apostle's words were written for the instruction of believers in every age, and they have a special significance for those who live at the time when 'the end of all things is at hand.' His exhortations and warnings, and his words of faith and courage, are needed by every soul who would maintain his faith 'steadfast unto the end.' Hebrews 3:14."—"The Acts of the Apostles," page 518.

The Blessing of Daily Study

"Every day some portion of time should be appropriated to the study of the lessons, not merely in learning to mechanically repeat the words, while the mind does not comprehend the meaning; but to go to the very foundation, and become familiar with what is brought out in the lesson."—"Counsels on Sabbath School Work," page 53.

My Pledge

As one who greatly desires to improve his knowledge of the Scriptures, I pledge myself to the careful and prayerful study of some portion of my Sabbath School lesson each day of the week.

(signed)

Lesson Titles for the Quarter

1. About the Author
2. Faith and Trouble
3. Live a Holy Life!
4. Rebirth and Growth
5. A Chosen People
6. Good Conduct: As Citizens
7. Good Conduct: As Servants
8. Good Conduct: In Marriage
9. Christian Characteristics
10. Suffering for Christ
11. The Separated Life
12. The Christian in Times of Trial
13. Lessons in Humility

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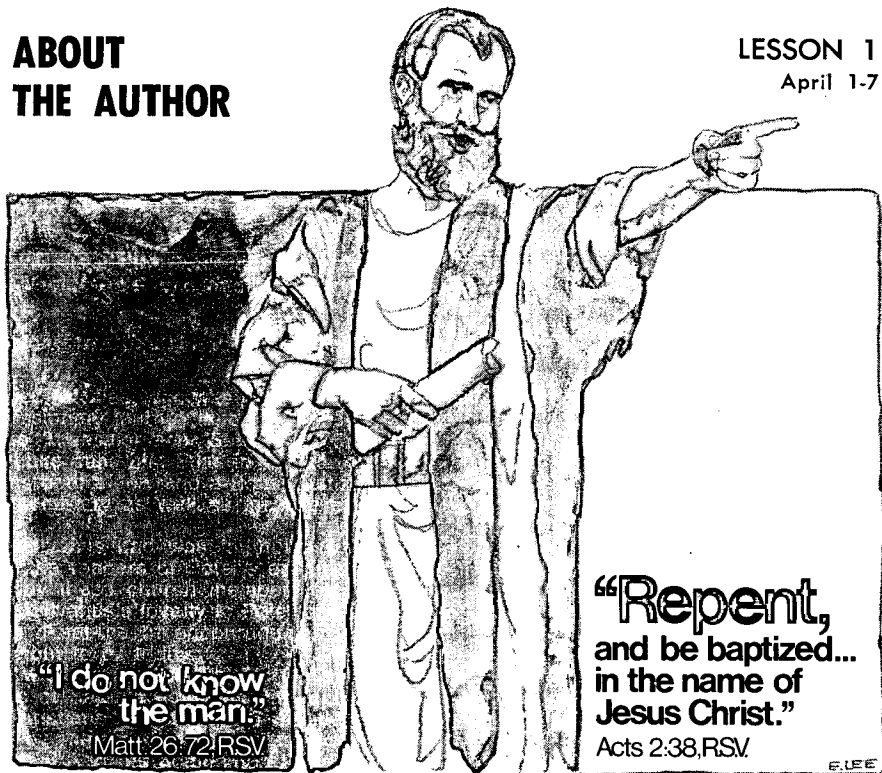
Cover and illustrations by Elfred Lee

NOTES

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

LESSON 1

April 1-7



“Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.” John 6:68, 69.

Our understanding and appreciation of the First Epistle of Peter can be enhanced by a study of the author. This week's lesson is intended to give us a brief overview of Peter's life before we study his letter.

“The history of no one of the disciples better illustrates Christ's method of training than does the history of Peter. Bold, aggressive, and self-confident, quick to perceive and forward to act, prompt in retaliation yet generous in forgiving, Peter often erred, and often received reproof. Nor were his warmhearted loyalty and devotion to Christ the less decidedly recognized and commended. Patiently, with discriminating love, the Saviour dealt with His impetuous disciple, seeking to check his self-confi-

dence, and to teach him humility, obedience, and trust.”—*Education*, page 88.

“And at the close of his experience of labor and sacrifice, the disciple once so unready to discern the cross, counted it a joy to yield up his life for the gospel, feeling only that, for him who had denied the Lord, to die in the same manner as his Master died was too great an honor.

“A miracle of divine tenderness was Peter's transformation. It is a life lesson to all who seek to follow in the steps of the Master Teacher.”—*Education*, pages 90, 91.

An article by Ellen G. White entitled “The Character of Peter” appears at the end of this lesson. This was originally printed in the *Review and Herald*, April 7, 1891, and has been reprinted here for reading in connection with this week's lesson.

Part 1
THE MAN

Four names are used in the New Testament to refer to Peter. He is called by the Hebrew name Simeon in Acts 15:14. More often he is called Simon, a Greek name, and apparently an alternate to his Hebrew name. Jesus changed Simon's name to Cephas (John 1:42), the Aramaic word for rock, and the name Peter is from the Greek translation of Cephas.

Who were Peter's partners in the fishing trade? Mark 1:16; Luke 5:10.

"Jesus chose unlearned fishermen because they had not been schooled in the traditions and erroneous customs of their time. They were men of native ability, and they were humble and teachable,—men whom He could educate for His work. In the common walks of life there is many a man patiently treading the round of daily toil, unconscious that he possesses powers which, if called into action, would raise him to an equality with the world's most honored men. The touch of a skillful hand is needed to arouse those dormant faculties."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 250.

What was Peter's hometown? John 1:44; Mark 1:21, 29.

Bethsaida and Capernaum were probably only about two miles apart and were located on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. The reference to both of these towns as Peter's home should present no great difficulty. Since Capernaum is specified as the location of the residence of Peter and his family, Bethsaida should probably be regarded as their ancestral home.

Almost nothing is known of Peter's family, except that his father's name was John (John 1:42), that he had a brother named Andrew (Mark 1:16), that Peter himself was married (Mark 1:30), and that his wife at times traveled with him (1 Cor. 9:5).

"To Matthew in his wealth, and to Andrew and Peter in their poverty, the same test was brought; the same consecration was made by each. At the moment of success, when the nets were filled with fish, and the impulses of the old life were strongest, Jesus asked the disciples at the sea to leave all for the work of the gospel. So every soul is tested as to whether the desire for temporal good or for fellowship with Christ is strongest."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 273.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pages 249-251.

Part 2 **How did Peter react to the miraculous catch of fish at the**
THE DISCIPLE, I **time of his call to discipleship? Luke 5:8-11.**

"Peter exclaimed, 'Depart from me; for I am a sinful man;' yet he clung to the feet of Jesus, feeling that he could not be parted from Him. . . . It was after Peter had been led to self-renunciation and dependence upon divine power that he received the call to his work for Christ."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 246.

In listings of the apostles' names, what place is always given to Peter? Matt. 10:2; Mark 3:16; Luke 6:14; Acts 1:13.

The position of Peter's name at the head of these name lists is indicative of his position among the Twelve. Ellen G. White refers to Peter as "the chief of apostles."—*The Story of Redemption*, page 276.

Peter was usually the member of the group who spoke. It was he who said that Jesus was the Son of God (Matt. 16:16); that booths should be built for Moses, Elijah, and Jesus (Matt. 17:4); that his Master was a taxpayer (Matt. 17:24, 25); that Jesus would never wash *his* feet (John 13:8); and that he would never deny Christ (Matt. 26:33-35). It was he who asked how often to forgive (Matt. 18:21); what the worker's reward would be (Matt. 19:27); where Jesus was going (John 13:36); who would betray Him (John 13:24).

"Before his fall, Peter was always speaking unadvisedly, from the impulse of the moment. He was always ready to correct others, and to express his mind, before he had a clear comprehension of himself or of what he had to say."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 812.

What was Peter's condition on the mount of transfiguration and in Gethsemane? Luke 9:32; Matt. 26:40.

"At first [on the mount of transfiguration] the disciples unite their prayers with His in sincere devotion; but after a time they are overcome with weariness, and, even while trying to retain their interest in the scene, they fall asleep."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 420.

"But the disciples trusted to themselves. They did not look to the mighty Helper as Christ had counseled them to do. Thus when the Saviour was most in need of their sympathy and prayers, they were found asleep. Even Peter was sleeping."—*The Desire of Ages*, pages 688, 689.

Part 3
THE DISCIPLE, II

"Peter had been inclined to act independently."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 816.

In this section we will note three examples of Peter's independent actions and their results.

1. He was the only one of the group who requested, and tried, water-walking.

What was the result of this venture? Matt. 14:29-31.

"Walking side by side, Peter's hand in that of his Master, they stepped into the boat together. But Peter was now subdued and silent. He had no reason to boast over his fellows, for through unbelief and self-exaltation he had very nearly lost his life. When he turned his eyes from Jesus, his footing was lost, and he sank amid the waves."—*The Desire of Ages*, pages 381, 382.

2. Only Peter tried, physically, to defend Jesus when he cut off Malchus's ear.

What was Jesus' response to Peter's daring act? Luke 22:51; John 18:11.

"Had Peter's rash act not been promptly remedied, it might have been presented before the Sanhedrin and before Pilate as evidence that Jesus and His disciples were dangerous men and a threat to the nation. As it was, the authorities made no mention of the incident at the trial because they would have had to admit that a miracle of healing had been performed."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Luke 22:51.

3. While all of the disciples forsook Jesus, only Peter denied Him.

How did Peter react to his own cowardice? Matt. 26:75.

"On the very spot where Jesus had poured out His soul in agony to His Father, Peter fell upon his face, and wished that he might die.

"It was in sleeping when Jesus bade him watch and pray that Peter had prepared the way for his great sin. . . . Had those hours in the garden been spent in watching and prayer, Peter would not have been left to depend upon his own feeble strength. He would not have denied His Lord."—*The Desire of Ages*, pages 713, 714.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pages 816, 817.

Part 4
THE MISSIONARY

When the Day of Pentecost arrived, Peter was a new man. His experience immediately after the denial of Jesus, his heart-searching during the time in the upper room preceding Pentecost, and the outpouring of the Spirit all contributed to his new life.

What was the result of Peter's sermon at Pentecost? Acts 2:40, 41.

"The arguments of the apostles alone, though clear and convincing, would not have removed the prejudice that had withstood so much evidence. But the Holy Spirit sent the arguments home to hearts with divine power. The words of the apostles were as sharp arrows of the Almighty, convicting men of their terrible guilt in rejecting and crucifying the Lord of glory.

"Under the training of Christ the disciples had been led to feel their need of the Spirit. Under the Spirit's teaching they received the final qualification, and went forth to their lifework. No longer were they ignorant and uncultured. . . . In mind and character they had become like their Master."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, page 45.

Peter, along with John, healed the lame man in the temple. It was Peter who rebuked Ananias and Sapphira and raised Dorcas from the dead. Even before this last event Peter's reputation as a miracle worker soared.

What actions by the people of Jerusalem and its environs attested popular confidence in Peter's gift of miracles? Acts 5:15, 16.

Who were the first Gentile converts to Christianity and who ordered their baptism? Acts 10:24, 46-48; 11:1; 15:14.

"Thus was the gospel brought to those who had been strangers and foreigners, making them fellow citizens with the saints, and members of the household of God. The conversion of Cornelius and his household was but the first fruits of a harvest to be gathered in. From this household a wide-spread work of grace was carried on in that heathen city."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, page 139.

"The apostle Peter became a faithful minister of Christ, and he was greatly honored with divine light and power; he had an active part in the upbuilding of Christ's church."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 160.

Part 5
THE PRISONER

Peter's first imprisonment, with John, was triggered by the jealousy of the religious leaders over the success of these apostles among the people in the temple.

**Who bore a testimony for Christ before the Jewish leaders?
Acts 4:8.**

"This courageous defense [by Peter] appalled the Jewish leaders. . . . There was no trace of fear in Peter's voice as he declared of Christ, 'This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.'"—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pages 63, 64.

The second arrest included possibly all of the apostles, and came about because of their continued success among the people of Jerusalem. They were released by an angel in the night, rearrested while they taught in the temple, and arraigned before the Sanhedrin. Acts 5:17-28.

**Who was the spokesman for the apostles on this occasion?
Acts 5:29.**

Peter's third imprisonment was by Herod after the execution of James. Peter awaited the same fate, but the church prayed for him and an angel delivered him during the night. Acts 12.

What was the result of this persecution? Acts 12:19-21.

**What did Jesus reveal to Peter about the end of his life?
John 21:18, 19.**

"In the providence of God, Peter was permitted to close his ministry in Rome, where his imprisonment was ordered by the emperor Nero about the time of Paul's final arrest. . . .

"Peter, as a Jew and a foreigner, was condemned to be scourged and crucified. In prospect of this fearful death, the apostle remembered his great sin in denying Jesus in the hour of His trial. Once so unready to acknowledge the cross, he now counted it a joy to yield up his life for the gospel, feeling only that, for him who had denied his Lord, to die in the same manner as his Master died was too great an honor. . . . As a last favor he entreated his executioners that he might be nailed to the cross with his head downward. The request was granted, and in this manner died the great apostle Peter."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pages 537, 538.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pages 815-817.

Part 6
THE WRITER

The name of Peter has been associated with three books of the New Testament. The Gospel of Mark is believed by some scholars to be a record of Peter's memory of the work of Jesus.

"Papias, a bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor and reputed to have been a disciple of John the apostle, identifies Mark as the author and states that his Gospel is an accurate record of the life and teachings of Jesus as he received it from Peter. . . . This accords with Peter's own reference to Mark as his 'son' (1 Pe 5:13). Mark's particularly vivid narration of incidents involving Peter tends to confirm Papias' statement that Mark based his Gospel on the apostle Peter's eye witness reminiscences) Mk 1:36, 40; 21:1-4; 3:5; 5:4-6; 6:39, 40; 7:34; 8:33; 10:21; 11:20; etc.)."—*SDA Bible Dictionary*, page 685.

The other two books attributed to Peter are the two epistles that bear his name—First and Second Peter. Critical scholars have seriously questioned the Petrine authorship of 1 Peter, and have generally rejected Peter as author of 2 Peter. The authorship of 1 Peter was noted in the Introduction to these lessons and will not be repeated here. As to 2 Peter, "the epistle claims to be the writing of Simon Peter, disciple and apostle of Jesus Christ (ch 1:1), and to be his 'second epistle' (ch 3:1). The author also claims to have been with Christ upon the mount of Transfiguration (ch 1:17, 18), an occasion on which only Peter, James, and John were present (Mt 17:1). The difference in the style from 1 Peter may be the result of Peter's not having had the help of the same amanuensis he had in writing his 1st epistle (see 1 Pe 5:12). It is most logical to suppose that Peter, an unschooled Palestinian, with Aramaic as his mother tongue, would use a secretary when he wrote in Greek."—*SDA Bible Dictionary*, page 847.

The time of writing 1 Peter is of special interest in these lessons. Since we accept Peter as the author of 1 Peter, the problem of locating an approximate time in which this letter was written is very much simplified. Peter died in Rome in about A.D. 67 during the persecution of Christians by Nero. "Babylon" in 1 Peter 5:12 is a "cryptic name for Rome" (*SDA Bible Dictionary*, page 846), and thus 1 Peter was written from Rome. In his first letter he repeatedly writes about the suffering and persecution that the Christians of Asia Minor face. This condition suggests that the letter was written during Nero's persecution of Christians. The persecution began in A.D. 64, and Nero himself died in A.D. 68. If Peter died under Nero, and if the trouble mentioned in 1 Peter refers to Nero's persecution, then the letter had to be written some time between A.D. 64 and A.D. 68.

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pages 516-518, 528.

THE CHARACTER OF PETER

By Ellen G. White

Although Peter and John were chosen disciples of Christ, and were counted among the twelve, they were still imperfect in character. Peter was of a zealous, ardent temperament, and ever manifested great earnestness in the cause of Christ. At one time the disciples were on the sea, and the record declares that the ship was in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves, for the wind was contrary; "and in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

This incident illustrates much of the character of impulsive Peter. Faith and unbelief were blended in his words and actions. He said, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." The Lord had assured the disciples, "It is I; be not afraid." And when Peter saw the waves around him, saw the boisterous winds, he forgot the power of his Lord, and began to sink; but at his cry of weakness, Jesus was at his side to grasp his outstretched hand, and lift him from the billows.

When the Lord sought to prepare the minds of his disciples for their last great trial in his betrayal and crucifixion, Peter felt that he could not bear to have the words of the Lord fulfilled; and stirred with the indignation at the thought of the injustice so soon to come upon Christ and his followers, he exclaimed, "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." The impression which Christ desired to make upon the minds of his followers was one directly op-

posed to the impression that Peter's words would make, and he rebuked his disciple with the sternest rebuke that ever fell from his lips. He said, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me; for thou savorest not the things that be of God; but those that be of men."

Although Peter had been long with the Master, he had a very imperfect conception of the plan of salvation. He did not desire to see the cross in the work of Christ, but it was through the cross that life and hope were to come to dying men.

When Jesus had spoken of his death, declaring that all his disciples would be offended because of him, Peter had said, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." He assured his Lord that he would go with him both to prison and to death; but Jesus knew Peter much better than the disciple knew himself, and he said to him, "Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice."

At the very first trial, Peter failed. When Jesus bowed in agony in the garden of Gethsemane, Peter was sleeping with the other disciples, and could not watch with his suffering Lord one hour. The thrice-repeated prayer was uttered that the bitter cup of woe might pass from the Saviour. Borne down with superhuman agony, Jesus staggered to his disciples, longing for human sympathy; but he found that instead of watching they were sleeping. From his quivering lips came the mild rebuke to Peter, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" Then he framed this tender excuse: "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Jesus had said many things concerning the hour of trial that was to come upon his disciples when he should be made the object of mockery and reproach. He had told them, "All ye shall be offended because of me." But the disciples could not believe that they would manifest such unfaithfulness, and Peter especially had assured the Master that he would never leave him, but would be true to him even if it should lead him

to prison and to death. When Jesus was actually in the hands of the armed men, where were the boastful disciples?—They had fled. Even Peter was in the rear, far from his suffering Lord. When the cruel trial began in the judgment hall, had Jesus a defender in the ardent Peter? Was he then by the side of his deserted Lord?—No, but with those who were mocking and reviling. It is true that Peter had a deep interest in the trial, and he did desire to be at the side of his Lord; but he could not endure the scorn, the reproach, that would fall upon him if he should take his place as a disciple of Christ. When one of the women of the palace said to Peter, "Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee," he denied before all the company, saying, "I know not what thou sayest." He who had made so confident a statement of his fidelity to Christ, now denied his Lord at the question of a maid in the palace. Did he now move nearer to his Lord?—No, he pushed his way out to the porch, seeking to escape the prying eyes of the enemies of his Lord; but again he was recognized, and another said to him, "This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth." And again he denied with an oath, "I do not know the man." Peter was irritated that he could not find an escape from the eyes of his enemies; he returned again to the hall, where he could better view the trial, but he stood among the mockers and revilers of Christ, and the third time he was recognized, and they said to him, "Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee." Peter had been ready to take up arms in defense of Christ, but to acknowledge the Lord when he was the object of scorn and derision, was more than he had courage to do. He was a moral coward, and with curses and oaths he denied that he knew his Master.

Peter had been warned of this temptation; but he did not realize his danger, and therefore had not prepared himself for the trial. He had been filled with self-confidence, and deemed that he was able to withstand any temptation, assuring the Lord that though all others should be offended, he would be ready to go with him to prison and to death. When he took his stand with the revilers of Christ, he placed himself on the enemy's ground, and he fell. At his third

denial of his Lord the cock crew, and Jesus turned his eyes upon Peter with a look of peculiar sadness, and the words that Christ had spoken to him came quickly to his mind. All through his life the memory of that look was with Peter. His sinful boasting, his Lord's warning, his denial of the Saviour, all came to him like a flash of lightning; and casting one pitiful look upon his suffering, insulted Lord, he hurried away from the sound of false accusation and reproach, rushed from the palace, plunged into the darkness, and weeping bitterly, hurried to Gethsemane. He began to see himself as he really was. Memory was alive, and his sins were pictured before him in all their heinous light. Peter threw himself on the spot where a few hours before, Jesus had prayed and wept in agony, and there the disciple prayed as he never before had prayed. With deep repentance and terrible remorse he pleaded for forgiveness, and he rose a converted man; but he felt that although Jesus would forgive him, he could never forgive himself.

Jesus knew all the sorrow and remorse of his erring disciple, and when the heavenly messengers appeared to the women at the sepulcher, they told them of Christ's resurrection, and bade them tell the disciples and Peter, that he went before them into Galilee. How eagerly did Peter receive this word of love and compassion! He knew that his Lord still thought of him, still loved him, and he took this message as a sign of forgiveness.

After his resurrection, Jesus showed himself to his disciples at the sea of Tiberias; "and on this wise showed he himself. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore; but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able

to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea." When the disciples came to land, they found that Jesus had prepared them fish and bread. "So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him,

Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep."

In the answers that Peter gave to the Lord's thrice-repeated question, a different spirit is manifested from what we find in the boastful assurances before the crucifixion of Christ. Peter was a converted man, and showed in his life that transforming grace had taken possession of his heart. As firm as a rock, he ever after stood boldly up to witness for Christ. Jesus had said to Peter, "Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Peter had severe trials to pass through, but although he was called to go to prison and to death for Christ's sake, never again did he waver from his allegiance. —*Review and Herald*, April 7, 1891.

"However great the deprivation and suffering of the Christian, however dark and inscrutable may seem the way of Providence, he is to rejoice in the Lord, knowing that all is working for his good."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, p. 1099.

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 1:6, 7.

The passage to be studied in this week's lesson presents a look at faith from four angles. It is a means of God's power (verse 5), is tested by trial (verse 7), results in salvation (verse 9), is based on the prophets' messages (verses 10-12). Peter is writing to Christians who are in deep trouble with society because they have exercised faith. The four points that Peter makes about faith are a reassurance to these harried believers that their faith is worthwhile in spite of the trouble. Through the one element of faith Peter succeeds in trying together the power of God, the meaning of trial, the assurance of ultimate salvation, and the messages of the prophets. The trials do not cancel out the other three elements as some may think.

This faith is more precious than gold, but, like gold, its genuineness must be tested. The result of this testing is to bring glory to God.

"A refining, purifying process is going on among the people of God, and the Lord of hosts has set His hand to this work. This process is most trying to the soul, but it is necessary in order that defilement may be removed. Trials are essential in order that we may be brought close to our heavenly Father, in submission to His will, that we may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. . . . The Lord brings His children over the same ground again and again, increasing the pressure until perfect humility fills the mind, and the character is transformed; then they are victorious over self, and in harmony with Christ and the Spirit of heaven. The purification of God's people cannot be accomplished without suffering. . . . He passes us from one fire to another, testing our true worth. True grace is willing to be tried. If we are loath to be searched by the Lord, our condition is one of peril."—*My Life Today*, page 92.

Part 1
LIVING HOPE

1 Peter 1:3, RSV

Why do you think Peter begins this passage with praise to God? How does it relate to the rest of the passage?

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

The word "living" is a favorite with Peter. He uses some form of this word seven times in the first epistle. Six of these times is in connection with God's work for man. To speak of the "living hope" is to speak of a hope that has its origin in God. The Christian participates in this hope because he has experienced a new birth. Since this hope is exercised in the present life, it affects the daily experience and allows the Christian to face troubles with equanimity.

What is the basis of the "living hope"? Verse 3.

This hope is a living hope also because it reaches beyond death to the resurrection. Compare the Christian religion with any other religion on earth, and this single ingredient of a living hope proclaims it superior.

The resurrection of Jesus has conquered the power of death forever. Those who identify themselves with Him will participate in that first resurrection prior to the millennial period if they are laid to rest before Christ's coming. The doctrine of Christ's resurrection inspires the Christian to have hope for the future. This hope has comforted persecuted Christians throughout history. It has enabled surrendered men to endure the loss of all things.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can I maintain hope while living in conditions that lead to despair and pessimism?

"The heart is to be carefully kept and guarded. 'What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?' Mark 8:36, 37. Christ must abide in the heart by faith. His word is the bread of life and the water of salvation. Trust in its fullness comes to us through constant communion with God. By eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ we gain spiritual strength. Christ supplies the lifeblood of the heart, and Christ and the Holy Spirit give nerve power. Begotten again, unto a lively hope, imbued with the quickening power of a new nature, the soul is enabled to rise higher and still higher."—*Counsels on Health*, page 593.

FURTHER STUDY

Counsels on Stewardship, pages 226, 227; *Counsels to Teachers*, page 490.

Part 2
GOD'S KEEPING
POWER

1 Peter 1:4, 5, RSV

How does the Christian come into possession of the heavenly inheritance? Verses 3, 4.

"And to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

Verses 3 and 4 point out that along with new birth comes not only a living hope but also a place for the hope to be realized. It is called an "inheritance." One does not work for an inheritance; he comes into possession of it because of family relationship. God is keeping it for His born-anew sons and daughters. Whatever the Christian's inheritance will be, Peter assures us that it is eternal, pure, and always beautiful.

What two things combine to keep or guard the persons who are to receive a heavenly inheritance? Verse 5.

In verse 4 Peter wrote of the incorruptible inheritance which is kept for the redeemed. He follows this promise with the assurance that the people who were born anew by God's mercy are guarded (in Greek it is a military term) by His power, day by day, so that they may be able to claim the inheritance which is reserved in heaven for them. There is salvation from the power of sin and Satan today, as there will be salvation from the presence of Satan and sin in the future.

The power to overcome sin comes to man through faith. Verse 5. God does not work independently of faith. Faith is built through consistent, Spirit-guided study of God's Word and prayer.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can I ensure that I am "kept" by God's power for the coming of Jesus?

"In these thoroughly converted souls the world has a witness to the sanctifying power of truth upon the human character. Through them Christ makes known to the world His character and will. In the lives of God's children is revealed the blessedness of serving the Lord, and the opposite is seen in those who do not keep His commandments. The line of demarcation is distinct. All who obey God's commandments are kept by His mighty power amid the corrupting influence of the transgressors of His law. From the lowliest subject to the highest in positions of trust, they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."—*Evangelism*, page 316.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, page 506; *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 307.

Part 3
THE TEST OF FAITH
1 Peter 1:6, 7, RSV

What is the basis of the rejoicing referred to in verse 6? "In this you rejoice, though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire, may redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

They had experience in God's abundant mercy. The resurrection of Christ made their hope certain. Verse 3. They had a hope of an incorruptible inheritance. Verse 4. They were kept by the power of God. Verse 5. These were reasons for rejoicing.

In verse 6, Peter's reference to trials is not merely to the usual trials of the Christian life, but to a special time of difficulty with a diversity of problems, that was confronting the Christians of Asia Minor, and probably of the whole Empire. This may have been during the reign of Nero.

How were the recipients of Peter's letter to know if their faith was genuine or counterfeit? Verses 6, 7.

Peter's discussion of trials gives the believer a reason for them. It is to test the genuineness of faith. Consider the non-Christian who sees loved ones laid to rest, who bears financial reverses, or who is struck down with a terminal disease, but cannot understand why. How often persons in such situations are overwhelmed by hopelessness. The true Christian may not be able to explain the detailed reason for each trial, but he knows that every adverse circumstance, endured in faith, proves his faith genuine. This tested and tried faith is valuable because it is the means of realizing the living hope. He also knows that any trials that come his way, not due to his own deliberate mistakes or stubborn wrong choices, are for testing, not for punishment. Each trial to the true believer may not only test his faith, but also result in increase of faith.

THINK IT THROUGH

What means has God provided for me so that I can rejoice in faith in Jesus even when I have troubles?

"God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as coworkers with Him. Not Enoch, who was translated to heaven, not Elijah, who ascended in a chariot of fire, was greater or more honored than John the Baptist, who perished alone in the dungeon. 'Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.' Phil. 1:29. And of all the gifts that Heaven can bestow upon men, fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the most weighty trust and the highest honor."—*The Desire of Ages*, pages 224, 225.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, Vol. 5, pp. 577-580.

Part 4

LOVE AND FAITH
1 Peter 1:8, 9, RSV

What was the result of Peter's friends' love of, and belief in, the unseen Christ?

"Without having seen him you love him; though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy. As the outcome of your faith you obtain the salvation of your souls."

The readers of Peter's letter had never seen Christ. Yet they loved Him so dearly that they rejoiced with an unspeakable joy. This is faith; Peter indicates it in verse 9. Faith and love combine in the Christian life, and either is incomplete alone.

Paul wrote, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema" (1 Cor. 16:22). All the rules, standards, regulations, laws, preaching, profession, and praying mean nothing unless we have a deep love for the Saviour.

How can love for the unseen Christ be increased? Consider the following: (1) Seek for every inspired statement in the Scriptures and the spirit of prophecy writings which deals with Christ and His character. (2) Let the memory daily dwell upon the points of His life and character. (3) Feed the flames of your love for Him with the promises of God. (4) In your personal prayers seek a place where you can be alone. (5) When performing Christian duties, connect your actions with your love for Christ. (6) Talk to others about Christ and tell them why you love Him supremely. (7) When singing gospel songs or hymns in home or church worship, note the words carefully and make a conscious effort to understand that your voice is being uplifted in praise to One you love.

Peter emphasizes the "conclusion" or the "final end in view" of our faith, which is glorification. Those who on earth have experienced justification and sanctification will finally experience glorification. When each segment of the Christian's life is put together, and the journey is terminated, then we receive the "end" or "goal" of our faith—eternal life with our Saviour.

The apostle Paul compares the life of sin with the life of righteousness. Rom. 6:21, 22. The end of those who maintain their faith in Christ is "everlasting life." He emphasizes the fact that while the harvest of salvation is experienced when Christ comes, freedom from slavery to sin is now!

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the source of motivation for all of my religious activities?

"How broad and deep and measureless is the love of God manifested to man! No words can describe this love; it surpasses all thought and imagination, but it is a reality that you may learn by experience; you may rejoice in it with joy unspeakable and full of glory."—Testimonies, Vol. 3, p. 458.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, Vol. 5, p. 348; *Testimonies*, Vol. 7, p. 46; *The Desire of Ages*, page 83.

Part 5
THE BASIS OF FAITH
1 Peter 1:10

"Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you."

The apostle has written about the unseen Jesus. It requires faith on our part to believe in Him. The faith of the early Christian church was founded on the Old Testament prophets who not only eagerly looked forward to Christ's day but prophesied of it.

Many of these prophets themselves had an imperfect comprehension of the plan of redemption. Yet their confidence was strong in a coming Messiah and a future eternal life.

Jesus declared, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:56). Christ's discussion with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus shows the importance of Old Testament prophetic utterances concerning Himself. "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." Luke 24:27.

Prophets of old undoubtedly searched the writings of those that preceded them as well as their own writings regarding the plan of salvation.

We today stand, with respect to the coming of Jesus, in a situation similar to that of the days when the first advent was still prophecy. "To us who are standing on the very verge of their fulfillment, of what deep moment, what living interest, are these delineations of the things to come—events for which, since our first parents turned their steps from Eden, God's children have watched and waited, longed and prayed!"—*Education*, page 183.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can I be certain that I understand the events relative to Christ's second coming?

"Yet while it was not given to the prophets to understand fully the things revealed to them, they earnestly sought to obtain all the light which God had been pleased to make manifest. They 'inquired and searched diligently,' 'searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify.' What a lesson to the people of God in the Christian age, for whose benefit these prophecies were given to His servants! 'Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister.' Witness those holy men of God as they 'inquired and searched diligently' concerning revelations given them for generations that were yet unborn. Contrast their holy zeal with the listless unconcern with which the favored ones of later ages treat this gift of Heaven. What a rebuke to the ease-loving, world-loving indifference which is content to declare that the prophecies cannot be understood!"—*The Great Controversy*, page 344.

FURTHER STUDY

Prophets and Kings, page 22; *The Desire of Ages*, page 234.

**Part 6
PRIVILEGED
BELIEVERS**

1 Peter 1:12, RSV

"It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things which have now been announced to you by those who preached the good news to you through the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look."

These prophets, Peter said, really worked for the people he was writing to, since the prophets' revelations contributed to the Christian understanding of the gospel.

"Even the prophets who were favored with the special illumination of the Spirit did not fully comprehend the import of the revelations committed to them. The meaning was to be unfolded from age to age, as the people of God should need the instruction therein contained."—*The Great Controversy*, page 344.

To stress further the privilege human beings have of knowing the truths of salvation, Peter points out that even the angels desire to understand these divine mysteries. Why should unfallen angels be interested in the theme of salvation? "This is the mystery into which angels desire to look. They desire to know how Christ could live and work in a fallen world, how He could mingle with sinful humanity. It was a mystery to them that He who hated sin with intense hatred felt the most tender, compassionate sympathy for the beings that committed sin."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 904.

This verse can be a challenge to us as lost sinners. It should lead us to study and investigate the prophecies and their fulfillments centering around the entire plan of salvation. Note the groups who are engaged in searching out the unfathomable details of the sacrifice of Christ: (1) prophets, (2) apostles and ministers, (3) those interested in hearing and learning, (4) angels.

THINK IT THROUGH

How much time am I spending studying Christ's life, suffering, death, resurrection, and soon coming?

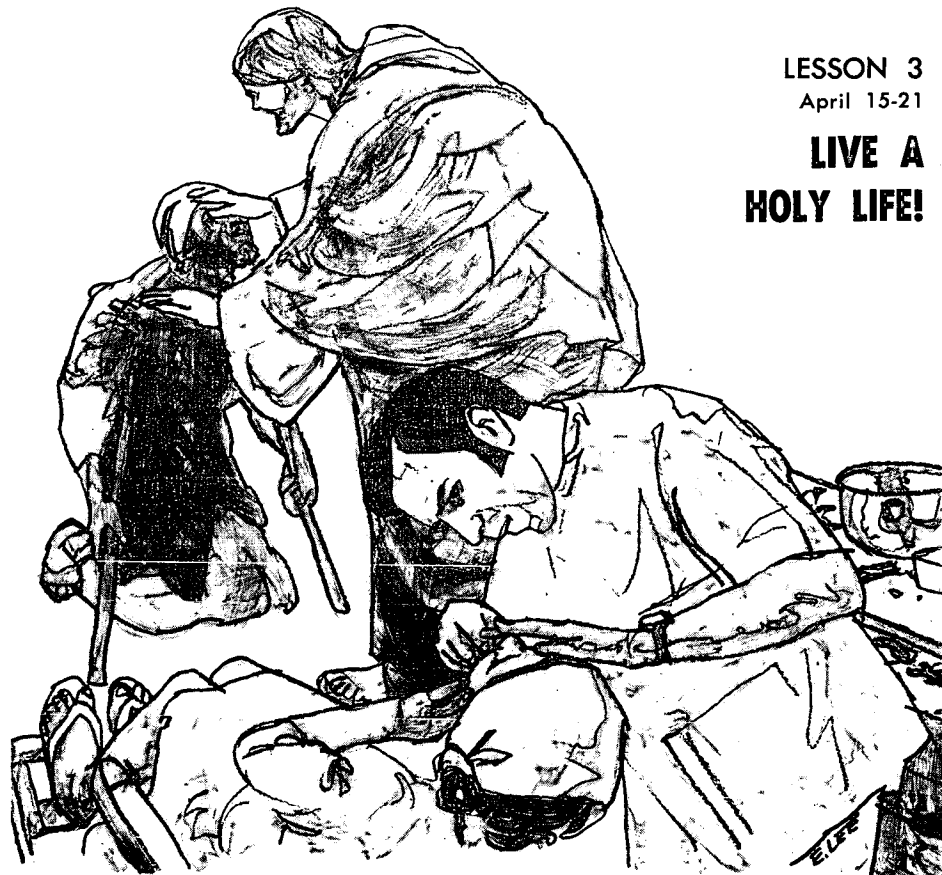
"The science of redemption is the science of all sciences, the science that is the study of the angels and of all the intelligences of the unfallen worlds, the science that engages the attention of our Lord and Saviour, the science that enters into the purpose brooded in the mind of the Infinite—'kept in silence through times eternal,' the science that will be the study of God's redeemed throughout the endless ages. This is the highest study in which it is possible for man to engage. As no other study can, it will quicken the mind and uplift the soul. . . .

"The theme of redemption is one that angels desire to look into; it will be the science and the song of the redeemed throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity. Is it not worthy of careful thought and study now?"—*My Life Today*, page 360.

FURTHER STUDY

Counsels to Teachers, pages 11-18.

LIVE A HOLY LIFE!



"Well you know that it was no perishable stuff, like gold or silver, that bought your freedom from the empty folly of your traditional ways. The price was paid in precious blood, as it were of a lamb without mark or blemish—the blood of Christ." 1 Peter 1:18, 19, NEB.

Up to this point the apostle Peter has been writing of the born-anew believer (verse 3) who by faith expects salvation in the "last time," but whose faith is being tested by trials in the present, and supported by prophetic revelation from the past.

The word "therefore" in verse 13 indicates that what follows is in the light of what precedes it. Believers are to "gird up" their "minds" in the light of the work of the prophets especially for them, and the desire of the angels to examine

the gospel. Reference to "grace . . . at the revelation of Jesus Christ" carries us back to verse 7 which indicates that we are to set our hope upon this grace because there is trouble and suffering. "As obedient children" carries us back to verse 3 and reference to "born anew." Thus the basic force of "therefore" in this instance is something we are to do in light of the gospel, our trials, and our new faith. What are we to do? Be holy!

The article by Ellen G. White which follows this lesson was printed in the *Review and Herald*, May 10, 1906. "The New Life in Christ" is to be read as supplementary material for this week.

Part 1
STRENGTHENING
THE MIND
1 Peter 1:13

"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

This text deals with alertness and watchfulness. Who better than Peter knew by experience that unless a man watches carefully, he is sure to fall miserably. He proudly announced to Christ on that last Thursday evening before the crucifixion, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I" (Mark 14:29). Poor Peter denied Christ when he should have denied self and stayed awake and watched lest he enter into temptation. So he can speak out of his own experience of the necessity of being careful and watchful.

The concept of strengthening and preparing the mind was expressed by Christ in Luke 12:35, 36: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately."

For what purpose is the mind to be girded up? Verse 13.

The expression "wherefore gird up the loins of your mind" was probably derived from the type of dress worn in those days. The long garments were pulled up and tucked into the waistband thus facilitating walking, working, or running. The Christian who senses his responsibility, recognizes that life is more than foolishness. There should be a purpose for every movement.

Spiritual dangers and enemies beset on every side. One of the most difficult things for Christians to sense is the reality of the battle they are in. Peter tries to warn Christians to be vigilant against every type of spiritual danger. Perversions of truth abound. For every one of God's true doctrines and standards the devil has one or more false ones.

THINK IT THROUGH

What can I do to "gird up the loins" of my mind?

"Few realize that it is a duty to exercise control over the thoughts and imaginations. It is difficult to keep the undisciplined mind fixed upon profitable subjects. But if the thoughts are not properly employed, religion cannot flourish in the soul. The mind must be preoccupied with sacred and eternal things, or it will cherish trifling and superficial thoughts. Both the intellectual and the moral powers must be disciplined, and they will strengthen and improve by exercise.

"In order to understand this matter aright, we must remember that our hearts are naturally depraved, and we are unable of ourselves to pursue a right course. It is only by the grace of God, combined with the most earnest effort on our part, that we can gain the victory."—*Counsels to Teachers*, page 544.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, Vol. 2, pp. 265, 266, 470.

Part 2
OBEDIENT
CHILDREN
1 Peter 1:14

From the information given in verse 14, what is the basis of disobedience?

"As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance."

Peter emphasizes the privilege and need of living a life of obedience. From this viewpoint, there are only two kinds of children—the obedient and disobedient. All of us at one time or another have belonged to the disobedient class.

"The word 'fashion' in the Greek text refers to the act of assuming an outward appearance patterned after some certain thing, an appearance or expression which does not come from and is not representative of one's inmost and true nature. It refers here to the act of a child of God assuming as an outward expression the habits, mannerisms, dress, speech expressions, and behavior of the world out from which God saved him, thus not giving a true expression of what he is, a cleansed, regenerated child of God, but instead, hiding the Lord Jesus who should be seen in the life of the Christian. It is the believer masquerading in the costume of the world."—Kenneth S. Wuest, *First Peter in the Greek New Testament*, page 37.

The lust of sinners is the badge of their willfulness. Lust is like a wild horse which cannot be restrained. It asserts its own will to the detriment of itself. Lust fashions a man. Enslaving habits become tyrants and prove the ruin of multitudes.

The word "ignorance" undoubtedly refers to an ignorance of God. This may be a willful ignorance, or as with Paul, a true ignorance. Paul said he was a blasphemer and persecutor but he "obtained mercy, because [he] did it ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Tim. 1:13).

THINK IT THROUGH

Is my character being shaped by my self-centered desires or by God's will?

"Wherever the word of God has been faithfully preached, results have followed that attested its divine origin. The Spirit of God accompanied the message of His servants, and the word was with power. Sinners felt their consciences quickened. . . .

"These souls brought forth fruit meet for repentance. They believed and were baptized, and rose to walk in newness of life—new creatures in Christ Jesus; not to fashion themselves according to the former lusts, but by the faith of the Son of God to follow in His steps, to reflect His character, and to purify themselves even as He is pure. The things they once hated they now loved, and the things they once loved they hated. The proud and self-assertive became meek and lowly of heart. The vain and supercilious became serious and unobtrusive. The profane became reverent, the drunken sober, and the profligate pure. The vain fashions of the world were laid aside."—*The Great Controversy*, pages 461, 462.

FURTHER STUDY

The Adventist Home, pages 127, 128; *Temperance*, pages 140, 141.

Part 3
HOLY CONDUCT

**1 Peter 1:15, 16,
RSV**

When verses 13 to 16 are read together, what do you find to be the basis of obedience?

"But as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"

Peter issues a call to Christians to pattern their conduct after God and not after their own lusts. He urges them to a holy life. The word "holy" in Greek means "set apart" or "separate." Man is set apart from sin. The word "saint" is a translation of a word with the same root. Thus a saint is one who lives a holy, or sanctified, life.

The word "conversation" in the King James Version of the Bible means "behavior," or "conduct." Peter uses this term eight times in his writings. It is not only how a person talks but how he walks which determines whether a man is holy or not.

When a man becomes a Christian, a new standard of living is set before him. The model to be copied is none less than God Himself. We become "imitators of God." Eph. 5:1, RSV. A Christian becomes one of God's family, and he ought to look like the family. So we put on the new man "after the image of him that created him." Col. 3:10.

Being holy as God is holy is a totally unattainable goal if attempted in our own power. His command to be holy carries with it the enabling promise of power. He does not require the impossible; He will enable us to reach the condition that He has commanded us to reach.

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I trying to be different just to be different? In what ways are my differences based upon my adherence to the principles of God's character?

"God has commanded us, 'Be ye holy; for I am holy;' and an inspired apostle declares that without holiness 'no man shall see the Lord.' Holiness is agreement with God. By sin the image of God in man has been marred and well-nigh obliterated; it is the work of the gospel to restore that which has been lost; and we are to co-operate with the divine agency in this work. And how can we come into harmony with God, how shall we receive His likeness, unless we obtain a knowledge of Him? It is this knowledge that Christ came into the world to reveal unto us.

"The meager views which so many have had of the exalted character and office of Christ have narrowed their religious experience and have greatly hindered their progress in the divine life. Personal religion among us as a people is at a low ebb. There is much form, much machinery, much tongue religion; but something deeper and more solid must be brought into our religious experience."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 743.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, Vol. 3, pp. 253-256.

Part 4
JUDGED BY AN
UNBIASED JUDGE
1 Peter 1:17
Phillips

What does Peter give as the reason that men should fear God?

"If you pray to a Father who judges men by their actions without the slightest favoritism, then you should spend the time of your stay here on earth with reverent fear."

The equality of God's judgment is stressed by Peter. The Father's judgment is actually done through the Son. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." John 5:22. See also 2 Cor. 5:10.

Peter had learned from his divinely directed visit to the Gentile centurion, Cornelius, that God is no respecter of persons.

"The words 'without respect of persons' are the translation of one word in Greek which means literally, 'does not receive face.' That is, God does not receive anybody's face. He is impartial. Outward appearance, wealth, culture, social position, family background, education, beauty, intellect, all things that more or less sway the opinions of man, do not count with God when it comes to appraising a person's character or worthiness."—Kenneth S. Wuest, *First Peter in the Greek New Testament*, page 40.

What is the correct response to God's impartiality? Verse 17.

The counsel to fear God is based on the impartiality of the Judge. Man must not count on special concessions in the judgment, but he must fear to behave in a way that the Judge cannot approve. The fear of God is really the fear to sin because God has condemned sin prior to the judgment. Thus the fear of God is shown by obedience to the law of God.

THINK IT THROUGH

If we believe in righteousness by faith, then why does God judge a man according to his works?

"Let everyone who professes the name of Christ consider the fact that he must meet every act of injustice, give an account for every harsh word, at the judgment seat of Christ. It will not be pleasant to review the words that have been spoken that have wounded and bruised souls, to review the decisions that have worked against souls for whom Christ died. Every action will come into judgment, and the spirit that prompted it will be made manifest. The fruit of every selfish, arbitrary exaction will be made plain, and men will see the results of their doings even as God sees them. They will see that they have turned precious souls out of the right path by dealing with them in an un-Christlike manner. We are living in the great Day of Atonement, and it is now time that everyone should repent before God, confess his sins, and by living faith rest upon the merit of a crucified and living Saviour."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pages 224, 225.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, Vol. 4, pp. 384-387.

Part 5

**THE INSUFFICIENCY
OF SILVER AND
GOLD**

**1 Peter 1:18, 19,
RSV**

From what were the believers ransomed?

"You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot."

The last part of verse 18 points out that redemption is not only a model, it involves a total change in a man's life. "From the futile ways" refers to the conduct from which they had been redeemed. This is a pointed appeal to those whose environment was unconducive to living a Christian life. "Inherited from your fathers" could apply to Christians coming from either pagan or Jewish backgrounds. Salvation by works lay at the heart both of heathenism and of perverted Judaism.

Peter sets forth first of all what they have *not* been redeemed with. A Roman slave might purchase his freedom with silver and gold, but a Mount Everest of gold cannot secure the release of a soul from sin.

How much time do we spend on contemplating the fact of redemption? Do we really sense the immense cost of our redemption? Since the whole human race has been potentially redeemed, why should anyone remain in slavery to Satan?

Which do you ordinarily think of as precious: silver and gold, or blood? Which as perishable? Can you find a reason for Peter's change from the human scale of value and perishability? Verses 20, 21.

THINK IT THROUGH

Does any act which I perform, however good it may be, help to offset any sin which I have committed?

"Jesus is our atoning sacrifice. We can make no atonement for ourselves; but by faith we can accept the atonement that has been made. . . . 'Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot' (1 Peter 1:18, 19). It was through infinite sacrifice and inexpressible suffering that our Redeemer placed redemption within our reach. He was in this world unhonored and unknown, that, through His wonderful condescension and humiliation, He might exalt man to receive eternal honors and immortal joys in the heavenly courts. During His thirty years of life on earth His heart was wrung with inconceivable anguish. The path from the manger to Calvary was shadowed by grief and sorrow. He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, enduring such heartache as no human language can portray."—*Selected Messages*, Bk. 1, pp. 321, 322.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, page 311; *Christ's Object Lessons*, Chap. 15, "This Man Receiveth Sinners," pages 196, 197.

Part 6
NO EMERGENCY
WITH GOD
1 Peter 1:20, 21

What shows Christ's value? Verse 20.

"Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God."

The imperative "be ye holy" in verse 16 has been followed by the reasons for this command: (1) God is holy; (2) God is an impartial Judge; (3) redemption, the means of holiness, has been provided in Christ at great cost. Today's lesson emphasizes the responsibility that the Christian has to be holy in the light of the pre-earth decision to redeem man.

"Who by him do believe in God." The full revelation of the character of God is seen in Jesus Christ. The Saviour made this point clear when He declared, "He who has seen me has seen the Father." John 14:9, RSV.

"The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 22.

What shows Christ's imperishability? Verse 21.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can I develop a personal, vivid sense that Jesus' sacrifice was for my sake?

"The soul that has given himself to Christ is more precious in His sight than the whole world. The Saviour would have passed through the agony of Calvary that one might be saved in His kingdom. He will never abandon one for whom He has died. Unless His followers choose to leave Him, He will hold them fast."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 483.

"The heart of God yearns over His earthly children with a love stronger than death. In giving up His Son, He has poured out to us all heaven in one gift. The Saviour's life and death and intercession, the ministry of angels, the pleading of the Spirit, the Father working above and through all, the unceasing interest of heavenly beings,—all are enlisted in behalf of man's redemption.

"Oh, let us contemplate the amazing sacrifice that has been made for us! Let us try to appreciate the labor and energy that Heaven is expending to reclaim the lost, and bring them back to the Father's house."—*Steps to Christ*, page 21.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pages 147, 834, 835.

THE NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

By Ellen G. White

"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

But a change came. You were convicted and converted. Did you then exercise the faith that works by love and purifies the soul, or did you continue to follow the same evil habits and practices that you followed before your conversion? If you were genuinely converted, you turned away from all wrong. The mind which has been placed in the control of Christ, and on which he has wrought by his grace, becomes refined, purified, elevated.

"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

Let us consider the representation that God wants us to make before angels and before men. By helpful words, purity of actions, nobility of principle, the Christian is to reveal Christ. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Those who obey these words will show what a belief in the truth that Christ came to impart, will do for human beings.

"Wherefore remember," Paul says, "that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time"—before light broke into the darkened chambers of the soul—"ye

were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

The apostle desired those to whom he was writing to remember that they must reveal in their lives the glorious change wrought in them by Christ's transforming grace. They were to be lights in the world, by their purified, sanctified characters exerting an influence counter to the influence of satanic agencies. They were ever to remember the words, "Not of yourselves." They could not change their own hearts. And when by their efforts souls were led from the ranks of Satan to take their stand for Christ, they were not to claim any credit for the transformation wrought.

God's workers to-day are to remember this. The great change that is seen in the life of a sinner after conversion is not brought about by any human goodness. "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." Let those who are brought to repentance declare that it is only because of the goodness of God that they have been led to Christ.

He who is rich in mercy has imparted his grace to us. Then let praise and thanksgiving ascend to him, because he has become our Saviour. Let his love, filling our hearts and minds, flow forth from our lives in rich currents of grace. When we were dead in trespasses and sins, he quickened us into spiritual life. He brought grace and pardon, filling the soul with new life. Thus the sinner passes from death to life. He now takes up his new duties in Christ's service. His life becomes true and strong, filled with good works. "Because I live," Christ said, "ye shall live also."

I ask every church-member to consider the words, "ye must be born again." Are you living a new life in Christ? Are you doing his work? Are you honoring him by showing the great blessing that is found in standing under his banner? Are you so grateful to Christ for his redeeming love, so faithful and

true to his service, that your heart can not be haughty, selfish, self-centered? Is watching unto prayer a part of your daily life?

The truly converted man has no time to think or talk of the faults of others. His lips are sanctified, and as God's faithful witness he testifies that the grace of Christ has transformed his heart. He realizes that he can not afford to talk discouragement and unbelief; he can not afford to be harsh and faultfinding. He has not received orders from God to punish the erring by heaping abuse upon them.

My brethren and sisters, be afraid to find fault, afraid to talk against your fellow beings, lest you lose the sense that you are dedicated to the service of God, and that as a faithful servant you must keep his interests in view. You are to live a life that will convince others that you are a child of God, under the training of the Captain of your salvation, that you may be prepared for active service. You have enlisted to fight against Satan's forces, and you have no time to fight against your fellow soldiers.

God calls upon his church to awake to their duty, to show themselves true and loyal to the Captain of their salvation. They are to follow his example, and learn what it means to be faithful to him who loves them, and who has given them a place in his army.

Not to Destroy, But to Save

Envy, evil surmising, backbiting, and faultfinding,—let these not be named among Christ's disciples. These things are the cause of the present feebleness of the church. We have a perfect Pattern, even the life of Christ. It is to be our eager desire to do as he has done, to live as he lived, that others, by seeing our good works, may be led to glorify God. The blessing of heaven will rest upon those who try to help others by doing the work that Christ came to do.

God gave his only begotten Son to die for a race of rebels, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. Why should we not walk and work in the way that God has marked out? Why should any one please the enemy by tearing down another's work, using the powers God has given him to kill hope and drive souls into discouragement? In every church there

are young men and women who need the help of a strong, compassionate hand-clasp, of a loving, Christlike interest that will not let them go. Let there be an end to bickering over little things. Cease to speak words that do no good, and come close to those who have erred. Take hold of them, and draw them to Christ. Give Satan no chance to enter our ranks.

Angels are sent from the heavenly courts, not to destroy, but to watch over and guard imperiled souls, to save the lost, to bring the straying ones back to the fold. "I came not to condemn, but to save," Christ declared. Have you, then, no pitying words to speak to the straying? Will you let them perish, or will you reach out to them a helping hand? Right around you there are souls who are in danger of perishing. Will you not with the cords of love draw them to the Saviour? Will you not cease your reproaches, and speak words that will inspire them with faith and courage?

God's Message to Us

"For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

This is the message that I am commissioned to bear to you: You are to

take the words addressed by Paul to the church at Ephesus as if addressed to you personally. By alienation, disunion, and diversity of opinion, Satan has hindered the work outlined in the words of the apostle. Had believers put self out of sight, had they refused to carry out the plans devised by Satan to hinder the work of God, how much farther advanced we might now be! For years messages have been sent pointing out the work to be done. But this work has not been accomplished. Believers have stood directly across the path of its accomplishment, blocking the way by envy, evil surmisings, and faultfinding. They have sought the highest place. Commercial business has absorbed the attention and consumed the means that ought to have been given to the proclamation of the message of salvation. Thank God, something has been done, but a thousand times more might have been done than has been done. The enemy has brought in a variety of things to occupy the minds of believers. Time is fast passing, the work is still undone, and the world is growing worse and worse. And yet in mercy the Spirit of God is still striving with souls. Brethren and sisters, I call upon you to put on the whole armor of God. Those who have never heard the reasons of our faith are now to be reached. Many are waiting for a message from God's Word. Go to them, and tell them where we are standing in the history of this world.

The end is near, and the message contained in the third chapter of Ephesians is the message that I am bidden to give to believers. A world-wide work

is to be done. We are now to go to work in earnest to proclaim the truth. The Voice said, "Lift up your voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins. They are hindering the proclamation of the last message of warning."

Paul carried a burden that we ought now to be carrying. A great work is to be done, and it is to be done in a short time. O, how much there is to do, and how many there are who for various reasons are not engaged in God's work! Satan is devising plans to keep the Lord's forces out of the work. He does not want people to be aroused to a realization of the swift judgments that are coming upon the world.

My brethren and sisters, let us arouse to an understanding of our true position. God will not be trifled with. He has spoken in judgments to arouse those who for years have worked at cross-purposes with him. These judgments were not mere casualties. They were the reproof of God to his people. I entreat those who have, as it were, defied God to his face, no longer to dishonor him by clinging to their own way. Let us now take up the work of God intelligently and unitedly, proclaiming as with one voice the message of warning and salvation. Let us heed the word of the Lord, lest coming suddenly, he find us unready. There will be no second probation. Now, while it is called to-day, if we will hear the voice of the Lord, and turn fully to him, he will have mercy upon us, and abundantly pardon.—*Review and Herald*, May 10, 1906.

"You have been born anew, not of mortal parentage but of immortal, through the living and enduring word of God." 1 Peter 1:23, N.E.B.

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." 1 Peter 1:23.

Peter describes the religious experience of the Asia Minor Christians as a new birth. His concepts coincide with those of the apostle John who declared that a man's spiritual life depends "not on the course of nature nor on any impulse or plan of man, but on God." John 1:13, Phillips. Here is the secret of Christian power.

Many plans for social betterment today are based on the philosophy of working from the outside to the inside of the human being. But the Scriptural principle is that the work must begin from the inside of the person. Renewal must begin in the human heart. If men's hearts are not changed, all of the plans and programs devised for human betterment, while they may alleviate trouble,

will not bring about a basic change in human nature.

"It is written" was the foundation principle upon which Christ stood, and His example is for all time. Peter appeals to the believer to grasp every word of God, believe it, and live by it! Anyone who will take His word and order his life by it will find salvation.

"Satan well knows that all whom he can lead to neglect prayer and the searching of the Scriptures, will be overcome by his attacks. Therefore he invents every possible device to engress the mind."—*The Great Controversy*, page 519. Christians must be awake and on guard to make sure that they are not only "born again," but that they maintain this new birth by a consistent study of God's Word. In Peter's illustration the Word is the means both of birth and of sustenance, just as a human mother bears her child and nurses it.

Part 1
OBEDIENCE,
PURIFICATION,
AND AFFECTION
1 Peter 1:22

What is the result of purification of the soul?

"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."

The secret of obedience and purification of the soul is the power of the Spirit. No man can obey the truth or purify himself without the Spirit's aid.

Peter's point is in harmony with the words of Christ in John 17:17: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." Obedience to the Word of God brings man into harmony with Christ. Thus a man's life becomes more pure, more holy, and more like the character of God.

We need a divine innocence resulting from an ignorance of wrongdoing! Is a person able truly to love his brother fervently without this experience of purification resulting from obedience? "Obedience to the word produces fruit of the required quality—'unfeigned love of the brethren.' This life is heaven-born and leads to high motives and unselfish actions."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, page 520.

Purification of the soul through obedience to the Word results in a moment-by-moment control of every faculty. Its result is seen in a hundred daily acts of self-denial which one never brags about. Right actions within the walls of our own homes will be the result. It means a person will take time out to show the members of his own home that he cares. He will speak just as kindly and politely at home to his loved ones as he does to church members on Sabbath morning. He will treat his enemy as kindly as he treats those who love him. The habit of obeying the truth matures this kind of love.

What is the first fruit of the Spirit? Gal. 5:22.

THINK IT THROUGH

How are love and politeness related?

"The Lord purifies the heart very much as we air a room. We do not close the doors and windows, and throw in some purifying substance; but we open the doors and throw wide the windows, and let heaven's purifying atmosphere flow in. The Lord says, 'He that doeth truth cometh to the light.' The windows of impulse, of feeling, must be opened up toward heaven, and the dust of selfishness and earthliness must be expelled. The grace of God must sweep through the chambers of the mind, the imagination must have heavenly themes for contemplation, and every element of the nature must be purified and vitalized by the Spirit of God."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 940.

FURTHER STUDY

Selected Messages, Bk. 2, pp. 19-21; *Testimonies*, Vol. 5, pp. 471, 472.

Part 2
BASIS OF THE
NEW BIRTH
1 Peter 1:23

What does Peter mean by the two kinds of seed?
"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

On the subject of the new birth Peter notes (1) how it is not accomplished, (2) how it is accomplished, and (3) the eternal quality of that which produces the new birth.

Natural birth results from human action. It comes from "the will of the flesh," and "the will of man." John 1:13. All human beings, even those born of the best parentage, are "perishable." 1 Peter 1:23, RSV. Spiritual rebirth results from divine action. The "incorruptible" or "imperishable" seed which produces the new birth is the Word of God. Can the Bible of itself change a man's heart? Is it the printed pages of the Bible or the Person which the printed pages talk about which changes a man? Christ, the Word made flesh, is the source of change. Yet it is through the Bible that man obtains a knowledge of God. It is believing this word that brings a man into fellowship with the Divine.

Only this rebirth through a divine agency can make it possible that a person shall not perish. See John 3:16. It is Jesus who gives an eternal quality to the Word. It is Jesus who "ever liveth to make intercession" for us. Heb. 7:25.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is my relation to the Word of God, which alone can accomplish my new birth?

"When truth becomes an abiding principle in the life, the soul is 'born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.' This new birth is the result of receiving Christ as the Word of God. When by the Holy Spirit divine truths are impressed upon the heart, new conceptions are awakened, and the energies hitherto dormant are aroused to co-operate with God.

"Thus it had been with Peter and his fellow disciples. Christ was the revealer of truth to the world. By Him the incorruptible seed—the word of God—was sown in the hearts of men. But many of the most precious lessons of the Great Teacher were spoken to those who did not then understand them. When, after His ascension, the Holy Spirit brought His teachings to the remembrance of the disciples, their slumbering senses awoke. The meaning of these truths flashed upon their minds as a new revelation, and truth, pure and unadulterated, made a place for itself. Then the wonderful experience of His life became theirs. The Word bore testimony through them, the men of His appointment, and they proclaimed the mighty truth, 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, . . . full of grace and truth.' 'And of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.' John 1:14, 16."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pages 520, 521.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pages 167-177.

Part 3
THE IMPERMANENCE OF MAN
1 Peter 1:24

Distinguish between the meaning of the grass and the meaning of the flower in verse 24.

"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."

In the preceding verse Peter referred to perishable and imperishable seed, or as the NEB states, mortal or immortal parentage. This verse (24) shows how utterly perishable one is who is born merely of mortal parentage. He is only grass. What is more impermanent than grass? In the summer heat of the area of ancient Palestine grass quickly dries up and turns brown.

Life is extremely transitory and frail. Whether young or old, none can count on another hour of life. Life is just begun when death's grim hand leads us to the pit. This is true even of those who live the longest. Where is boasting then? Where is pride? Man's wisdom, strength, riches, and honor all fade at a moment's notice.

When Peter quoted these words, emperors were regarded as divinities. Human power was idolized. In the midst of this elevation of man a handful of uninfluential, untrained preachers led a group of followers from the common walks of life. What was the central theme of their teaching? A God who was crucified, but who was resurrected and now lives forever.

THINK IT THROUGH

What decisions and actions in my life show that I am conscious of the frailty of life? What indications are there that I take life for granted?

"Truths, precious, vital truths, are bound up with man's eternal well-being both in this life and in the eternity that is opening before us. 'Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth.' John 17:17. The word of God is to be practiced. It will live and endure forever. While worldly ambitions, worldly projects, and the greatest plans and purposes of men will perish like the grass, 'they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.' Daniel 12:3"—*Testimonies*, Vol. 7, p. 249.

"Worldly, ambitious statesmen are represented in the word of God as the grass that groweth up and as the flower of the grass that fadeth. Yet the Lord desires to have in His service intelligent men, men qualified for various lines of work. There is need of businessmen who will weave the grand principles of truth into all their transactions. And their talents should be perfected by most thorough study and training. If men in any line of work need to improve their opportunities to become wise and efficient, it is those who are using their ability in building up the kingdom of God in our world."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pages 350, 351.

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, Chap. 25, "Talents—Strength," pages 350, 351.

Part 4
THE ENDURING
WORD
1 Peter 1:25

"But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

In contrast with the ephemeral human existence is the everlasting word of God by which the Christian has been born anew. As a result of birth by the word, the Christian receives eternal life. What hope the believer has—what confidence! Nothing could be more secure than the word of God which "endureth for ever." As long as God exists, His word will exist, for His word is His character in written form. Compare John 1:1, 14.

How had the word of the Lord reached the believers to whom Peter was writing? Verse 25.

The word of the Lord comes to the world in the form of the gospel. This is His word adapted for sinners. The Bible, the Written Word, can be studied in other ways than as gospel, but only when it is studied as gospel, as God's good news for sinners, will it accomplish new birth.

It was by the Written Word that Christ overcame Satan. Matt. 4:4. He also declared, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Matt. 24:35. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." John 6:63. "The creative energy that called the worlds into existence is in the word of God. This word imparts power; it begets life. Every command is a promise; accepted by the will, received into the soul, it brings with it the life of the Infinite One. It transforms the nature and re-creates the soul in the image of God."—*Education*, page 126.

THINK IT THROUGH

What experiences have I had that show the power of this Word in my own personal life?

"In our day, as of old, the vital truths of God's word are set aside for human theories and speculations. . . . Its divine authenticity is destroyed. Thus the seeds of infidelity are sown broadcast; for the people become confused and know not what to believe. There are many beliefs that the mind has no right to entertain. In the days of Christ the rabbis put a forced, mystical construction upon many portions of Scripture. Because the plain teaching of God's word condemned their practices, they tried to destroy its force. The same thing is done today. The word of God is made to appear mysterious and obscure in order to excuse transgression of His law. Christ rebuked these practices in His day. He taught that the word of God was to be understood by all. He pointed to the Scriptures as of unquestionable authority, and we should do the same. The Bible is to be presented as the word of the infinite God, as the end of all controversy and the foundation of all faith."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pages 33, 40.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, page 288; *Education*, pages 183, 184.

Part 5 **What is the significance of the word “wherefore” in verse 1?**
THE FEARFUL FIVE **“Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypoc-**
1 Peter 2:1 **risies, and envies, and all evil speakings.”**

Peter lists five evils that must be laid aside. Those who have experienced the new birth will put away these sins.

“Laying aside” is a decisive renouncement, a “stripping off” of not only these five sins but any and all sin! The man who is truly repentant and converted will make a complete about face in his life.

“Malice” refers to evil and sin in a general sense. Compare “naughtiness,” James 1:21. It is “the vicious nature which is bent on doing harm to others.”—J. B. Lightfoot. Those who are free from malice never rejoice in the misfortunes of others.

“Guile” is the translation of a word which in its verb form means ‘to catch with bait,’ and in the noun which Peter uses means ‘craftiness.’—Kenneth S. Wuest, *First Peter in the Greek New Testament*, page 50.

“Hypocrisies.” This was discussed under 1 Peter 1:22. The Christian is not an actor. He does not operate behind a false face or mask. He is for real! Everything he does is open and aboveboard.

“Envies.” 1 Cor. 13 is the testimony of the true Christian. He is not jealous. He refuses to run down others.

“All evil speakings.” See 2 Cor. 12:20. The true Christian does not slander, defame, ridicule, or murder by words. He is careful with his words. It is interesting to note that in Matt. 12:31, 32, Christ talks about the sin against the Holy Spirit and immediately presents the concept that what a man is in his heart he speaks with his tongue.

THINK IT THROUGH

Are any of these five traits in my life?

“Cease to dwell upon the shortcomings of others. Keep the tongue sanctified unto God. Refrain from saying anything that might detract from the influence of another; for by indulging in these words of criticism, you blaspheme God’s holy name as verily as you would were you to swear. . . .

“We need especially to guard against having a tongue that is sanctified to Satan. The tongue that God has given is to be used to glorify Him in speech. Unless it is, we shall be standing directly in the way of God’s work in this world, and the judgments of heaven will surely fall upon us.”—Ellen G. White *Comments*, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 5, p. 1093.

FURTHER STUDY

SDA Bible Commentary, Vol. 3, p. 1159; *Testimonies*, Vol. 5, pp. 57-59.

Part 6
FOOD FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH
1 Peter 2:2, 3

Compare the content of the old life described in verse 1 with the desire of the reborn person in verse 2.

"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious."

An infant's most obvious need is nourishment. How determined and anxious babies are for food! How they welcome feeding time! So with the reborn Christian. He longs for spiritual food.

"Sincere milk"—"unadulterated spiritual milk," Phillips. No dilutants should be added to the spiritual milk which is the Word of God. God's children thrive on the pure Word. It is rich nourishment for growing Christians.

Appetite for the Word comes by tasting and seeing that the Lord is good. Verse 3. "O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him." Ps. 34:8.

It is quite impossible really to desire and enjoy the Word of God while maintaining habits of sin. When a person's heart is set upon serving Christ and he is determined to lay aside the evils described in verse 1, then he enjoys spiritual food. The pleasures of this world—and they are pleasures for a season—constitute the poisonous delicacies of the devil. His sugar-coated evils destroy the appetite for the Word. Those who elect to carry the cross of Christ find delight in feeding on the Word.

THINK IT THROUGH

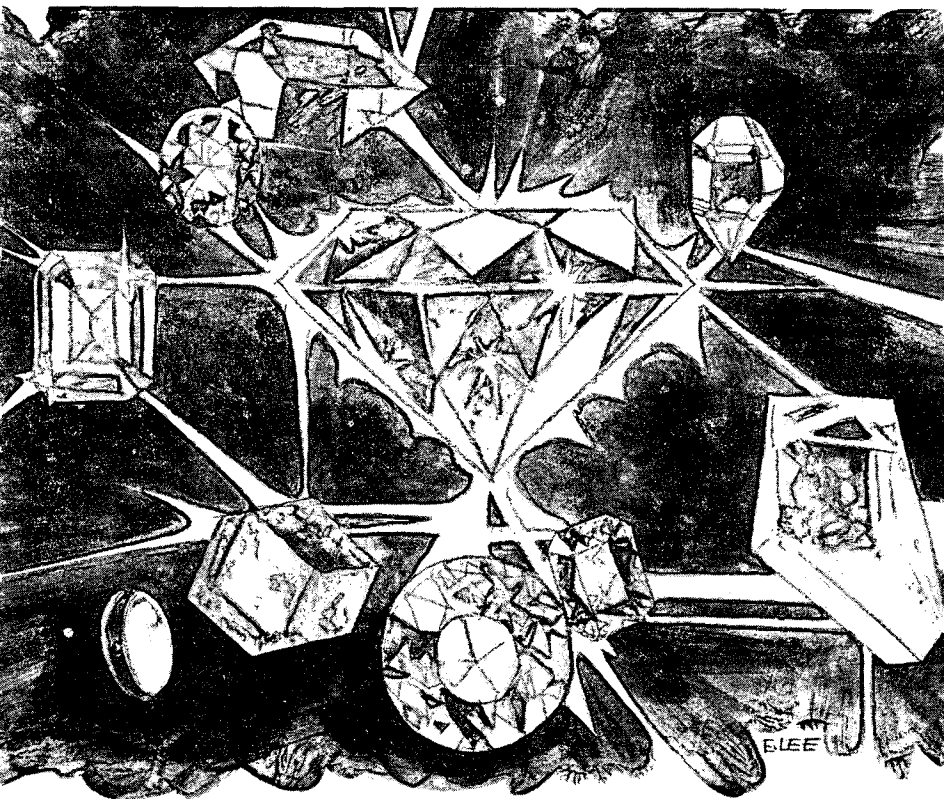
How much time do I spend daily in studying the Word of God?

"If as newborn babes you desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, you will have no appetite to partake of a dish of evil speaking, but all such food will be at once rejected, because those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious cannot partake of the dish of nonsense, and folly, and backbiting. They will say decidedly, 'Take this dish away. I do not want to eat such food. It is not the bread from heaven. It is eating and drinking the very spirit of the devil; for it is his business to be an accuser of the brethren.'"

"It is best for every soul to closely investigate what mental food is served up for him to eat. When those come to you who live to talk, and who are all armed and equipped to say, 'Report, and we will report it,' stop and think if the conversation will give spiritual help, spiritual efficiency, that in spiritual communion you may eat of the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God."—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, page 458.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, Vol. 5, p. 273; *Testimonies*, Vol. 8, p. 193; *Counsels to Teachers*, page 395.



"Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded." 1 Peter 2:6.

Peter abruptly changes from looking at the Christian life as a birth and growth to illustrating it as a temple. The birth and growth emphasized the new life and development of the individual Christian, but the temple calls attention to the community of Christians. The reborn Christian is more than an individual serving God; he belongs to a group that has Christ as its cornerstone. This is

a call to Christians to think of themselves as belonging to a new spiritual order.

The terms that Peter uses in this passage clearly show that he is attributing to Christians the prerogatives that previously belonged to the Jews. Through the inspired eyes of Peter, the Christian church is no longer a sect of Judaism. It has replaced the parent body as the chosen people because they stumbled through unbelief in Jesus. This privilege of being the chosen people is for a definite purpose and is not an end in itself. They are to let the world know about God.

Part 1
THE LIVING
STONE
1 Peter 2:4

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

The form of the Greek word for coming indicates "a close . . . and a habitual . . . approach and an intimate association." —Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. Just as a child comes repeatedly to his mother for food, so the Christian is to come repeatedly to the Lord for food for his soul. But surprisingly Peter changes, at this point, from milk to rock for his illustration. Since he calls this rock a living one, this may not be as drastic a change of figure as at first appears. In the experience of Israel, water came out of the rock; Moses speaks, in a song, about the rock that gave honey and oil (Deut. 32:13), and even speaks of the Rock that begat Israel (Deut. 32:18). So there is Biblical usage of a rock that gives birth and sustains life even as Peter has, in 1 Peter 1:23-2:3, regarded the Word as the instrument of rebirth and infant sustenance.

What meaning does Paul give to the word "rock"? 1 Cor. 10:4.

"From very early times the figure of a rock was used by the Hebrew people as a specific term for God (see on Deut. 32:4; Ps. 18:2; etc.). The prophet Isaiah speaks of Christ as 'a great rock in a weary land' (see on ch. 32:2), and as 'a precious corner stone, a sure foundation' (see on ch. 28:16). . . .

"Jesus Christ is the 'rock of our salvation' (Ps. 95:1; cf. Deut. 32:4, 15, 18; DA 413). He alone is the foundation of the church, for 'other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. 3:11), 'neither is there salvation in any other' (Acts 4:12)." —*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Matt. 16:18.

"Disallowed. Gr. *apodokimazō*, 'to reject after testing,' because of a failure to measure up to specifications. Men looked upon Christ, examined Him, and considered Him lacking in the qualities they desired in the Messiah, and therefore rejected Him as the Saviour. The Jewish nation made that decision, as many individuals of many nations have since that time (cf. Acts 4:11).

"Chosen of God. Gr. *eklektos* (see on ch. 1:2). Although men in general repudiated Christ, God recognized Him as fulfilling all the requirements for being man's sinless substitute." —*SDA Bible Commentary*, on 1 Peter 2:4.

THINK IT THROUGH

How consistently do I depend on Jesus Christ for spiritual strength?

"Upon this living stone, Jews and Gentiles alike may build. This is the only foundation upon which we may securely build. It is broad enough for all, and strong enough to sustain the weight and burden of the whole world. And by connection with Christ, the living stone, all who build upon this foundation become living stones." —*The Desire of Ages*, page 599.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, page 599.

Part 2
THE LIVING STONES
1 Peter 2:5, RSV

"And like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

Peter here calls the believers living stones, just as he did Christ. The believers are to be like Jesus, and the living stones are to be both temple and priests. The spiritual house is an allusion to the temple, as indicated by reference to priests. The temple was God's dwelling place among men; so the idea of a spiritual house is that God dwells in believers. The priests were those who performed the services of the temple. If the persons are the temple in whom God dwells, who else but the same persons can perform the services of the temple? The temple represents God in man, and the priest represents man reaching out to God. Thus the spiritual sacrifices are all those acts of the Christian life by which man seeks to do God's will and come into a close relation to Him. But all of this priestly service of the believer is acceptable to God through Jesus Christ alone.

"The religious services, the prayers, the praise, the penitent confession of sin ascend from true believers as incense to the heavenly sanctuary, but passing through the corrupt channels of humanity, they are so defiled that unless purified by blood, they can never be of value with God. They ascend not in spotless purity, and unless the Intercessor, who is at God's right hand, presents and purifies all by His righteousness, it is not acceptable to God. . . .

"Oh, that all may see that everything in obedience, in penitence, in praise and thanksgiving, must be placed upon the glowing fire of the righteousness of Christ. The fragrance of this righteousness ascends like a cloud around the mercy seat."—*Selected Messages*, Bk. 1, p. 344.

The idea of a *living* stone was interpreted by Ellen G. White as a stone that emits light. (See quote at bottom of page.) If we give this meaning to verses 4 and 5, then the living stone is a building stone of gem quality.

THINK IT THROUGH

In my own experience what can make me a living, lighted "stone"?

"How amazed is heaven at the present condition of the church that could be so much to the world if every stone were in its proper place, a living stone to emit light! A stone that does not shine is worthless. That which constitutes the value of our churches is not dead, lusterless stones, but living stones, stones that catch the bright beams from the Chief Cornerstone, even the Sun of Righteousness—the bright glory in which are combined the beams of mercy and truth that have met together, of righteousness and peace that have kissed each other."—Ellen G. White *Comments*, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, p. 1116.

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pages 595-599; *Evangelism*, page 573.

Part 3
A BASIS FOR
BELIEF
1 Peter 2:6

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

In the illustration of rebirth and milk Peter emphasized the divine source of spiritual life. In verse 6 the emphasis is on man's belief in Jesus Christ. The "wherefore" in verse 6 relates back to the expression "to whom coming" in verse 4. That is, a reason for coming to the Stone is now given—to avoid being confounded. The word translated "confounded" is often used in the Bible to describe the experience of guilty people when they are brought under God's judgment. The one who keeps coming to the Stone, believing in Him will never be confounded or ashamed (RSV) in God's judgment.

Not only is Christ a living stone and the Chief Cornerstone but He is "elect." Before the world began, Christ was selected as the foundation stone of the church. As the pearl of great price He is "precious." He is beyond all price. The altogether lovely One, the fairest of ten thousand. Nothing can compare with Him in beauty, grace, dignity, and power. This is the second time in this chapter that Peter uses the word "precious." See verse 4.

Grasp the concept that God dwells not in any house built by man, but in the living structure of surrendered people. Once we were dead as stones, but now through the living Stone we become "lively stones."

What about those who refuse to become a part of this living building? Those who build outside of Christ are part of another tower of Babel. They shall be confounded—"disgraced," "put to shame." Their building will not last.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can I experience a constant grateful appreciation for Jesus?

"The Lord will not accept a heartless service, a round of ceremonies that are really Christless. His children must be lively stones in God's building. If all would give themselves unreservedly to God, if they would cease to study and plan for their amusement, for excursions, and pleasure-loving associations, and would study the words, 'Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's,' they would never hunger or thirst for excitement or change. If it is for our true interest to be spiritual and if the salvation of our people depends on our being riveted on the Eternal Rock, would we not better be engaged in seeking for that which will hold the whole building to the chief corner stone, that we may not be confused and confounded in our faith."—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pages 461, 462.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, page 210; *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pages 461, 462.

**Part 4
STONE OF
STUMBLING
OR SUCCESS
1 Peter 2:7**

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

"He is precious." Peter makes a comparison between the believers and unbelievers. It is a practical, living, day-by-day faith that leads the believer to see the true value of the Stone. An attitude of faith which considers Christ "precious," is not a natural attitude. Sinful man cannot appreciate Christ and His matchless qualities. It takes spiritual eyesight to discern the value of Christ. This requires the daily presence of the Holy Spirit in the human heart. Believing in Jesus is not a one-time act, but a continuous attitude deliberately maintained.

THINK IT THROUGH**How can I grow in admiration for Jesus Christ?**

"In quoting the prophecy of the rejected stone, Christ referred to an actual occurrence in the history of Israel. The incident was connected with the building of the first temple. While it had a special application at the time of Christ's first advent, and should have appealed with special force to the Jews, it has also a lesson for us. When the temple of Solomon was erected, the immense stones for the walls and the foundation were entirely prepared at the quarry; after they were brought to the place of building, not an instrument was to be used upon them; the workmen had only to place them in position. For use in the foundation, one stone of unusual size and peculiar shape had been brought; but the workmen could find no place for it, and would not accept it. It was an annoyance to them as it lay unused in their way. Long it remained a rejected stone. But when the builders came to the laying of the corner, they searched for a long time to find a stone of sufficient size and strength, and of the proper shape, to take that particular place, and bear the great weight which would rest upon it. Should they make an unwise choice for this important place, the safety of the entire building would be endangered. They must find a stone capable of resisting the influence of the sun, of frost, and of tempest. Several stones had at different times been chosen, but under the pressure of immense weights they had crumbled to pieces. Others could not bear the test of the sudden atmospheric changes. But at last attention was called to the stone so long rejected. It had been exposed to the air, to sun and storm, without revealing the slightest crack. The builders examined the stone. It had borne every test but one. If it could bear the test of severe pressure, they decided to accept it for the cornerstone. The trial was made. The stone was accepted, brought to its assigned position, and found to be an exact fit."—*The Desire of Ages*, pages 597, 598.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, page 600.

Part 5
STUMBLING OR
SUBMITTING
1 Peter 2:8

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

What is this stone of stumbling? What is this rock of offense? Is it possible that Christ could be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense? If so, how? Isn't the gospel the glorious good news of life, salvation from sin, and the promise of an eternal heaven as home? True, but there is one ingredient necessary for the saved. It is a constant attitude of self-surrender. Otherwise, a person, a group, or a nation will hopelessly dash against this rock of offense. Christ is a rock of offense only because a person makes Him that. We stumble at His Word only because we refuse to submit to it. It is a question of stumbling or submitting. How many poor souls wander in darkness and plunge down precipices simply because of a rebellious attitude! It is a lamentable fact that the world's majority pay more attention to warning signs on highways than to warning messages in the Word.

"Being disobedient." The test of faith is obedience. This principle hasn't changed since Eden. It all depends on how a person relates himself to the Stone. The Stone has already related Himself to us through the supreme sacrifice on Calvary. "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already." John 3:18.

"Whereunto also they were appointed." The Scriptures do not teach that some are arbitrarily appointed unto disobedience, but rather the ones who choose to disobey, stumble.

THINK IT THROUGH

What can prevent my stumbling on Christ's self-denying example?

"All men, women, and youth are appointed to do a certain work. But some stumble at the word of truth. It does not harmonize with their inclinations, and therefore they refuse to be doers of the word. They will not wear Christ's yoke of perfect obedience to the law of God. They look upon this yoke as a burden, and Satan tells them that if they will break away from it, they will become as gods. No one shall rule them or dictate to them; they will be able to do as they please, and have all the liberty they desire. True, they have been oppressed and cramped in every way in their religious life, but that religious life was a farce. They were appointed to be co-laborers with Jesus Christ, and yoking up with Christ was their only chance for perfect rest and freedom. Had they done this, they would never have been confounded."—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, page 462.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pages 608, 609.

Part 6
CHRISTIAN
RESPONSIBILITY
1 Peter 2:9, 10

To whom is Peter referring as a "chosen generation"?

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy."

Those who stumbled over the Stone had been a chosen people, but Peter now addresses those who believe on Christ as the chosen ones. True Christians are the new Israel. They have the temple (verse 5), the priesthood (verse 5), the promised Messiah (verses 6-8), and the specific designation of "God's own people" (verse 9, RSV). All of this is not for the glory of the new Israel or for their self-esteem.

What is the specific purpose for which they have been chosen? Verse 9.

With privilege must always go responsibility, or privilege will deteriorate into self-centeredness. The new Israel is appointed to service. Its people are to communicate to the world what God has done for them. They were "nobodies" but have become "God's own people."

Just as the Jews had been called out for the particular work of glorifying God before humanity, so Christians today have this same extraordinary call to service.

The phrase "a peculiar people" should not be confused with oddness or eccentricity. The idea is that they belong especially to God.

THINK IT THROUGH

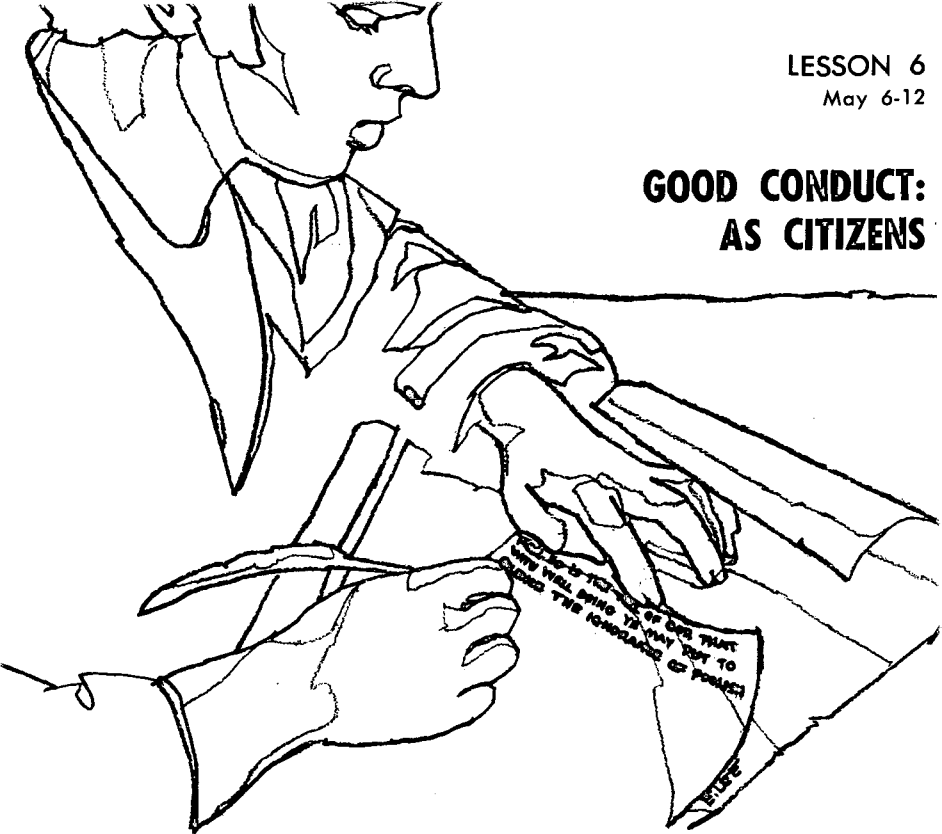
What responsibilities are peculiarly mine because I belong peculiarly to God?

"As we read the word of God, how plain it appears that His people are to be peculiar and distinct from the unbelieving world around them. Our position is interesting and fearful; living in the last days, how important that we imitate the example of Christ, and walk even as He walked. 'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.' The opinions and wisdom of men must not guide or govern us. They always lead away from the cross. The servants of Christ have neither their home nor their treasure here. Would that all of them could understand that it is only because the Lord reigns that we are even permitted to dwell in peace and safety among our enemies. It is not our privilege to claim special favors of the world. We must consent to be poor and despised among men, until the warfare is finished and the victory won. The members of Christ are called to come out and be separate from the friendship and spirit of the world; their strength and power consists in being chosen and accepted of God."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 1, p. 286.

FURTHER STUDY

Counsels to Teachers, pages 37, 38.

GOOD CONDUCT: AS CITIZENS



"For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." 1 Peter 2:15.

Peter now begins a line of thought which contains both general and particular exhortation related to the Christian's behavior in society. He discusses the evils which battle against a man's soul. Although a person may be a new creature in Christ, he still has the old nature and the old surroundings to contend with. The war against the soul rages more fiercely when a man becomes a Christian. Peter emphasizes the need of rightly influencing the non-Christians about him through proper conduct. He then enters into a discussion of a Christian's relationship to civil authorities. Politics and political issues are nothing new to Christians.

In this week's lesson Peter changes

the emphasis from the doctrinal to the practical. After laying a strong foundation for the theory of gospel truth he now begins erecting the superstructure which deals with practical godliness. This is clearly a transitional point. After all, what good is doctrine unless there is personal application? Doctrine without application is like a skeleton without flesh. Cold theory, destitute of practical application in the daily life, renders Christianity impotent.

The article entitled "A Peculiar People" which appears at the end of this lesson was written by Ellen G. White for the *Review and Herald*, Nov. 18, 1890. It is reprinted here for reading in conjunction with this week's lesson.

Part 1
THE WAR AGAINST
THE SOUL
1 Peter 2:11, RSV

"Beloved, I beseech you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh that wage war against your soul."

The Christian's first and greatest difficulty is with himself. Thus Peter concentrates on the heart of all problems—the heart of man! All wrong actions can be traced to wrong thinking. Wrong thinking leads to wrong desires. Lust is the desire of a person to please himself. This attitude, if yielded to, leads one to the performance of destructive outward acts. Even the indulgence in an excess of something good is harmful.

Peter addresses the Christians as "strangers and pilgrims." They do not belong to this world, although they live in it. They are citizens of a "holy nation."

Why does Peter warn against fleshly lusts? Verse 11.

"Let none who profess godliness regard with indifference the health of the body, and flatter themselves that intemperance is no sin and will not affect their spirituality. A close sympathy exists between the physical and the moral nature. . . . Any habit which does not promote healthful action in the human system degrades the higher and nobler faculties. Wrong habits of eating and drinking lead to errors in thought and action. Indulgence of appetite strengthens the animal propensities, giving them the ascendancy over the mental and spiritual powers."—*Counsels on Health*, page 67.

Death to self is the only way to win this war. Paul puts it plainly in Gal. 5:24: "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Many never come to this point of crucifixion. They try to hold on to God and the lusts of the flesh at the same time. Life becomes a monotonous series of yieldings and repentings. There is need of a fierce determination to cling to Christ for victory as Jacob wrestled with the angel.

THINK IT THROUGH

What steps am I taking, with God's help, to gain victories over self?

"All habits of indulgence that weaken the physical powers, that becloud the mind, or that benumb the spiritual perceptions, are 'fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.' 1 Peter 2:11.

"'And the lusts of other things.' These are not necessarily things sinful in themselves, but something that is made first instead of the kingdom of God. Whatever attracts the mind from God, whatever draws the affections away from Christ, is an enemy to the soul."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 53.

"Every sinful gratification tends to benumb the faculties and deaden the mental and spiritual perceptions, and the word or the Spirit of God can make but a feeble impression upon the heart."—*The Great Controversy*, page 474.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, Vol. 2, pp. 400-402; *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, pages 399, 400.

Part 2
THE POWER OF
INFLUENCE
1 Peter 2:12, RSV

What reason does Peter give for good conduct in verse 12?

"Maintain good conduct among the Gentiles, so that in case they speak against you as wrongdoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation."

The behavior of a Christian in a secular society provides evidence to his unsaved neighbors of the gospel's excellence.

"Speak against you as wrongdoers." Christians in the early church were accused of the most monstrous deeds. "Suetonius, in his life of Nero (chap. xvi.), calls the Christians by the very name St. Peter uses: 'the Christians, a kind of men of a new and malefic superstition.' Only about forty years later, we have Pliny's famous letter to Trajan, . . . asking whether it is the profession of being a Christian which is itself to be punished, or 'the crimes which attach to that profession.'"—*The Preacher's Homiletic Commentary*, on 1 Peter, page 72. Many were cruelly punished, tortured, and even put to death because of these false accusations. Peter's appeal is for Christians to live such lives that even their persecutors will be impressed by their deportment. In this manner "was Justin Martyr won to the side of Christianity: [He said,] 'When I heard the Christians accused and saw them fearless of death and of everything else that is counted fearful, I was sure they could not be living in wickedness and in the love of pleasures' (2 Apol. xii.)."—*The Expositor's Bible*, Vol. 6, p. 698.

The Seventh-day Adventist Christian is under daily surveillance. He is not only watched for the good he does, but for the mistakes he makes and for his inconsistencies.

A continuous, consistent display of Christlike traits of character will have its effect on someone, somewhere, sometime. "The strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian."—*The Ministry of Healing*, page 470.

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I living, by God's grace, such a life of consistent obedience to His will that even if someone falsely accused me, there would be those who would refuse to believe evil of me?

"We must expect to meet unbelief and opposition. The truth has always had to meet these elements. But though you should meet the bitterest opposition, do not denounce your opponents. They may think, as did Paul, that they are doing God's service, and to such we must manifest patience, meekness, and long-suffering.

"Let us not feel that we have heavy trials to bear, severe conflicts to endure, in representing unpopular truth. Think of Jesus and what He has suffered for you, and be silent. Even when abused and falsely accused, make no complaint; speak no word of murmuring; let no thought of reproach or discontent enter your mind. Take a straightforward course, 'having your conversation honest among the Gentiles.'"—*Testimonies*, Vol. 6, p. 120.

FURTHER STUDY

Gospel Workers, pages 372, 373.

Part 3
SUBMISSION TO
AUTHORITY
1 Peter 2:13, 14

"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well."

Peter now begins to spell out the ways in which the Christian should maintain good conduct. He uses a key word which is basic to an understanding of Christianity—"submit." Submission or self-surrender in the home, community, church, government, or business has its rewards.

Since Peter follows the phrase "to every ordinance of man" with mention of the king and governors, it is clear he refers to the government. Regardless of the type of government, the Christian has a responsibility to be subject to it. If this counsel was given to Christians living under the corrupt rulers of Rome, surely the same course is applicable today. Governments are the powers "ordained of God." Rom. 13:1. Whether it be the city, the county, the state, or the national government, the attitude towards it should be one of respect. The only occasion for exception to this attitude is when there is a conflict between the law of the government and the law of God.

"The banner of truth and religious liberty held aloft by the founders of the gospel church and by God's witnesses during the centuries that have passed since then, has, in this last conflict, been committed to our hands. The responsibility for this great gift rests with those whom God has blessed with a knowledge of His word. We are to receive this word as supreme authority. We are to recognize human government as an ordinance of divine appointment, and teach obedience to it as a sacred duty, within its legitimate sphere. But when its claims conflict with the claims of God, we must obey God rather than men. God's word must be recognized as above all human legislation. A 'Thus saith the Lord' is not to be set aside for a 'Thus saith the church' or a 'Thus saith the state.' The crown of Christ is to be lifted above the diadems of earthly potentates."—*Gospel Workers*, pages 389, 390.

THINK IT THROUGH

Are there ways in which I do not submit to the government in matters that are not contrary to God's law?

"We are not required to defy authorities. Our words, whether spoken or written, should be carefully considered, lest we place ourselves on record as uttering that which would make us appear antagonistic to law and order. We are not to say or do anything that would unnecessarily close up our way. We are to go forward in Christ's name, advocating the truths committed to us. If we are forbidden by men to do this work, then we may say, as did the apostles, 'Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.' "—*The Acts of the Apostles*, page 69.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, Vol. 6, pp. 394, 395.

Part 4
SAFETY IN GOOD
CITIZENSHIP
1 Peter 2:15

What was one reason for Christians of Asia Minor to be obedient to government?

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

Peter here states in relation to government what he previously said in verse 12 about the reason for good conduct. The Christian is to obey the government so that there can be no evidence for accusations of wrongdoing that may be brought against him. A small infraction of the law by a Christian could lend credence to the false accusations of criminal conduct made by their enemies. This is not the only reason for the Christian to obey the law, but for Christians living in a society which is hostile toward them it is certainly a crucial point.

"Those who honor the Bible Sabbath will be denounced as enemies of law and order, as breaking down the moral restraints of society, causing anarchy and corruption, and calling down the judgments of God upon the earth. Their conscientious scruples will be pronounced obstinacy, stubbornness, and contempt of authority. They will be accused of disaffection toward the government. Ministers who deny the obligation of the divine law will present from the pulpit the duty of yielding obedience to the civil authorities as ordained of God. In legislative halls and courts of justice, commandment keepers will be misrepresented and condemned. A false coloring will be given to their words; the worst construction will be put upon their motives."—*The Great Controversy*, page 592.

"We should remember that the world will judge us by what we appear to be. Let those who are seeking to represent Christ be careful not to exhibit inconsistent features of character."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 6, p. 397.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is there in my conduct now that could be used as an accusation against me and my fellow believers in the last crisis?

"We should not work in a manner that will mark us out as seeming to advocate treason. We should weed out from our writings and utterances every expression that, taken by itself, could be so misrepresented as to make it appear antagonistic to law and order. Everything should be carefully considered, lest we place ourselves on record as encouraging disloyalty to our country and its laws. . . . There will come a time when, because of our advocacy of Bible truth, we shall be treated as traitors; but let not this time be hastened by unadvised movements that stir up animosity and strife."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 6, p. 394.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, Vol. 6, pp. 396, 397.

Part 5
HOW SHOULD
WE USE LIBERTY?
1 Peter 2:16

What consideration is to determine how a Christian uses his freedom?

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

"As free. That is, act as free men. The Christian submits to authority (v. 13), not as a servile, unthinking slave, but intelligently and of his own volition, as a free man in Christ Jesus.

"Liberty. That is, freedom to act as an intelligent being.

"Cloke. Or, 'cover,' 'veil,' figuratively, a 'pretext.' The Christian will not abuse his liberty or take advantage of his reputation as a law-abiding citizen. Christian freedom does not release a person in the slightest degree from his accountability, as a citizen, to duly constituted authority (cf. 1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23). . . .

"Servants. Or, 'slaves.' As a servant of God the Christian is obedient to God. The world has every right to expect him to live up to his profession, and to conclude that what he does he does with God's approval. Thus, the good name of God is at stake in the way a Christian conducts himself. He should never give men occasion to conclude that God's standard of conduct is inferior to that commonly accepted by non-Christians."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on 1 Peter 2:16.

THINK IT THROUGH

What are the personal meanings to me of the ideal of being a servant of God?

"God desires from all His creatures the service of love—service that springs from an appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced obedience; and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service.

"So long as all created beings acknowledged the allegiance of love, there was perfect harmony throughout the universe of God. It was the joy of the heavenly host to fulfill the purpose of their Creator. They delighted in reflecting His glory and showing forth His praise. And while love to God was supreme, love for one another was confiding and unselfish. There was no note of discord to mar the celestial harmonies. But a change came over this happy state. There was one who perverted the freedom that God had granted to His creatures. Sin originated with him who, next to Christ, had been most honored of God and was highest in power and glory among the inhabitants of heaven. . . .

"Instead of seeking to make God supreme in the affections and allegiance of all created beings, it was his endeavor to secure their service and loyalty to himself."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pages 34, 35.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, Vol. 6, pp. 398, 399.

Part 6
HOW SHOULD WE
TREAT OTHERS?
1 Peter 2:17

What two words describe the relation of the Christian to other human beings?

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

Freedom in Christ brings with it the responsibility of four imperatives listed by Peter. They include honor, love, and fear. Did you note in this verse the balance between the Christian's relationship to secular powers and the church?

"Love. Or, 'keep on loving.' The same sense of continuity is used with 'fear' and 'honour,' stressing the consistency of the Christian attitude, which puts ignorant men to silence (v. 15)." —*SDA Bible Commentary*, on 1 Peter 2:17.

God sees every man as of value, which is indicated by the death of Jesus on the cross for all men. The Christian is under obligation to treat all people, in or out of authority, with dignity, courtesy, and gentleness. He is to despise no one.

"Propriety of deportment is at all times to be observed; wherever principle is not compromised, consideration of others will lead to compliance with accepted customs; but true courtesy requires no sacrifice of principle to conventionality. It ignores caste. It teaches self-respect, respect for the dignity of man as man, a regard for every member of the great human brotherhood."—*Education*, page 240.

What word does Peter use to distinguish the relation to God? Verse 17.

"A proper fear of God, in believing His threatenings, works the peaceable fruits of righteousness, by causing the trembling soul to flee to Jesus."—Ellen G. White *Comments*, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, p. 1100.

THINK IT THROUGH

In what ways should I improve my attitudes toward other people?

"The Lord Jesus demands our acknowledgment of the rights of every man. Men's social rights, and their rights as Christians, are to be taken into consideration. All are to be treated with refinement and delicacy, as the sons and daughters of God.

"Christianity will make a man a gentleman. Christ was courteous, even to His persecutors; and His true followers will manifest the same spirit. Look at Paul when brought before rulers. His speech before Agrippa is an illustration of true courtesy as well as persuasive eloquence. The gospel does not encourage the formal politeness current with the world, but the courtesy that springs from real kindness of heart."—*The Ministry of Healing*, pages 489, 490.

FURTHER STUDY

The Ministry of Healing, pages 487-490.

A PECULIAR PEOPLE

By Ellen G. White

The law of God is the only genuine standard for the measurement of character. Christ displayed to the world by his life and teaching, by his divine character, what obedience to the law means. He was man's example; but man cannot set up a standard for himself. Man is ignorant of the infinite purity of God, and without divine enlightenment he cannot appreciate the holy exactions of the law of God. While he is ignorant of the uncompromising character of God's law, he is unconcerned about his defective, sinful character. He fears nothing, he has no disquietude, because he measures himself by a false standard.

How many cry, "believe, only believe. Peace, peace," and fail to arouse conviction, or to convert men from the error of their way, because of their superficial knowledge of the claims of God's law. Men in this condition make a claim of perfection, but such perfection is simply ignorance of imperfection, lack of perception as to what is required by the law of Jehovah. The peace that may come from such self-satisfaction is a false peace. When the truth comes in contact with such persons, their peace is disturbed, and they make it manifest that they have not the peace of Christ.

The enemy of Christ, who rebelled against God's law in heaven, has, as a skilled, trained general, worked with all his power, bringing out one device after another, full of deception, to make of none effect the law of God, the only true detector of sin, the standard of righteousness. The great mass of mankind are thoughtless, careless, irreverent, and they do not concern themselves with serious thoughts as to the things of eternal importance. One reason for the state of carelessness in society is that the Christian world itself has made void the law of God. Large numbers claim sanctification who will not hear to the binding obligation of the divine precepts. They are willfully ignorant of the attributes of God, ignorant of the law, ignorant of what constitutes genuine religion, and ignorant of their own sinful, defective characters. If the truth as it is in Jesus should flash upon their hearts,

they would be constrained to cry out, "Unclean, unclean." They would, if candid, have to repent of their transgression of God's law; for "by the law is the knowledge of sin"; they would have to exercise faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, whose blood alone can cleanse from all sin. Then they would have the peace of Christ. Righteousness and peace would meet together in their experience, and they would be able to become symmetrical Christians. They would have the peace that passeth understanding.

There are many who seem to imagine that outside observances are sufficient for salvation; but formalism, rigorous attendance on religious exercises, will fail to bring the peace of God which passeth understanding. It is Jesus alone who can give us peace. He says, "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." The peace of Christ cannot be disturbed by the presentation of truth, for it is in harmony with the spirit of truth.

Those who are self-righteous, who claim that they are saved, are not always patterns of piety. We have found that those who say most concerning their sanctification, are most opposed to the principles of God's law. Satan often deludes the mind, and men are led to erect false standards of their own, whereby they measure character. They exalt their own ideas, boast of their attainments, of their assurance, and place all their confidence in their feelings. They do not find a foundation for their faith in the word of God. Many have a fanciful religion. They talk of God's love, claiming that he is not severe and exacting, but long-suffering and lenient; at the same time, they echo the suggestion of Satan, "Hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? . . . Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." It was as though he had declared that God's threatening was all a pretense, and man

need not be alarmed, for God would not be so severe and exacting. The very same reasoning is employed to-day in the Christian world. When the claims of the law are presented, men begin to frame excuses for continuing in disobedience, stating that God will not punish them for the breaking of his precepts. But let us think of it soberly. Will God change his holy law to suit my convenience? Will he sanction sin, and countenance disobedience? If God had a character of this kind, we could not reverence him. His authority could not be respected. Every transgression of God's law will be visited with its penalty upon the transgressor. The wages of sin is death. God is jealous for the honor of his law; it is the foundation of his government in heaven and earth, and it will stand throughout eternal ages. The prophet declares, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Sin is the transgression of the law. But, again, it is written for the comfort and salvation of the penitent: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." God cannot change his law in order to save men; he cannot alter it to save the world; but he has not refused to give his own Son, that men might have another probation, and become heirs of heaven. Jesus took humanity upon him, and in so doing what honor he placed upon the race! He suffered as a man, he was tempted as men are tempted, yet without sin. He was made sin for us, though he knew no sin, that

we might be made the righteousness of God in him. He "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Let us call to mind what is due to our Lord from his professed followers, and not be deceived by our own hearts. The truth exerts a purifying, refining influence upon our characters, that we may be sanctified through it; and we must permit it to work reformation in our life, if we would bear the title, the "peculiar people" of God.

The age in which we live is one of temptation, and if the people of God stand clear from the corrupting influences around them, they will be termed "peculiar," "old-fashioned," and "odd." But God has declared that he is purifying to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. If the truth is brought into the character, it will have a sanctifying power upon the life. But those who claim to believe the truth, and yet imitate the world in its practices, and go contrary to the word of God, manifesting selfishness in their business relations, are bodies of darkness. They encourage sin, and are full of hypocrisy. Everything God's people do should be as transparent as sunlight. Escaping detection does not justify crime, and make it honesty and righteousness. Temptations are surrounding us on every side, and our only safety is in becoming in reality the peculiar people whom God is cleansing from all iniquity, redeeming unto himself, to be to him an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of his glory.—*Review and Herald*, Nov. 18, 1890.

GOOD CONDUCT: AS SERVANTS

LESSON 7
May 13-19

"If we possess the humility of our Master, we shall rise above the slights, the rebuffs, the annoyances, to which we are daily exposed, and they will cease to cast a gloom over the spirit. The highest evidence of nobility in a Christian is self-control. He who under abuse or cruelty fails to maintain a calm and trustful spirit robs God of His right to reveal in him His own perfection of character."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 301.

"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." 1 Peter 2: 21, 22.

The verses under consideration for this week were directly addressed to servants or slaves. The term "servants" in the New Testament does not apply to those who were on salary and free to come and go as they pleased. These were individuals whose personal liberty was lost and they were the property of a master. The lot of a slave at any time in history was usually a bitter one. But for a Christian slave in a totally pagan society, the difficulties he faced were nearly unbearable. Yet, a large number of the early Christian converts were believed to have belonged to this class. In view of this it is not surprising that Peter counsels them with words of kindness and assurance. To make their existence more bearable, he sets forth principles which, if followed, would bring them hope and peace of mind.

These principles are not without ap-

plication in our day. The whole world, save for the minority group of true Christians, is in slavery to Satan. No one group has a monopoly on suffering. This slavery assumes various forms. Many a wife is bound to an intolerant husband, and vice versa. Some children are forced to live under tyranny. Many a working man is under the direction of an unreasonable foreman. Corruption exists on every level of authority. The rights of many are openly or subtly denied. In the midst of political, social, and economic upheaval, perhaps Peter's admonition is equally needful for Christians today.

The secret of maintaining a calm, serene, patient spirit in the midst of anarchy, oppression, confusion, and rebellion is found in studying our example, Jesus Christ. Our passage gives a portrait of the suffering servant of God. Following our Redeemer's example is the only way to solve the personal problem of maintaining our equilibrium even under the most painful and unjust circumstances. To follow any other example will spell spiritual disaster.

Part 1
ENDURANCE

1 Peter 2:18-20, RSV

To what two kinds of masters were servants to be submissive?

"Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to the kind and gentle but also to the overbearing. For one is approved if, mindful of God, he endures pain while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it, if when you do wrong and are beaten for it you take it patiently? But if when you do right and suffer for it you take it patiently, you have God's approval."

Peter notes that masters may be "kind and gentle" or "overbearing" and "unfair." Even with the latter class of masters, Peter admonishes believers to act like Christians. See also Phil. 2:15.

"Masters." This comes from a Greek word from which we get our English word "despots." This is a strong word with a connotation of uncontrolled power and absolute ownership.

"Because many converts in the early church lived in physical bondage to earthly masters the church leaders found it necessary to approach the problem of slavery from a practical, rather than an ideal, point of view (see on Deut. 14:26). Christian slaves were to win the esteem and kindness of their masters by manifesting faithfulness, loyalty, humility, patience, and a forgiving spirit."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on 1 Peter 2:18.

Under what conditions were Christian servants to suffer patiently? Verses 19, 20.

On the other hand, if a man is "beaten," meaning, "struck with the fist" or "pummeled," because of his wrong actions, it is no credit to him.

THINK IT THROUGH

What course should I follow if accused or treated wrongly?

"We cannot afford to let our spirits chafe over any real or supposed wrong done to ourselves. Self is the enemy we most need to fear. No form of vice has a more baleful effect upon the character than has human passion not under the control of the Holy Spirit. No other victory we can gain will be so precious as the victory gained over self.

"We should not allow our feelings to be easily wounded. We are to live, not to guard our feelings or our reputation, but to save souls. As we become interested in the salvation of souls, we cease to mind the little differences that so often arise in our association with one another. Whatever others may think of us or do to us, it need not disturb our oneness with Christ, the fellowship of the Spirit."—*The Ministry of Healing*, page 485.

FURTHER STUDY

The Ministry of Healing, page 487.

Part 2
IN HIS STEPS
1 Peter 2:21

In what respect does Peter point to Jesus as an example for servants? Is it for us too?

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

What a calling! Called to suffer! Strange invitation! Peter suffered, and so did the rest of the disciples. Multitudes of Christians through the centuries have suffered; why should we think it strange if we suffer? We should think it strange if we do not suffer. In the center of the gospel stands the great moral magnet of the universe—the cross of Christ. How the suffering Christian ought to love the cross and all that it stands for! See Matt. 16:24.

A person can operate on one of two principles of action relative to injustices. One is the principle of adjustment, patience, kindness, love, and acceptance. The other is one of explosive protest, retaliation, anger, and revolution. Peter votes for the former and uses Christ as the example. The unjust suffering of the Lord constitutes the example for the Christian. Paul makes it clear when he says, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." Phil. 1:29.

Christ taught:

1. That He must suffer. Luke 24:25-27, 44-47.
2. That the purpose of His suffering was to provide a ransom and remission of sins for others. Matt. 20:28; 26:28.
3. That all who follow in His steps must be prepared to suffer. Mark 8:34; 10:38, 39.

These three points are summed up in this verse. First, Christ suffered; second, Christ suffered for us; third, His suffering sets an example for us to follow in His steps.

THINK IT THROUGH

What attitude do I take when suffering or persecution of any type comes to me?

"Life is disciplinary. While in the world, the Christian will meet with adverse influences. There will be provocations to test the temper; and it is by meeting these in a right spirit that the Christian graces are developed. If injuries and insults are meekly borne, if insulting words are responded to by gentle answers, and oppressive acts by kindness, this is evidence that the Spirit of Christ dwells in the heart, that sap from the living Vine is flowing to the branches. We are in the school of Christ in this life, where we are to learn to be meek and lowly of heart; and in the day of final accounts we shall see that all the obstacles we meet, all the hardships and annoyances that we are called to bear, are practical lessons in the application of principles of Christian life. If well endured, they develop the Christlike in the character and distinguish the Christian from the worldling."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 344.

FURTHER STUDY

Evangelism, page 524; *Steps to Christ*, "The Test of Discipleship," pages 61, 62.

Part 3
THE SINLESS ONE
1 Peter 2:22

How does verse 22 fit into Peter's line of thought? See also verses 19 and 20.

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

"Who did no sin." Never in a single instance did Christ commit sin. No lamb or any other animal sacrificed during the sanctuary era was scrutinized for blemishes and mars as was Christ. Peter, close companion of Christ, declared He was as "a lamb without blemish and without spot." 1 Peter 1:19. Judas, well acquainted with the sinlessness of Christ's life, was forced to cry, "I have betrayed the innocent blood." Matt. 27:4. The unscrupulous Pilate maintained to the end that he could find no fault in Him. The only charge the priests could truthfully substantiate against Him was His claim to Deity.

The remarkable part of this truth is that in the preceding verse we are commanded to "follow his steps." He is our example. This command is also a promise. The greatness and perfection of Christ does not place Him beyond our imitation. Without a perfect example there would be no power to neutralize our selfish, sensual natures. His life and character, when studied and imitated, awaken the whole mind. Christ's perfection is communicable to us. An object of the gospel is to make Christ accessible to us so that we become "partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." 2 Peter 1:4.

Even though man retains his sinful nature until resurrection or translation day, he can, through Christ, overcome every defect of character. This is not only a possibility but his privilege to experience. There is nothing that can prevent his growing up into Christ except his lack of faith. The goodness and greatness of Jesus can be his by faith. Perfection in Christ is an attainable goal. What a sublime standard! Without a perfect pattern he could never reach the heights God has designed for him. This perfection of Christ is one of the unique features of Christianity.

"Neither was guile found in his mouth." During Jesus' life both His friends and His enemies listened very carefully to His words. No craftiness or trickery was found in His speech. His mouth uttered only words that were in harmony with His Father's character.

THINK IT THROUGH

Do I believe that all sinful habits in my life can be overcome through Christ's power? What habits remain to be conquered?

"As soon as He could talk, Christ used the talent of speech, in the family circle and among friends and acquaintances, in a way that was without fault. Not one impure word escaped His lips. Never did He do a wrong action, for He was the Son of God. Although He possessed a human form, yet He was without a taint of sin."—*Welfare Ministry*, pages 286, 287.

FURTHER STUDY

Child Guidance, page 150; *Welfare Ministry*, pages 286, 287.

Part 4
THE SILENT
SAVIOUR
1 Peter 2:23

What was Christ's example of behavior in unjust suffering?

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

Follow Christ on that awful Friday morning. Dragged before Caiaphas, the Sanhedrin, Pilate, Herod and back to Pilate again—scorned, accused, smitten, mocked, scourged, railed on, taunted with every form of cruelty, and then finally hung between earth and heaven as if He were unfit for either place. To treat a good man in this fashion is cause for horror. But to treat the perfect Person in this way is unthinkable. What was His reaction to this unjust treatment? He was silent before the Sanhedrin, silent before Caiaphas, silent before Pilate, silent before Herod, silent before His accusers, and silent before even Peter who denied Him.

This silence was a remarkable fulfillment of Isa. 53:7 which stresses twice that Christ would be silent. "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he *opened not his mouth*; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he *openeth not his mouth*." Christ, under strain and the object of repeated attacks, never retaliated in the least.

To maintain control of the tongue under such adverse circumstances reveals a character under the Spirit's control. Peter appeals not only to the servants in his day, but to men and women down through the ages, to follow the example of Christ. What agony the world would be spared if all would maintain silence even when suffering undeserved abuse! If a person whose life is at stake did not revile back, what about an individual whose life is not at stake but merely comes under provocation? The very least the Christian can do under these circumstances is to follow the advice of Solomon who suggested that, "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger." Prov. 15:1.

THINK IT THROUGH

What victories have I gained over my tongue—even when I have suffered unjustly? What victories are yet ungained?

"When the cruelty of man caused Him to suffer painful stripes and wounds, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him who judgeth righteously. . . . Christ has given us His life as a pattern, and we dishonor Him when we become jealous of every slight, and are ready to resent every injury, supposed or real. It is not an evidence of a noble mind to be prepared to defend self, to preserve our own dignity. We would better suffer wrongfully a hundred times than wound the soul by a spirit of retaliation, or by giving vent to wrath. There is strength to be obtained of God. He can help. He can give grace and heavenly wisdom. If you ask in faith, you will receive; but you must watch unto prayer. Watch, pray, work, should be your watchword."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 2, pp. 426, 427.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, Vol. 2, pp. 566, 567.

Part 5
LIFE THROUGH
DEATH
1 Peter 2:24

For whose benefit did Jesus suffer?

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

The concept of transferring our sins to Jesus, the sinner's Representative, Substitute, and Surety is something beyond our powers to comprehend. Only the Holy Spirit can draw back the curtains of the mind and let the light of the atonement shine in.

Peter first emphasizes that our Substitute had no substitute for Himself. It was none other than God the Son who bore our sins. He died, not for His own sins—for He "knew no sin"—rather He died for our sins! Thought sublime—God dying for man! (See 2 Cor. 5:21.)

This thought provides the most powerful motivation possible to separate ourselves from sin. The purpose of the cross was to save man not only from the penalty of sin, but also from the power of sin. A study of the high cost of low living brings with it a deep longing to be free from sin. How can anyone serve the devil and uphold his program on earth after seeing what Christ went through to save us? The only attitude for an understanding Christian to assume toward sin is one of hate and death. Living "unto righteousness" is possible only after one perceives the mighty love expressed in the atonement.

Peter uses the thought of being healed with Christ's stripes. See Isa. 53:5. The analogy between sin and sickness is clearly taught in the Scriptures. Matthew interprets Isa. 53:4 more literally when he recorded that Christ Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses. The gospel carries with it a flood of healing power for physical, mental, and spiritual ills. "It was His mission to bring to men complete restoration; He came to give them health and peace and perfection of character. . . . From Him flowed a stream of healing power, and in body and mind and soul men were made whole."—*The Ministry of Healing*, page 17.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can I sense more fully the extent to which Christ went in order to redeem me?

"The fact that the only-begotten Son of God gave His life because of man's transgression, to satisfy justice and to vindicate the honor of God's law, should be constantly kept before the minds of children and youth. . . . He is our only hope of salvation. Through His sacrifice we who are now on probation are prisoners of hope. We are to reveal to the universe, to the world fallen and to worlds unfallen, that there is forgiveness with God, that through the love of God we may be reconciled to God. Man repents, becomes contrite in heart, believes in Christ as His atoning sacrifice, and realizes that God is reconciled to him."—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, page 370.

FURTHER STUDY

Selected Messages, Bk. 1, pp. 392, 393.

Part 6
STRAY SHEEP
RETURNED
1 Peter 2:25

In what way does Peter compare people with sheep?

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

Peter, referring to Isa. 53:6, portrays the picture of wandering sinners and compares them to wandering sheep. There is probably no more defenseless animal than a sheep. A stray sheep is at the mercy of wild beasts and enemies and will certainly perish for want of pasture. Sheep are incapable of providing for themselves or of finding their way back to the fold from which they have strayed. A lost sheep continues to stray and if not sought out, found, and helped back to the fold, will in time perish.

Men are sheep whether in or out of the fold. "Men may deny the claim of His love, they may wander from Him, they may choose another master; yet they are God's, and He longs to recover His own."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 187.

This is a picture of the world and every sinner in it. In the parable of the lost sheep "Christ represents not only the individual sinner but the one world that has apostatized and has been ruined by sin."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 190.

How did God describe His work as the Shepherd of Israel?
Ezek. 34:12-16.

THINK IT THROUGH

When I am found, what is my responsibility toward other sheep who are lost?

"As an earthly shepherd knows his sheep, so does the divine Shepherd know His flock that are scattered throughout the world. . . .

"Jesus knows us individually, and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He knows us all by name. He knows the very house in which we live, the name of each occupant. He has at times given directions to His servants to go to a certain street in a certain city, to such a house, to find one of His sheep.

"Every soul is as fully known to Jesus as if he were the only one for whom the Saviour died. The distress of every one touches His heart. The cry for aid reaches His ear. He came to draw all men unto Himself. He bids them, 'Follow Me,' and His spirit moves upon their hearts to draw them to come to Him. Many refuse to be drawn. Jesus knows who they are. He also knows who gladly hear His call, and are ready to come under His pastoral care. He says, 'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.' He cares for each one as if there were not another on the face of the earth."—*The Desire of Ages*, pages 479, 480.

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, Chap. 15, "This Man Receiveth Sinners—The Lost Sheep," pages 186-192.

GOOD CONDUCT: IN MARRIAGE

LESSON 8

May 20-26

Your beauty should reside,
not in outward adornment
—the braiding of the hair,
or jewellery,
or dress—
but in the inmost centre
of your being,
with its imperishable
ornament,
a gentle, quiet spirit,
which is of high value
in the sight of God.

1 Peter 3:3, 4, N.E.B.*

"But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." 1 Peter 3:4.

Peter continues his theme of submission. He admonishes citizens to submit to their government (2:13, 14), and servants to submit to their masters (2:18). Even though treated unfairly, Peter admonished Christians to submit to those who had authority over them. Our modern society, with its various liberation movements, may consider Peter's admonition outdated. Yet, "self-surrender is the substance of the teachings of Christ."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 523.

Submission in the Christian context is also a necessity in the marriage relation. Peter relates the theme of submis-

sion in a special way to those Christian wives who were united to non-Christian husbands. In the formative years of the Christian church the problem of divided homes was most prominent. Believing wives were perplexed as to what course to follow with their unbelieving husbands. How to live a Christian life and at the same time please and save their husbands was a very pressing practical concern. Peter's counsel indicates that some of these concerned wives were using wrong methods in their attempts to save their husbands. The inspired principles given on how to win husbands to the Lord are applicable today. This section of Peter's letter contains instruction which is valid not only for divided homes but for those homes where both parties are professed Christians.

Part 1
WINNING
NON-CHRISTIAN
HUSBANDS
FOR CHRIST
1 Peter 3:1, 2

"Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear."

The term "likewise," connects this section with the same theme of submission which precedes it. Just as Christian citizens and servants are to submit to the emperor and master, so the believing wife is to submit to an unbelieving husband in the hope of winning the unbelieving husband to Christ.

"Be in subjection." This phrase in no way implies inferiority of women. The mother and wife has an incomparably important position in her sphere. Yet, it must be recognized that for a home to run smoothly and efficiently it must have a head. Just as a government, business organization, or ball team must have a captain or head, so must the home have a head. A two-headed family spells unhappiness and eventual disaster.

Who is ordained by God to be the head of the family? Eph. 5:23.

"Neither husband nor wife is to make a plea for rulership. The Lord has laid down the principle that is to guide in this matter. . . .

"Do not try to compel each other to do as you wish. You cannot do this and retain each other's love. Manifestations of self-will destroy the peace and happiness of the home. Let not your married life be one of contention."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 7, p. 47.

THINK IT THROUGH

If I am married to a non-believing husband, what am I doing to influence him in favor of Christianity? Can my husband see Christ living in me?

"You have trials, I know, but there is such a thing as showing a spirit of driving rather than of drawing. Your husband needs each day to see a living example of patience and self-control. Make every effort to please him, and yet do not yield up one principle of the truth. . . .

"Christ requires the whole being in His service—heart, soul, mind, and strength. As you give Him what He asks of you, you will represent Him in character. Let your husband see the Holy Spirit working in you. Be careful and considerate, patient and forbearing. Do not urge the truth upon him. Do your duty as a wife should; and then see if his heart is not touched. Your affections must not be weaned from your husband. Please him in every way possible. Let not your religious faith draw you apart. Conscientiously obey God, and please your husband wherever you can."—*The Adventist Home*, page 349.

FURTHER STUDY

The Adventist Home, pages 348-352.

Part 2
FASHIONS FOR
CHRISTIAN WOMEN
1 Peter 3:3

What does Peter reject for human adornment?

"Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel."

The beauty business prospered in Roman times. Roman cosmetic equipment and materials were quite comparable with those in use today. Extravagance in the use of cosmetics and costumes probably prompted Peter to give this advice to Christian women. The believing wife's religious influence over her husband would be far greater if her adornment were the inward principles of the Christian faith. Immodest, conspicuous, gaudy dress, makeup, and ornamentation are not only exterior, but are contrary to inward Christian principles. These exterior adornments may attract a husband to his wife, but Peter is urging that the wife attract her husband to Jesus Christ.

One reason for low moral standards today is the dazzling dress of men and women who thus appeal to man's lower nature. On the other hand, Peter is not appealing for sloppy dressing. "In dress, as in all things else, it is our privilege to honor our Creator. He desires our clothing to be not only neat and healthful, but appropriate and becoming. . . .

"Our appearance in every respect should be characterized by neatness, modesty, and purity."—*Child Guidance*, page 413.

"Our clothing, while modest and simple, should be of good quality, of becoming colors, and suited for service."—*Child Guidance*, page 420.

"When the mind is fixed upon pleasing God alone, all the needless embellishments of the person disappear."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 4, p. 645.

THINK IT THROUGH

What changes should I make in my personal appearance so that I may reflect Christian principles?

"Christians should not take pains to make themselves a gazestock by dressing differently from the world. But if, when following out their convictions of duty in respect to dressing modestly and healthfully, they find themselves out of fashion, they should not change their dress in order to be like the world; but they should manifest a noble independence and moral courage to be right, if all the world differ from them.

"If the world introduce a modest, convenient, and healthful mode of dress, which is in accordance with the Bible, it will not change our relation to God or to the world to adopt such a style of dress. Christians should follow Christ and make their dress conform to God's Word. They should shun extremes. They should humbly pursue a straightforward course, irrespective of applause or of censure, and should cling to the right because of its own merits."—*Child Guidance*, page 414.

FURTHER STUDY

Evangelism, pages 270-272; *Welfare Ministry*, page 216.

Part 3
CHRISTIAN
ORNAMENTS
1 Peter 3:4

"But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."

Those whose chief desire is to be admired and flattered, and to make a sensational impression on society have problems keeping their minds off themselves. But those who follow Peter's counsel of "putting on the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit," will find that "ninety-nine out of a hundred of the troubles which so terribly embitter life might be saved."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 4, p. 348.

Self-importance can be greatly encouraged by making dress and adornment the main theme of life.

What comparison did Paul make between the outward and inward man? 2 Cor. 4:16.

One of Peter's favorite terms was "incorruptible." It is used several times in this small book. The term "incorruptible" or "not corruptible" indicates a freedom from spoilage, decay, or even theft. Earthly treasures such as gold may be relatively incorruptible, but they cannot endure the fires of the world's end. In verse 3 Peter advises against the wearing of gold on the outside, but the true gold of faith and love in the heart will endure eternally. Our pattern is God who covers Himself with a garment of light (Ps. 104:2).

THINK IT THROUGH

When Christ was transfigured, what was striking about His appearance? Matt. 17:2.

How can my appearance reflect Christ instead of self?

"Let the new converts be faithfully dealt with. Are they vain in dress? Do they cherish pride of heart? The idolatry of dress is a moral disease. It must not be taken over into the new life. In most cases, submission to the gospel requirements will demand a decided change in the dress.

"There should be no carelessness in dress. For Christ's sake, whose witnesses we are, we should seek to make the best of our appearance. . . .

"The words of Scripture in regard to dress should be carefully considered. We need to understand that which the Lord of heaven appreciates in even the dressing of the body. All who are in earnest in seeking for the grace of Christ will heed the precious words of instruction inspired by God. Even the style of the apparel will express the truth of the gospel."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 6, p. 96.

FURTHER STUDY

The Adventist Home, pages 383-385.

Part 4
EXAMPLE OF
HOLY WOMEN
1 Peter 3:5

What were the two relationships of the "holy women"?

"For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands."

The term "holy women" does not refer to a type of woman found exclusively in Bible times. It means a person "set apart" from the world for a holy purpose. The same term can be applied to any devoted Christian today. These women depended upon God and made it their business to follow His will. Their lives were adorned, just as ours can be, with the desirable characteristics of quietness and gentleness.

"When the wife yields her body and mind to the control of her husband, being passive to his will in all things, sacrificing her conscience, her dignity, and even her identity, she loses the opportunity of exerting that mighty influence for good which she should possess to elevate her husband."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 2, p. 476.

Is divorce the best solution for a religiously divided home, or where incompatibility exists?

Referring to those who find themselves ill-mated, Ellen White counsels that "they ought then to make the best of their situation, but many will not do this. They will either prove false to their marriage vows or make the yoke which they persisted in placing upon their own necks so very galling that not a few cowardly put an end to their existence.

"It should henceforth be the life study of both husband and wife how to avoid everything that creates contention and to keep unbroken the marriage vows."—*The Adventist Home*, page 85.

THINK IT THROUGH

In what ways does my daily life exert a sanctifying influence on my partner?

"The moral character of those united in marriage is either elevated or degraded by their association; and the work of deterioration accomplished by a low, deceptive, selfish, uncontrollable nature is begun soon after the marriage ceremony. If the young man makes a wise choice, he may have one to stand by his side who will bear to the utmost of her ability her share of the burdens of life, who will ennoble and refine him, and make him happy in her love. But if the wife is fitful in character, self-admiring, exacting, accusing, charging her husband with motives and feelings that originate only in her own perverted temperament; if she has not discernment and nice discrimination to recognize his love and appreciate it, but talks of neglect and lack of love because he does not gratify every whim, she will almost inevitably bring about the very state of things she seems to deplore; she will make all these accusations realities."—*The Adventist Home*, pages 109, 110.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, Vol. 1, pp. 188, 189.

Part 5
THE MODEL
COUPLE

1 Peter 3:6

"Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement."

Sarah was the best illustration that Peter could use in the first century because of the high regard in which she was held by the Jews as the "mother" of the nation.

The Christian wife living with a non-Christian husband often finds life difficult. Peter presents an outstanding example of a husband-wife relationship. The principles taught are valid for a religiously united or a divided home.

One word which would describe better than others an attitude or quality a husband and wife must have if happiness is to be achieved would be the word "respect." The relationship between Sarah and Abraham was built on deep respect for each other. "She revered her husband, and in this she is presented in the New Testament as a worthy example."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 147.

"Calling him lord." To twentieth century ears this term sounds strangely ancient. Yet a courteous acknowledgment of each other on the part of husbands and wives brings with it the fruit of peace. This was not merely an outward custom with Sarah, but even in her thoughts of Abraham she referred to him as "My lord." (See Gen. 18:12.) Considering the ever climbing divorce rate and the abundant misery which is so widespread in the homes of the world, wouldn't it be well for all husbands and wives to cultivate daily a deeper respect in both attitudes and actions toward each other?

THINK IT THROUGH

What can I do to improve my relationship with my spouse?

"Let all see that you love Jesus and trust in Him. Give your husband and your believing and unbelieving friends evidence that you desire them to see the beauty of truth. But do not show that painful, worrying anxiety which often spoils a good work...."

"Never let a word of reproach or faultfinding fall upon the ears of your husband. You sometimes pass through strait places, but do not talk of these trials. Silence is eloquence. Hasty speech will only increase your unhappiness. Be cheerful and happy. Bring all the sunshine possible into your home, and shut out the shadows. Let the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness shine into the chambers of your soul temple. Then the fragrance of the Christian life will be brought into your family. There will be no dwelling upon disagreeable things, which many times have no truth in them."—*The Adventist Home*, page 349.

FURTHER STUDY

Education, pages 240-245.

Part 6
HUSBANDS,
HONOR, AND HEIRS
1 Peter 3:7

What should be the Christian husband's attitude toward his wife?

"Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered."

Peter penned these words in an age when women were considered inferior to men. True Christianity has been, and is, the greatest force in the world to free slaves, to elevate women to their rightful place, and to make saints out of sinners.

What comparable advice did Paul give to husbands? Eph. 5:25-33.

"According to knowledge." A wise, knowledgeable husband is intent on making his marriage succeed. Few recognize that building a happy union takes work. Just as carpenters build a house, so the husband and wife must daily lay and execute plans for building their marriage and home. The same principles required to build a house or to build a character are necessary for building a marriage union. What Christian literature would you recommend for careful reading and study to those planning to be married, as well as to those who are building their homes?

"Weaker vessel." This is no reference to morals, talents, personal qualities, intellectual abilities, or even ability to endure suffering. Women generally do not have the same muscle strength as men. No Christian husband will place upon her burdens which are beyond her powers to endure.

Peter's basis of appeal to husbands to give due honor to their wives is the fact that they are joint heirs of salvation. Since they are "co-heirs," they have souls equally precious in the sight of God. Each is to shun anything that might cause the other to stumble. If the husband maintains a tyrannical, unreasonable and selfish spirit toward his wife, God's ears will be deaf to his prayers.

THINK IT THROUGH

As a husband, how can I be more sympathetic toward my wife?

"To the man who is a husband and a father, I would say, Be sure that a pure, holy atmosphere surrounds your soul. . . . You are to learn daily of Christ. Never, never are you to show a tyrannical spirit in the home. The man who does this is working in partnership with satanic agencies. Bring your will into submission to the will of God. Do all in your power to make the life of your wife pleasant and happy."—*The Adventist Home*, pages 213, 214.

FURTHER STUDY

The Adventist Home, pages 211-215.

Compassion Love Pity Courtesy

"Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous."
1 Peter 3:8.

Peter draws to a conclusion his discussion on submission. Love, the chief of virtues, is the foundation principle on which a Christian builds an attitude of submission to authority whether it be government, masters, employers, husbands, or wives. He pleads for an exhibition of brotherly kindness. He urges a spirit of unanimity and Christlikeness in thought, feeling, and actions. Peter had finally learned the hard way the theme of Jesus' teaching—that of self-surrender.

"Self-sacrifice is the keynote of the teachings of Christ."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 9, p. 49.

"Self-surrender is the substance of the teachings of Christ."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 523.

"The law of self-serving is the law of self-destruction."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 624.

When the gospel of Christ becomes a part of a man's life, it inevitably has a subduing effect on the heart. True social

reforms will take place when these heavenly impulses surge through the hearts of Christians.

Beginning with verse 11 in chapter 2 and carrying through to verse 13 of chapter 3, Peter deals with the Christian's relationship with his fellowman. He now brings this section to a climax by listing certain qualities and modes of conduct which will mark all those who fear the Lord. He makes special mention of the tongue by quoting from Psalm 34.

Referring to verses 10-12, inspiration declares: "Those who have an experimental knowledge of this scripture are truly happy. They consider the approbation of Heaven of more worth than any earthly amusement; Christ in them the hope of glory will be health to the body and strength to the soul."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 1, p. 566.

An article entitled "God's Design for His People," appears at the end of this week's lesson for supplementary reading. Ellen White wrote this article for the *Review and Herald*, July 4, 1899.

Part 1
FIVE CHRISTIAN
QUALITIES
1 Peter 3:8

"Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous."

Five desirable Christian characteristics are listed. Note the social element in each one.

"Be ye all of one mind." Unity of heart and spirit is the thought in this command. There is a vast difference between unity of spirit and absolute uniformity of understanding, thinking, and even action. Certainly, true Christians should have a common belief. There should be essential agreement on major doctrines, the basic truths of salvation, and the goals of the Christian church.

The oneness of attitude and mind in this injunction does not refer to a monotonous similarity. The Christian church has a certain diversity in its unity.

What illustration does Paul use to explain unity and diversity in the church? 1 Cor. 12:14-31.

There is a marvelous indivisible unity in a living body. So with Christians. They may not look alike or see alike in every detail, but they may for the love of Christ be "all of one mind."

"Having compassion one of another." Our word "sympathy" comes from the Greek term for compassion. The sympathetic person is sensitive to the needs, the peculiarities, the weaknesses of others. It is a "fellow-feeling." It can be an expression of joy or sorrow depending on the circumstances. (See Rom. 12:15.)

"Be courteous." The RSV gives a preferable reading—"have a humble mind." This special Christian virtue is usually looked upon as weakness by the non-Christian. Might does not make right in Christian thinking. How much the world needs to see this quality exhibited in all mankind, whether it be squeezing into the elevator, walking the streets, driving a car, living harmoniously with members of the family, or dealing with business associates.

"Love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous." Cherish a supreme reverence for justice and truth, and a hatred for all cruelty and oppression. Do unto others as you would wish them to do to you. God forbids you to favor self, to the disadvantage of another."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 942.

THINK IT THROUGH

If my character were graded on these five qualities, how would I rate?

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies to Ministers, pages 150, 151; *The Ministry of Healing*, pages 489, 490.

Part 2
CHRISTIAN
RETALIATION
1 Peter 3:9

"Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing."

To render or give back just what a person gives us places us on the same low level of the unconverted enemy who treats us wrong. If God so loved us, and did not render back to us what is due us, but rather died for us on the cross, how willing we should be to endure suffering, even wrongfully.

How did Paul express a similar command? Rom. 12:17; 1 Thess. 5:15. What was Paul's testimony as to his own behavior toward persecution? 1 Cor. 4:12.

Someone has said, "We should ever conduct ourselves toward our enemy as if he were one day to be our friend." The true Christian has too much good sense to be insulted by insults. He is too busy to notice injuries and too forgetful to bear malice.

From a purely selfish standpoint, the one who operates on the principle of returning evil for evil—who is always vindicating himself and standing up for his rights—pays a heavy price for his so-called victories. He lives in a constant atmosphere of turmoil. He is never at peace with himself or with his fellow-man. He lives on an impoverished spiritual diet and misses the blessings which come to those who by the grace of God heap coals of fire on their enemies' heads! Retaliation with blessings is the Christian's secret weapon.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is my attitude toward those who have treated me wrongfully?

"When Christ was living on the earth, how surprised His associates would have been, if, after becoming acquainted with Him, they had heard Him speak one word of accusation, of faultfinding, or of impatience. Let us never forget that those who love Him are to represent Him in character. . . .

"The Lord Jesus demands our acknowledgment of the rights of every man. Men's social rights, and their rights as Christians, are to be taken into consideration. All are to be treated with refinement and delicacy, as the sons and daughters of God.

"Christianity will make a man a gentleman. Christ was courteous, even to His persecutors; and His true followers will manifest the same spirit."—*The Ministry of Healing*, page 489.

FURTHER STUDY

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, on Matt. 5:39, pages 69-73.

Part 3
A HEALTH-
PRODUCING TONGUE
1 Peter 3:10

“For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.”

Peter begins quoting from Psalm 34, a lovely poem of comfort. Who was better acquainted than Peter with the ill effects of an uncontrolled tongue which utters words that burn, destroy, ruin friendships, shorten life, and cause horrible regrets? Peter never forgot the awful display of intemperance of his own tongue when he denied his Master. He emphasized the influence of the tongue repeatedly. See 1 Peter 2:1, 21-23.

The tongue has ever been an instrument of mischief. It has separated friends, destroyed reputations, and produced untold agony and bitter tears. Those who have a living experience with Christ will have consecrated lips.

How does James describe the tongue? James 3:5, 6.

Peace in the world, nation, church, home and tongue must begin in the heart. When the heart is right, the words will show it. Our text deals not only with nasty gossip, but any talk which is negative and destructive. To go through the world complaining and groaning about everything and everyone can actually affect the quality and quantity of life.

“Nothing tends more to promote health of body and of soul than does a spirit of gratitude and praise. It is a positive duty to resist melancholy, discontented thoughts and feelings—as much a duty as it is to pray. If we are heaven-bound, how can we go as a band of mourners, groaning and complaining all along the way to our Father’s house?—*The Ministry of Healing*, page 251.

THINK IT THROUGH

What was my record of speech today? On what points do I especially need help?

“Through the help that Christ can give, we shall be able to learn to bridle the tongue. Sorely as He was tried on the point of hasty and angry speech, He never once sinned with His lips. With patient calmness He met the sneers, the taunts, and the ridicule of His fellow workers at the carpenter’s bench. Instead of retorting angrily, He would begin to sing one of David’s beautiful psalms; and His companions, before realizing what they were doing, would unite with Him in the hymn. What a transformation would be wrought in this world if men and women today would follow Christ’s example in the use of words.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 936.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, Vol. 1, pp. 356, 357.

Part 4
TURNING FROM EVIL
1 Peter 3:11

"Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it."

Peter continues his quotation from Ps. 34:12-16. "Let him eschew evil" simply means, let him turn away from evil.

"And do good." Abstaining from evil is insufficient. The true Christian has a positive record of good deeds done. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Matt. 7:20.

The man who simply refrains from evil-doing and enters into no active program of good doing has an empty, barren Christian experience. True religion is a practical religion. Goodness and corresponding activity under God's blessing, are mighty safeguards against evil. The person who fills up his life with good thoughts, and the deeds which arise from them, keeps evil squeezed out!

What parable did Jesus give to illustrate the wisdom of replacing evil with good? Matt. 12:43-45.

"We must inevitably be under the control of the one or the other of the two great powers that are contending for the supremacy of the world. It is not necessary for us deliberately to choose the service of the kingdom of darkness in order to come under its dominion. We have only to neglect to ally ourselves with the kingdom of light."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 324.

"Let him seek peace." Not only are Christians to have harmonious relations with each other, but they are to pursue it zealously. No quality of character comes by chance. It is developed. God gives man the talents, but man must improve these talents. "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matt. 5:9).

THINK IT THROUGH

What similar counsel did Paul give the Romans relative to seeking peace? Rom. 12:18.

What "good" in my sphere of life awaits my action?

"Those who, so far as it is possible, engage in the work of doing good to others by giving practical demonstration of their interest in them are not only relieving the ills of human life in helping them bear their burdens, but are at the same time contributing largely to their own health of soul and body. Doing good is a work that benefits both giver and receiver. If you forget self in your interest for others, you gain a victory over your infirmities. The satisfaction you will realize in doing good will aid you greatly in the recovery of the healthy tone of the imagination. The pleasure of doing good animates the mind and vibrates through the whole body."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 2, p. 534.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pages 323, 324.

Part 5
THE EYES, EARS,
AND FACE OF
THE LORD
1 Peter 3:12

"For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."

Peter comes to the final passage quoted from Ps. 34. Imagine God bending low to hear the prayers of His followers. He eagerly listens for their petitions and is eager to answer them. What security the Christian has to know that the God whom he serves does not have wooden ears or glass eyes! Furthermore, it is not a matter of begging God to hear us, but rather believing that God does hear the prayers of those who earnestly seek Him.

Take prayer from the heart of a Christian, and you reduce him to a lost soul. Take prayer from our world, and man would lose the link of communion between man and God. Prayer is an accurate gauge of our faith.

"No man is safe for a day or an hour without prayer."—*The Great Controversy*, page 530.

Do we need to coax God to hear our prayers? Ps. 62:8; Heb. 4:16:

In contrast to God's tender loving care over His children, "the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." Our names may be on the church books; but if we live in rebellion and sin, we may know for a certainty that the face of God is against us. In an age when love is being stressed on every side, let us not overlook the fact that we serve a God of justice and fairness. He will not overlook evil. The provisions for escaping from evil are readily available. That way of escape cost the Son of God His life, and if a person refuses to permit Christ to live in His life, refuses to surrender his entire being to His power, can he expect anything less than that God's face should be against him?

Love that is indulgent is not really love! The parent who does not properly discipline his children is partially responsible for the confusion, turmoil, and rebellion that exist in the hearts of their young.

THINK IT THROUGH

What can be accomplished for me through prayer?

"Cry unto the Lord, tempted soul. Cast yourself, helpless, unworthy, upon Jesus, and claim His very promise. The Lord will hear. He knows how strong are the inclinations of the natural heart, and He will help in every time of temptation.

"Have you fallen into sin? Then without delay seek God for mercy and pardon."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 177.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, Vol. 5, pp. 177, 212; *Steps to Christ*, "The Privilege of Prayer," pages 93-104.

Part 6
THE REWARD OF
RIGHT DOING
1 Peter 3:13, RSV

"Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is right?"

In introducing the section of his epistle that deals with good conduct, Peter suggested that accusations against Christians would not be sustained if they maintained good conduct (2:12). With today's verse he has returned to the same thought and brings to a close his counsel on behavior. If Christians in every capacity will conduct themselves circumspectly, they will minimize the coming trouble. This is true in general for all citizens and believers; but it also applies to the special conditions of servants, wives, or husbands. This, of course, was not the only reason in Peter's mind for good conduct. In each case he shows how their good conduct relates to God and to Jesus Christ (see 2:15, 16, 20, 21; 3:3, 4, 7, 12), and how it also relates to the salvation of unbelievers (2:12; 3:1).

During the days in which Peter wrote this epistle a strong nationalistic Jewish party known as Zealots operated. They became fanatical resistance fighters against the Romans. These revolutionaries were assassins and were labeled Sicarii, meaning "daggermen." Their philosophy of "might makes right" helped to bring about the destruction of Jerusalem, according to the Jewish historian Josephus. Peter undoubtedly was well acquainted with the philosophy of these violent men and their evil deeds. He would have "zealots" for Christ as far as enthusiasm, conviction, and determination were concerned.

If Christians exhibited the same zeal for the cause of Christ as revolutionaries exhibit for their cause, how many more would be on God's side today!

How does the prophet Isaiah express the same concept? Isa. 58:7, 8.

THINK IT THROUGH

What are the rewards of right doing?

"In times past some in the sanitarium have felt it their duty to introduce the Sabbath question in all places. They have urged it upon the patients with earnestness and persistency. To such the angels of God would say, Not *words*, but *deeds*. The daily life tells much more than any number of words. A uniform cheerfulness, tender kindness, Christian benevolence, patience, and love will melt away prejudice, and open the heart to the reception of the truth. Few understand the power of these precious influences."—*Evangelism*, page 543.

FURTHER STUDY

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, on Matt. 5:14, pages 38-44.

GOD'S DESIGN FOR HIS PEOPLE

By Ellen G. White

The strength of God's people lies in their union with him through his only begotten Son, and their union with one another. There are no two leaves of a tree precisely alike; neither do all minds run in the same direction. But while this is so, there may be unity in diversity. Christ is our root, and all who are grafted into this root will bear the fruit which Christ bore. They will reveal the fragrance of his character in the talent of speech, in the cultivation of hospitality, of kindness, of Christian courtesy and heavenly politeness. Look at the flowers in a carpet, and notice the different colored threads. All are not pink, all are not green, all are not blue. A variety of colors are woven together to perfect the pattern. So it is in the design of God. He has a purpose in placing us where we must learn to live as individuals. We are not all fitted to do the same kind of work, but each man's work is designed by God to help make up his plan.

When the Lord commanded the children of Israel to build the tabernacle, and gave them the plan for its furniture, its curtains, and everything pertaining to it, all were not given the same work. The Lord chose his workers, and then fitted them for their work by giving to them skill, and imparting to them his wisdom. To each worker was appointed work according to his ability. No worker was to lay hold of one portion of the work, and place himself in the way of his fellow laborer. Each was to do with the strictest fidelity the part appointed him. The plan of the great Deviser was followed, and the tabernacle came forth, from the hands of the workers, complete, each part in harmony with every other.

Industry in a God-appointed work is as much part of true religion as is devotion. We are not to think that in any of the work essential in the building of the tabernacle one part was menial and the other not. Every part of God's work means service. He declares of his people, Ye are laborers together with God. We are to bear in mind that this world is the Lord's workshop. We are to bear the image of God, and every soul saved through the sacrifice of the Son of God

must in this life be made complete in Christ. There is much to do in order to fit us for the courts of the Lord. The roughness of spirit, the coarseness of speech, the cheapness of character, must be put away, or we can never wear the garment woven in the heavenly loom,—the righteousness of Christ.

The Lord designs to bring his people as material from the quarry of the world, that he may work them. They are in need of the ax and the hammer, of planing and polishing; for if this work is not done, the stones will retain their roughness. They will be unsymmetrical, and unfitted to fill the place Christ has prepared for every one who will enter the kingdom of heaven. Those who, under the education of Christ, make it possible to reach the highest attainments will take every divine improvement with them to the higher school. But those who are unwilling to have their characters molded after the divine similitude make the angels sad; for by clinging to their sinful habits and practises they spoil the design of God.

Angels of God are appointed to minister unto those who shall be heirs of salvation. The work of these heavenly beings is to prepare the inhabitants of this world to become children of God, pure, holy, undefiled. But men, though professing to be followers of Christ, do not place themselves in a position where they can understand this ministry, and thus the work of the heavenly messengers is made hard. The angels, who do always behold the face of the Father in heaven, would prefer to remain close by the side of God, in the pure and holy atmosphere of heaven; but a work must be done in bringing this heavenly atmosphere to the souls who are tempted and tried, that Satan may not disqualify them for the place the Lord would have them fill in the heavenly courts. Principalities and power in heavenly places combine with these angels in their ministration for those who shall be heirs of salvation. But how sad it is that this work is hindered by the coarseness, the roughness, the worldly-mindedness of men and women who are

so desirous of securing their own ends, of gratifying their own wishes, that they lose sight of the word of God, which should be their instructor and their guide.

The Lord gives to every angel his work for this fallen world. Divine help is provided for men and women. They have the opportunity of co-operating with the heavenly intelligences, of being laborers together with God. There is placed before them the possibility of gaining a fitness for the presence of God, of being enabled to see his face. Heavenly angels are working to bring the human family into a close brotherhood, a oneness described by Christ as like that existing between the Father and the Son. How can men so highly favored by God fail to appreciate their opportunities and privileges? How can they refuse to accept the divine help proffered? How much it is possible for human beings to gain if they will keep eternity in view!

Satanic agencies are always warring for the mastery over the human mind, but the angels of God are constantly at work, strengthening the weak hands and confirming the feeble knees of all who call upon God for help. The promise to every child of God is, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

The Lord is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him than parents are to give good gifts to their children. Then ask. Believe what God has said. He will surely fulfill his word. Say from your heart, "My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever." The victory must be gained day by day. As Christ's representatives, we are to stand on vantage-ground before the world. Let us, then, engage in this part of the Christian warfare, determinedly overcoming every weakness of character.

The Lord has had true-hearted men and women, those who have made a covenant with him by sacrifice. They have not swerved from their integrity. They have kept themselves unspotted from the world, and they have been led by the Light of life to defeat the purposes of the wily foe. Will human beings

now act their part in resisting the devil? If they will do this, he will surely flee from them. Angels, who will do for you what you can not do for yourselves, are waiting for your co-operation. They are waiting for you to respond to the drawing of Christ. Draw nigh to God and to one another. By desire, by silent prayer, by resistance of satanic agencies, put your will on the side of God's will. While you have one desire to resist the devil, and sincerely pray, Deliver me from temptation, you will have strength for your day. It is the work of the heavenly angels to come close to the tried, the tempted, the suffering ones. They labor long and untiringly to save the souls for whom Christ has died. And when souls appreciate their advantages, appreciate the heavenly assistance sent them, respond to the Holy Spirit's working on their behalf; when they put their will on the side of Christ's will, angels bear the tidings heavenward. Returning to the heavenly courts, they report their success with the souls for whom they have ministered, and there is rejoicing among the heavenly host.

The angels of God have seen in the churches a condition of things which has grieved them, and grieved the Holy Spirit. The professed people of God have shown a lack of unity and love. They have not heeded the admonition, "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor." The apostle Paul says, "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself. . . . Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that ye through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus: that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God."

Again he says: "Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another; not slothful in business; fervent

in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality."

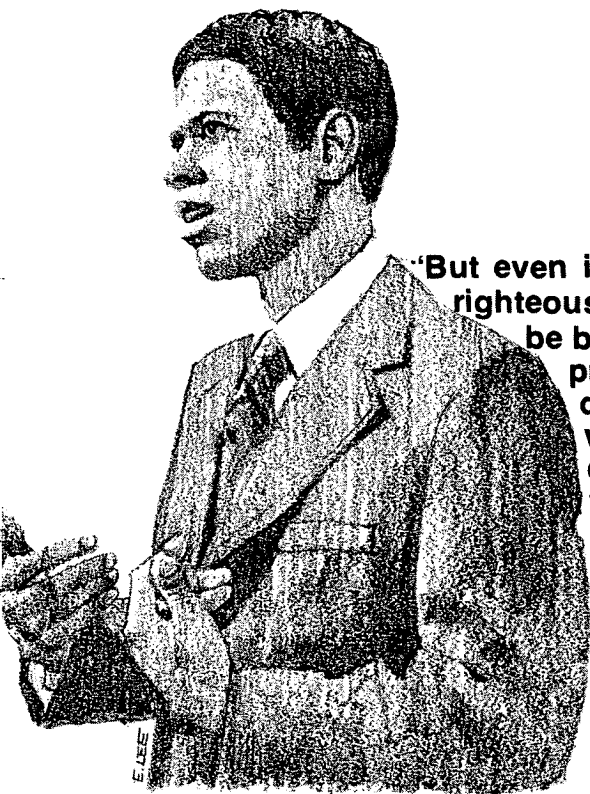
This admonition has been strangely neglected: "Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality." Plans have been devised by which the loving attentions shown in hospitality and visiting, a work which should bind heart to heart, are cut off. Let not methods and plans be invented which will give no opportunity for brotherly love to live. The spirit of covetousness, O, let it die! Our Heavenly Father gives us of his bounty freely, and for his sake who gave his life for us we should entertain our brethren and sisters.

The Lord designs that we shall care for the interests of one another. The

apostle Paul gives us an illustration of this. Addressing the church at Rome, he says: "I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea; that ye receive her in the Lord as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succorer of many, and of myself also."

Christ's admonition to his disciples is to be heeded by us. Almost his last words before he gave his life for the world were, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another." How much, Lord?—"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."—*Review and Herald*, July 4, 1899.

SUFFERING FOR CHRIST



"But even if you do suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed....Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence."

1 Peter 3:14,15, R.S.V.

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ." 1 Peter 3:15, 16.

The student of Peter's epistle should keep in mind that it was written to Christians who were exposed to persecution and suffering because of their faith in Christ. Similar conditions will exist throughout the world again. We believe we are living in the time of the end, and no Christian who lives until our Lord returns will be exempt from suffering for his faith. Trials will come to all regard-

less of their national or racial origins.

This week's lesson contains a difficult passage; but if the student keeps in mind that Peter is not setting forth any special doctrine but rather is giving strength and assurance to Christians in the fires of persecution, the passage will be clear.

Persecution and its effects were well-known to Peter. He remembered the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7), the beheading of James (Acts 12), and his own miraculous deliverance from prison and threat of death by an angel in answer to prayer (Acts 12). He also knew of the sufferings of Paul; yet in spite of all this, Peter assumed no posture of defeat but rather one of courage and confidence in suffering. Christians today will profit from a careful study of Peter's counsel.

Part 1
REMEDY FOR FEAR
1 Peter 3:14, 15

"But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."

Peter has already asked the question, "Who is he that will harm you?" Verse 13. "If ye suffer for righteousness' sake," count yourself "happy," or "blessed." See Matt. 5:10. This sounds paradoxical as it is opposite to the course which the natural man would follow. Trouble becomes unbearable when it is accompanied with the fear that it is *deserved*. But the most distressing circumstances have little effect upon the man of God who has sanctified the Lord God in his heart.

How could the apostle Paul stand calmly before an angry Sanhedrin that longed for his death? Acts 23:1.

Christ is the example of One who was ready "to give an answer to every man." God gave men minds to study, reason, and reflect. Every spare moment should be used by Seventh-day Adventists in these final hours of earth's history in gaining a deeper knowledge of Christ and His doctrines. This does not mean that everyone must be familiar with the theological language of the day, but rather that he should be able to convey the plan of salvation convincingly and clearly to others. Even those young in years, such as the Israelitish maid in Naaman's household, may be ready with the right answers. Here was a child taken from her family and native land into a stranger's household, yet her cheerful, helpful ways brought the truth to the commander-in-chief of the Syrian army. No one is too young or too old to witness for Christ.

THINK IT THROUGH

How much of our special message could I explain to someone else at a moment's notice?

"Every soul who believes present truth will be brought where he will be required to give a reason of the hope that is in him. The people of God will be called upon to stand before kings, princes, rulers, and great men of the earth, and they must know that they do know what is truth. They must be converted men and women. God can teach you more in one moment by His Holy Spirit than you could learn from the great men of the earth. The universe is looking upon the controversy that is going on upon the earth. At an infinite cost, God has provided for every man an opportunity to know that which will make him wise unto salvation. How eagerly do angels look to see who will avail himself of this opportunity!"—*Selected Messages*, Bk. 1, pp. 415, 416.

FURTHER STUDY

Gospel Workers, page 120; *Evangelism*, pages 87, 88.

Part 2
HOW TO SHAME
YOUR ENEMIES
1 Peter 3:16, RSV

"And keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are abused, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame."

Peter emphasizes again the power of a godly life (2:12). The Christian's enemies may know nothing of the Christian's faith and hope, but they should be able to see his orderly life. Those with a good or clear conscience, which is purity of heart, have nothing to fear even when falsely accused. "'Keep conscience as the noon-tide clear,' and you can go through a midnight darkness, and a world of woes unspeakable."—*The Preacher's Homiletic Commentary*, First Peter, page 107.

How did Paul, writing to youthful Timothy, emphasize the necessity of having a good conscience? 1 Tim. 1:5, 19.

Several types of consciences are referred to in the Scriptures. There is a conscience which is purged from dead works (Heb. 9:14); a conscience which speaks truth and the Holy Spirit bears witness to it (Rom. 9:1); a conscience which leads to shipwreck (1 Tim. 1:19); a conscience which is clear before both God and man (Acts 24:16); and the conscience which has been purified by the sprinkling of the blood (Heb. 10:22).

A violated conscience leads to self-degradation. For inner peace and freedom from condemnation every effort should be made to preserve the integrity of the conscience by obedience to the will of God. Those who live in this manner will never be put to shame even though accused falsely.

Is it possible to be too conscientious? "Now we read in the Bible of a good conscience; and there are not only good but bad consciences. There is a conscientiousness that will carry everything to extremes, and make Christian duties as burdensome as the Jews made the observance of the Sabbath. . . . One fanatic, with his strong spirit and radical ideas, who will oppress the conscience of those who want to be right, will do great harm. The church needs to be purified from all such influences."—*Selected Messages*, Bk. 2, p. 319.

THINK IT THROUGH

What molds my conscience?

"Inward peace and a conscience void of offense toward God will quicken and invigorate the intellect like dew distilled upon the tender plants. The will is then rightly directed and controlled, and is more decided, and yet free from perverseness. The meditations are pleasing because they are sanctified. The serenity of mind which you may possess will bless all with whom you associate. This peace and calmness will, in time, become natural, and will reflect its precious rays upon all around you, to be again reflected upon you."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 2, p. 327.

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, page 431.

Part 3
SUFFERING FOR
DOING GOOD
1 Peter 3:17, 18,
first part

What two reasons for suffering does Peter mention?

"For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

"Satan—not God—is the author of suffering. . . . But God knows when suffering is needed for the development of character, and therefore permits it to come."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on 1 Peter 3:17.

Note the word "if." This does not mean that it is absolute or even probable, but simply possible. It can happen and it does happen that a Christian is sometimes persecuted for doing well. Peter points us to Christ who suffered innocently and even died in order to save us. While there is a parallel between the sufferings of Christ and those of the believer, there is also a way in which the sufferings of Christ were unique. He suffered as a Substitute, "the just for the unjust."

The patient endurance of the sufferer has the twofold value of a godly example for others and a strengthening of the individual's faith. We should ever remember that one of the main blessings of persecution endured and triumphed over is that it may influence the persecutor in favor of Christ. Some persecutors throughout history have found Christ, and we can trace their acceptance of Him to some Christian who suffered patiently.

To comprehend the majestic love of Jesus gives courage to the Christian who suffers. Are you misunderstood? So was Christ. Does your family give you a difficult time because you are a Christian? So did Christ's family. Are you poor? So was Christ. Are you beset by numerous temptations? So was Christ. Does society ignore you, or ridicule you? They did so to Christ. Do people laugh at you behind your back? They laughed at Christ openly as well as behind His back.

The fact that Peter weaves in the sufferings of Christ throughout his epistles indicates how indelibly the final hours of Christ's agony were impressed upon his heart and mind. See 1 Peter 1:10, 11; 4:12-19.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the importance and value of meditating on Christ's earthly life?

"God's heroes of faith are heirs to an inheritance of greater value than any earthly riches,—an inheritance that will satisfy the longings of the soul. By the world they may be unknown and unacknowledged, but in the record books above they are enrolled as citizens of heaven, and an exalted greatness, an eternal weight of glory, will be theirs."—*Gospel Workers*, page 18.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, Vol. 4, pp. 121, 122.

Part 4
NOAH'S DAY
1 Peter 3:18-20

"Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing."

This is a difficult and much debated passage. A correct understanding of the nature of man must be derived from the Bible as a whole and used to guide in interpreting this problem passage. Conversely, an interpretation of this problem passage should not be the deciding factor in establishing a doctrine of man's condition in death. Man is subject to death. Since death is an unconscious state, a sleep, then it is impossible to interpret this passage as meaning that Christ in some spirit form went and preached to the departed spirits of wicked people who had lived during the days of Noah.

The S.D.A. Commentary offers one possible interpretation: "By which" refers back to v. 18 as a whole, and v. 19 means that by virtue of His *yet future* vicarious death and resurrection, in 'spirit,' Christ 'went and preached' to the antediluvians through the ministry of Noah. It was by virtue of the fact that Christ was to be 'put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit' (v. 18) that He formerly preached salvation through Noah and 'saved by water' those who accepted it. Similarly, it is 'by the resurrection of Jesus Christ' that 'baptism doth also now save us' (v. 21).—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on 1 Peter 3:19.

"Spirits in prison." The word "spirits" simply means "wind," "breath," "spirit." "Breath is one of the conspicuous characteristics of living beings, and by a figure of speech . . . in which a characteristic part of a thing stands for the whole. . . . Compare 1 Cor. 16:18, where 'my spirit' means 'me,' and Gal. 6:18; 2 Tim. 4:22; etc., where 'your spirit' means 'you.' . . . Accordingly, these 'spirits' can be considered living human beings. In fact, the first part of v. 20 apparently identifies them as people living on the earth immediately prior to the Flood. They were as certainly real, living human beings as were the 'eight souls' of v. 20."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on 1 Peter 3:19.

How did Christ preach to the people in Noah's day? Gen. 6:3.

"God granted them one hundred and twenty years of probation in which to consider, and during that time preached to them through Seth, Enoch, and Noah. They were represented as men shut up in prison. Had they listened to the testimony of these faithful witnesses, had they repented and returned to their loyalty, God would not have destroyed them."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1, p. 1088.

Part 5
BAPTISM, THE
CHRISTIAN "ARK"
1 Peter 3:20, 21

"Wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

Peter compares the waters of the Flood with the waters of baptism. The words "were saved" mean "were brought safely through."

"By water. Or, 'through water.' The very same waters of the Flood, which buried the 'disobedient' sinners of Noah's day, bore up those within the ark of safety, and thus preserved their lives. The saving of these eight persons 'by water' is the climax of this rather long parenthesis about the antediluvians, and Peter's reason for inserting it. The lesson he draws from their experience is stated in v. 21—as they were 'saved by water' so 'baptism doth also now save us.' However, the eight antediluvians and Christians are alike saved by virtue of Christ's resurrection from the dead (see on vs. 19, 21), for otherwise there would be no hope for either group (see 1 Cor. 15:13-23)." —*SDA Bible Commentary*, on 1 Peter 3:20.

Peter is emphasizing the importance of following the command of God to "repent and be baptized." Baptism in itself will save no one, but a refusal to follow any of God's commands can cause a person to be lost. Refusal to obey symbolizes a state of partial or total rebellion against God's will. A refusal on the part of the antediluvians to get into the ark, for whatever reason, spelled death. A refusal on the part of anyone to be baptized as God has ordained also spells death. Baptism should be an outward testimony of an inward condition of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the relationship of baptism to the resurrection of Jesus?

"If Christ, the spotless and pure Redeemer of man, condescended to take the steps necessary for the sinner to take in conversion, why should any, with the light of truth shining upon their pathway, hesitate to submit their hearts to God, and in humility confess that they are sinners, and show their faith in the atonement of Christ by words and actions, identifying themselves with those who profess to be His followers? There will ever be some who do not live out their profession, whose daily lives show them to be anything but Christians; but should this be a sufficient reason for any to refuse to put on Christ by baptism into the faith of His death and resurrection?"—*Testimonies*, Vol. 4, pp. 40, 41.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pages 104, 105.

Part 6
ALL THINGS SUB-
JECT TO CHRIST
1 Peter 3:22

"Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him."

Peter now turns back to his main subject. Verses 19-21 are parenthetical. When we attach verse 22 to verse 18, at one glance the sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, position and work of Christ are made clear.

Peter exalts his blessed Lord by declaring that all things are made subject to Him. Christ is the very zenith of God's glory and the very image of His person. See Heb. 1:3. Because of His perfect life, perfect sacrifice, glorious resurrection, and high position in heaven, all things have been made subject to Him.

What did Jesus tell His disciples about His authority? Matt. 28:18.

By what steps did God exalt Jesus to a position of supremacy in the universe? Eph. 1:19-23.

What is the last enemy which will be made subject to Christ? 1 Cor. 15:26, 27.

These texts should have special significance to Seventh-day Adventists who believe that Christ ministers for them in the heavenly sanctuary. Christ is in heaven. He is at the right hand of God; He ministers the benefits of His atonement to those who seek Him.

"The Scriptures confidently give the assurance that nothing, not even death, will be excluded from total subjugation by Christ (cf. Phil. 3:21; Heb. 2:8)."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on 1 Cor. 15:27.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the importance to me of Jesus' exalted position?

"The voice of God is heard proclaiming that justice is satisfied. Satan is vanquished. Christ's toiling, struggling ones on earth are 'accepted in the Beloved.' Eph. 1:6. Before the heavenly angels and the representatives of unfallen worlds, they are declared justified. Where He is, there His church shall be. 'Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.' Ps. 85:10. The Father's arms encircle His son, and the word is given, 'Let all the angels of God worship Him.' Heb. 1:6."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 834.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pages 832-835.

“Everything is secondary to the glory of God. Our heavenly Father is to be ever cherished as the first, the joy and prosperity, the light and sufficiency of our life, and our portion forever. . . . Anything that is made the subject of undue thought and admiration, absorbing the mind, is a god chosen before the Lord.”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 56.

“But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.” 1 Peter 4:7, 8.

In this lesson Peter urges the saints to have the same mind that Christ had. Those who fully surrender to Christ cannot live the same kind of life they did before conversion. Worldly pleasures and common practices of lustful indulgences

and the unmentionable evils of idolatry must be put away. Proof of renouncing the old life is seen in our witness and in a new type of living quite contrary to past performance. There must be a life separated from worldliness—a new life which stems from grateful hearts of love for Christ who died for them. Peter appeals to believers to be sober for “the end of all things is at hand.”

The practical instruction found in this week’s lesson is an enlargement of similar thoughts previously considered.

Part 1
SUFFERING
HAS REWARD
1 Peter 4:1, 2

"Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God."

Paul was a theologian, but Peter was more interested in a practical explanation of the Christian life. His writings are a guide to godly living. Throughout the first epistle he views the problem of suffering from several angles and then encourages the believers to maintain allegiance to God under even the most difficult circumstances.

Suffering can drive a man toward heaven or hell depending on how he relates himself to God. The person connected with God becomes more dependent upon divine resources when he suffers. The suffering person may—more readily than one who does not suffer—recognize the need of a power outside himself to enable him to be steadfast in the faith. John Bunyan spent twelve years in prison for his faith, and supported his family by making shoelaces. The name "Waldenses" and the term "suffering" are nearly synonymous.

How did Job relate himself to suffering? Job 13:15.

J. B. Phillips' translation of 1 Peter 4:1 illustrates another facet in suffering: "You must realize that to be dead to sin inevitably means pain." To crucify the lusts of the flesh is not a pleasant task. Ask the victorious man who still has to live with a greedy appetite. Ask the victorious person who still fights against a materialistic spirit. The mental anguish endured by those who seek victory over sin can exceed even physical suffering. When the sacrifice made on the cross for us is constantly considered, the motivation to arm ourselves with "the same mind" is strong.

THINK IT THROUGH

Does suffering drive me closer to or farther from God? If the latter, why?

"You know something of what it means to pass through trials. These have given you the opportunity of trusting in God, of seeking Him in earnest prayer, that you may believe in Him, and rely upon Him with simple faith. It is by suffering that our virtues are tested, and our faith tried. It is in the day of trouble that we feel the preciousness of Jesus. . . . Oh, it is so precious to think that opportunities are afforded us to confess our faith in the face of danger, and amid sorrow, sickness, pain, and death. . . ."

"With us, everything depends on how we accept the Lord's terms."—*Selected Messages*, Bk. 1, pp. 117, 118.

FURTHER STUDY

Selected Messages, Bk. 2, pp. 266, 267.

Part 2
FORGET THE PAST
1 Peter 4:3, 4
Phillips

"Our past life may have been good enough for pagan purposes, though it meant sensuality, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousals and worshiping forbidden gods. Indeed your former companions may think it very queer that you will no longer join with them in their riotous excesses, and accordingly say all sorts of unpleasant things about you."

For the Christian sin is past, and God views it in the same way. The thrilling doctrine of justification by faith teaches this. Peter has already declared in verse 1 that the converted people have "ceased from sin." This does not imply that the Christian will never make a mistake. "When we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ, we shall have no relish for sin; for Christ will be working with us. We may make mistakes, but we will hate the sin that caused the suffering of the Son of God." —*Messages to Young People*, page 338.

"Think it strange. Because the unconverted are usually blind to the supreme advantages and blessings of the Christian way of life, they are astonished that their erstwhile associates, now Christian, avoid the former pattern of life. On the premise that man finds his only satisfaction and happiness in this world, the life of the non-Christian is one unceasing quest for pleasure through the gratification of physical desire. To deny the natural desires, whether in eating, drinking, or sensual indulgence, is incomprehensible folly to such people. However, the Christian is 'to keep himself unspotted from the world' (James 1:27), for 'the friendship of the world is enmity with God' (ch. 4:4). Consequently, believers should 'marvel not' 'if the world' hates them (1 John 3:13)....

"Speaking evil of. Literally, 'blaspheming.' The heathen cursed the Christians because they thought the Christians were assuming a superior pose when they no longer engaged in 'the same excess of riot.' This pagan misconception was often the spark that ignited the fires of persecution."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on 1 Peter 4:4.

THINK IT THROUGH

What kind of relationship should I have with my former unconverted associates?

"If you truly belong to Christ, you will have opportunities for witnessing for Him. You will be invited to attend places of amusement, and then it will be that you will have an opportunity to testify to your Lord. If you are true to Christ then, you will not try to form excuses for your nonattendance, but will plainly and modestly declare that you are a child of God, and your principles would not allow you to be in a place, even for one occasion, where you could not invite the presence of your Lord."—*The Adventist Home*, page 519.

FURTHER STUDY

The Adventist Home, pages 512-520.

Part 3
JUDGMENT
DAY COMING
1 Peter 4:5, 6
Amplified

"But they will have to give an account to Him Who is ready to judge and pass sentence on the living and the dead. For this is why the good news (the Gospel) was preached [in their lifetime] even to the dead, that though judged in fleshly bodies as men are, they might live in the spirit as God does."

This is another one of Peter's difficult passages. The Scriptures make it clear that the wages of sin are death, and after that, the judgment. The Bible does not teach that those who are alive today will have a second chance for salvation. Our text therefore must be interpreted within the framework of the unconscious state of the dead, and that the wicked dead do not have a second chance for salvation.

The phrase "to them that are dead" refers to those who have lived in the past. The phrase "was the gospel preached" clearly points out that the message of good news was preached prior to the time that Peter wrote this epistle.

A paraphrasing of our text would result in the following wording: "Wicked people, especially blasphemers (see v. 4), shall give account to Jesus Christ, who is the Judge of both the living and the dead. The gospel for this very reason was preached to men in the past *before* they died. This group will be judged on the basis of how they lived when they were alive. But those Christians who have fallen asleep in Christ will someday have an immortal glorified body like Christ's when He arose from the grave." See *SDA Bible Commentary*, on 1 Peter 4:6.

The interpretation of this text must be similar to that of 3:19, 20, where Peter refers to the "spirits in prison."

Will Gal. 3:8, Heb. 4:2, and 1 Cor. 10:2-4 throw any light on this text, and if so how?

THINK IT THROUGH

What is my relation to the judgment?

"Every man's work passes in review before God and is registered for faithfulness or unfaithfulness. Opposite each name in the books of heaven is entered with terrible exactness every wrong word, every selfish act, every unfulfilled duty, and every secret sin, with every artful dissembling. Heaven-sent warnings or reproofs neglected, wasted moments, unimproved opportunities, the influence exerted for good or for evil, with its far-reaching results, all are chronicled by the recording angel.

"The law of God is the standard by which the characters and the lives of men will be tested in the judgment."—*The Great Controversy*, page 482.

FURTHER STUDY

SDA Bible Commentary, on 1 Peter 4:6.

Part 4
BLESSINGS OF LOVE
1 Peter 4:7, 8

"But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins."

Nearly 2,000 years have elapsed since Peter wrote these words. James expressed the same thought when he said, "Stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." James 5:8. Paul exhorts the Philippians, "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand." Phil. 4:5. The apostle John declared, "It is the last time." 1 John 2:18. Were these men confused in their declarations of the imminent return of Christ?

Not at all! The Old Testament sanctuary services met their fulfillment in the first coming of Christ. When Jesus ascended into heaven after His resurrection, the disciples heard the angels declare that this same Jesus would return. Acts 1:11. From their day to ours the understanding Christian has ever lived in the light of the second coming of Christ. There is no more type or sacrifice to be fulfilled—all have passed away. The disciples lived for one thing only—the coming of their Lord. The focal point of all history is in that event.

For Christians today this text has far deeper meaning. Even the non-Christian is sobered by the crescendo of cataclysmic events. This is no time to live a life of self-indulgence or complacency. The end is upon us!

What result of love does Peter emphasize? Verse 8.

Peter makes a stirring appeal on behalf of brotherly love. The reason for brotherly love is to hide rather than magnify the faults of others. However, the intent of this passage is not to teach that love covers a man's own sins.

THINK IT THROUGH

With what attitude and feelings do I view the failings of other people?

"The subject of purity and propriety of deportment is one to which we must give heed. We must guard against the sins of this degenerate age. . . . Every word, every act, should tend to elevate, to refine, to ennoble. There is sin in thoughtlessness about such matters. . . .

"Is there not enough taking place around us to show the need for this caution? Everywhere are seen wrecks of humanity, broken-down family altars, ruined homes. There is a strange abandonment of principle, the standard of morality is lowered, and the earth is fast becoming a Sodom."—*Gospel Workers*, pages 125, 126.

FURTHER STUDY

Steps to Christ, "The Privilege of Prayer," page 97; *Testimonies*, Vol. 7, p. 272.

Part 5
THE ART OF
HOSPITALITY
1 Peter 4:9, 10

"Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

"When the spirit of hospitality dies, the heart becomes palsied with selfishness. . . .

"Christ keeps an account of every expense incurred in entertaining for His sake. He supplies all that is necessary for this work."—*My Life Today*, page 194.

"Much may be said about this ancient hospitality which provided lodging for a traveling Christian, gave him necessary information and help to become located, to transact his business, to find work, to expedite him on his journey. Some had to flee from their homes in other cities because of persecution and were often destitute. During their many extensive travels the apostles were guests at many Christian homes. . . . Even pagans remarked about how the Christians loved each other and received a wholly strange Christian as a brother."—R. C. H. Lenski, *Interpretation of the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John, and St. Jude*, page 196.

What beautiful example of Christian hospitality do we find in the early church? Acts 16:14, 15.

True Christian hospitality does not mean extravagant meals. It is the sharing of what we have, not only with fellow Christians, special friends, et cetera, but also with strangers and the unfortunate. See Heb. 13:2; Luke 14:12, 13. "It is a denial of Christ to make preparation for visitors which requires time that rightly belongs to the Lord. In this we commit robbery of God. And we wrong others as well. In preparing an elaborate entertainment, many deprive their own families of needed attention, and their example leads others to follow the same course."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 6, p. 343.

THINK IT THROUGH

To whom should my hospitality be given?

"These admonitions have been strangely neglected. Even among those who profess to be Christians, true hospitality is little exercised. Among our own people the opportunity of showing hospitality is not regarded as it should be, as a privilege and blessing. There is altogether too little sociability, too little of a disposition to make room for two or three more at the family board, without embarrassment or parade. Some plead that 'it is too much trouble.' It would not be if you would say: 'We have made no special preparation, but you are welcome to what we have.' By the unexpected guest a welcome is appreciated far more than is the most elaborate preparation."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 6, p. 343.

FURTHER STUDY

The Adventist Home, pages 445-452.

Part 6
ALL TO THE
GLORY OF GOD
1 Peter 4:11, NEB

What reasons do you see in this verse for God to receive the glory resulting from human acts?

"Are you a speaker? Speak as if you uttered oracles of God. Do you give service? Give it as in the strength which God supplies. In all things so act that the glory may be God's through Jesus Christ; to him belong glory and power for ever and ever. Amen."

Peter speaks of two types of ministry: first, that of the ministry of preaching, speaking, and teaching; second, that of the ministry of deeds of kindness such as the hospitality mentioned in verse 9. Whether a man is a layman or a minister, if he has the ability to preach, he should preach his message as from God. The word "oracles" was used in classical Greek as utterances of heathen gods. Peter uses this in the sense of the messages or revelations which come from the true God.

"In the strength which God supplies." Whatever talent a man has, he is required to use it to the best of his ability. He is not in competition with anyone else. "Our power is not in our talents of education or means, neither is it in our popularity; it is in self-sacrifice, our willing obedience to Jesus Christ. Those who truly surrender all to Him, will carry a weight of influence, and will carry others along with them, because they walk in the light. Brain power will be inefficient, purse power of little account with God; but heart power, thorough godliness, humble fidelity, will bear a weight of influence that will be irresistible."—*Sons and Daughters of God*, page 236.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can I give glory to God? What does it mean?

"God gives to every man his work, and He expects corresponding returns, according to their various trusts. He does not require the increase from ten talents of the man to whom He has given only one talent. He does not expect the man of poverty to give alms as the man who has riches. He does not expect of the feeble and suffering, the activity and strength which the healthy man has. The one talent, used to the best account, God will accept 'according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.' . . .

"Every talent which returns to the Master, will be scrutinized. The doings and trusts of God's servants will not be considered an unimportant matter. Every individual will be dealt with personally, and will be required to give an account of the talents entrusted to him, whether he has improved or abused them. The reward bestowed will be proportionate to the talents improved. The punishment awarded will be according as the talents have been abused."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 119, 120.

FURTHER STUDY

Education, page 226.

“Be happy if you are cursed and insulted for being a Christian, for when that happens the Spirit of God will come upon you with great glory....

“So if you are suffering according to God’s will, keep on doing what is right and trust yourself to the God who made you, for he will never fail you.” 1 Peter 4:14-19, *The Living Bible*.

“If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.” “Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.” 1 Peter 4:14, 19.

Peter’s admonition in this passage was designed to brace Christians for the turbulent times just ahead. If this counsel does not seem relevant at the moment, it will become so in the very near future. With a world in revolt and with Satan in the climactic minutes of rebellion against God, the true Christian will sooner or later become the object of hate and persecution. The Christian suffering under Nero was just a beginning of the awful persecutions which came and continued upon the true Christian church. Peter did everything possible to bolster the minds of the believers by pointing them to the sufferings of Christ. He well knew that any man who became a citizen of the kingdom would be subject to much tribulation.

“The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the place where sorrow is unknown.”—*The Preacher’s Homiletic Commentary*, on First Peter, page 145.

In the preceding verses Peter has carefully outlined the kind of lives believers ought to live in order to prevent provoking anti-Christian conduct. Their activity in well-doing was to stop the mouths of the enemy. But if after having done all this, suffering should come, Peter counsels them how to relate themselves to it. Some of the Christians were probably amazed as they read his counsel to consider suffering for Christ’s sake a distinct blessing rather than a cause for complaint and faintheartedness.

The article following this lesson was printed in the *Review and Herald*, March 7, 1912 and is printed here for extra reading this week.

Part 1
ROBBING SUFFER-
ING OF ITS
STRANGENESS
1 Peter 4:12, 13

What two events does Peter relate to the joy of the Christian believers?

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

"Beloved." This word indicates Peter's love, as a true undershepherd, for his fellow believers in Asia Minor. He warned them about a "fiery trial." In spite of the severity of persecution which was to face them, he counsels them not to be astonished or bewildered, but rather to expect it and even to rejoice when it comes.

The five words "which is to try you" gives one of the basic reasons for God's permitting Christians to suffer. It is also a means of developing character. Peter could have cited a host of Old Testament characters who suffered for their faith, such as Nehemiah, Job, Elijah, Elisha, Joseph. Rather he points them to the supreme Sufferer—Jesus Christ. No one in history ever endured such testing as the Master endured. He was beset by perplexities and trials which were more fierce than any we shall have to face. His trials were not only fierce but also constant. A study of His life points the direction that Christians are to take in facing trouble. Furthermore, to share Christ's sufferings here and now will lead to the glory which we shall share with Him when He returns the second time. (See Matt. 5:11, 12; Heb. 11:26.)

THINK IT THROUGH

In what ways am I a partaker of Christ's suffering?

"Trial is part of the education given in the school of Christ, to purify God's children from the dross of earthliness. It is because God is leading His children that trying experiences come to them. Trials and obstacles are His chosen methods of discipline, and His appointed conditions of success. He who reads the hearts of men knows their weaknesses better than they themselves can know them. He sees that some have qualifications which, if rightly directed, could be used in the advancement of His work. In His providence He brings these souls into different positions and varied circumstances, that they may discover the defects that are concealed from their own knowledge. He gives them opportunity to overcome these defects and to fit themselves for service. Often He permits the fires of affliction to burn, that they may be purified."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, page 524.

FURTHER STUDY

The Ministry of Healing, pages 470-473.

Part 2
HOW TO BE
HAPPY THOUGH
REPROACHED
1 Peter 4:14

What reason does Peter give for the happiness which results from reproach?

"If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified."

A trail of blood has followed the Christian church wherever she has walked. Considering the wickedness on every hand, the marvel is that there isn't more persecution and reproaching.

Satan is probably most successful with a sophisticated type of persecution. The example of Peter is a case in point. How fearful he was of the mockings of the crowd that led him to deny that he ever knew Christ!

What is the Bible's assurance in regard to the severity of temptation? 1 Cor. 10:13.

What is one reason for suffering? Heb. 5:8.

"By God's mighty cleaver of truth we have been taken from the quarry of the world and brought into the workshop of the Lord to be prepared for a place in His temple. In this work the hammer and chisel must act their part, and then comes the polishing. Rebel not under this process of grace. You may be a rough stone, on which much work must be done before you are prepared for the place God designs you to fill. You need not be surprised if with the hammer and the chisel of trial God cuts away your defects of character. He alone can accomplish this work. And be assured that He will not strike one useless blow."—*The Faith I Live By*, page 317.

"The spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." Just as the shekinah, the glory of God, rested upon His tabernacle in the wilderness, so will His glory, through the Holy Spirit, rest upon those who are reproached for Christ's name.

THINK IT THROUGH

How do I feel when I am reproached for my faith in Jesus?

"Now as in former ages, the presentation of a truth that reproves the sins and errors of the times will excite opposition. 'Everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.' John 3:20. As men see that they cannot maintain their position by the Scriptures, many determine to maintain it at all hazards, and with a malicious spirit they assail the character and motives of those who stand in defense of unpopular truth. It is the same policy which has been pursued in all ages."—*The Great Controversy*, page 458.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, Vol. 3, p. 531.

Part 3
DESERVED
SUFFERING

1 Peter 4:15, 16, RSV

"But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a wrongdoer, or a mischief-maker; yet if one suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but under that name let him glorify God."

Peter was constantly aware of the distinction between suffering resulting from a person's own wrongdoing and suffering resulting from allegiance to Christ. See 1 Peter 2:19, 20; 3:17. It could be very enlightening for a person to examine the reasons for his episodes of suffering. What suffering was done for Christ? How much was the result of one's own mistakes?

It might be surprising to most of us just how much we suffer because of our own evil ways. Can you think of any sufferings which you have brought on yourself? What about sickness and disease stemming from wrong dietary habits?

It is interesting to note that Peter's list of four things for which people should suffer includes the two specific crimes of murder and theft, and one general phrase embracing the "wrongdoer." The last one, "mischief-maker" ("busybody," KJV), in Greek is an unusual term and may have been coined by Peter. Those who meddle in other people's business are legion. Probably most suffering, outside of that of suffering for Christ, is directly traceable to poor relationships with others.

Peter's point is that if a servant of God suffers, make certain that it is undeserved and not because of some wrong act. Those who suffer as evildoers undermine the whole Christian cause and contradict the very gospel of Christ.

THINK IT THROUGH

In what ways have I avoided suffering for Christ?

"The largest share of the annoyances of life, its daily corroding cares, its heartaches, its irritation, is the result of a temper uncontrolled. The harmony of the domestic circle is often broken by a hasty word and abusive language. How much better were it left unsaid. One smile of pleasure, one peaceful, approving word spoken in the spirit of meekness, would be a power to soothe, to comfort, and to bless. The government of self is the best government in the world. By putting on the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, ninety-nine out of a hundred of the troubles which so terribly embitter life might be saved. Many excuse their hasty words and passionate tempers by saying: 'I am sensitive; I have a hasty temper.' This will never heal the wounds made by hasty, passionate words. Some, indeed, are naturally more passionate than others; but this spirit can never harmonize with the Spirit of God. The natural man must die, and the new man, Christ Jesus, take possession of the soul, so that the follower of Jesus may say in verity and truth: 'I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.'"—*Testimonies*, Vol. 4, pp. 348, 349.

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pages 157, 158.

Part 4
LIVING IN VIEW
OF THE JUDGMENT
HOUR
1 Peter 4:17

"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"

Peter introduces a basic reason as to why Christians should not suffer as evildoers, but gladly suffer for the Lord's sake. A judgment day is coming! Only those who commit themselves as faithful Christians will face the judgment in confidence.

Peter makes a comparison of those who obey and those who obey not the gospel. If a righteous God detests evil in His own people and will surely deal with it, then He certainly detests evil in those who are not His people, and how much more will He deal with those who have rejected His mercy and authority? If the sons are chastised, what have the rebellious ones to expect?

When the Lord carried Ezekiel in vision from Babylon to Jerusalem, what did he hear the voice of God commanding the destroyers to do? Ezek. 9:4-6.

How does this idea of judgment fit into Adventist theology? "In the typical service only those who had come before God with confession and repentance, and whose sins, through the blood of the sin offering, were transferred to the sanctuary, had a part in the service of the Day of Atonement. So in the great day of final atonement and investigative judgment the only cases considered are those of the professed people of God. The judgment of the wicked is a distinct and separate work, and takes place at a later period."—*The Great Controversy*, page 480.

In the parable of the talents the nobleman made the demand, "Give an account to thy stewardship." If there is one concern greater than others among believers it should be regarding the solemn warning of a judgment to come.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is lacking in my life for one who is living in view of the judgment?

"As the features of the countenance are reproduced with unerring accuracy on the polished plate of the artist, so the character is faithfully delineated in the books above. Yet how little solicitude is felt concerning that record which is to meet the gaze of heavenly beings. Could the veil which separates the visible from the invisible world be swept back, and the children of men behold an angel recording every word and deed, which they must meet again in the judgment, how many words that are daily uttered would remain unspoken, how many deeds would remain undone."—*The Great Controversy*, page 487.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pages 479-491.

Part 5
SAVED WITH
DIFFICULTY
1 Peter 4:18

"And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

The doctrine of easy salvation is widespread in Christendom today. Their theme song is, "Just Believe and You're In." It is an undeniable fact that a man is saved by faith and faith alone, but the question is how many of us are really fighting "the good fight of faith"? 1 Tim. 6:12. It is a fatal error to confuse the works of faith with salvation by works!

How did Christ illustrate the difficulty of salvation? Matt. 7:13, 14.

What was the reaction of the disciples to an illustration Christ used relative to entering the kingdom? Mark 10:23-26.

Matt. 11:12 gives an indication of what it will take to gain the kingdom. It states that "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Commenting on this statement, Ellen G. White says, "The violence here meant is a holy earnestness, such as Jacob manifested."—*That I May Know Him*, page 272. None of the apostles, or Jesus Himself, taught that salvation was hopeless. The problem is not one of stringent regulations or rules, but rather one of zeal and earnestness on the part of those who seek admittance to the kingdom. What earnestness we see in people today who join enthusiastically in demonstrations to promote their own ideologies! How earnest people are in supporting some political figure! Compare their zeal and earnestness with that of those who seek to gain eternal life. It is not a matter of salvation by works but rather of our commitment and response to God's great love toward us.

THINK IT THROUGH

About what am I enthusiastic? About what should I be enthusiastic?

"Day by day and year by year we shall conquer self and grow into a noble heroism. This is our allotted task; but it cannot be accomplished without continual help from Jesus, resolute decision, unwavering purpose, continual watchfulness, and unceasing prayer. . . . No one, not even God, can carry us to heaven unless we make the necessary effort on our part. We must put features of beauty into our lives. We must expel the unlovely natural traits that make us unlike Jesus. While God works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure, we must work in harmony with Him."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 345.

FURTHER STUDY

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, on Matt. 7:14; Luke 13:24, pages 138-144.

Part 6
COMMITMENT
TO A FAITHFUL
CREATOR
1 Peter 4:19

"Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

This text summarizes the discussion on suffering which begins in chapter 3:13. Peter undoubtedly never forgot the scene in which Christ set an example for all Christians in committing Himself to His Father in His supreme moment of agony. "Father," He cried, "into thy hands I commend my spirit." Luke 23:46.

God never forsakes His own. Our Creator is faithful and can be fully depended upon to fulfill His plan and purpose for us and in us. Whether it be life or death, we can fearlessly place our entire honor, our good name, and our plans in the hands of a Creator-God who is faithful to see us through. All creation witnesses to God's faithfulness. The unerring accuracy of heavenly bodies, seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, follow His commands. If a sparrow cannot fall without His taking notice, surely He not only takes notice of but sustains those who suffer for His sake. The hands of our God are strong, tender, and true. They will bear us up in times of peace and in times of emergency.

In what words did Paul express this concept to young Timothy? 2 Tim. 1:12.

What did Jeremiah say about God's faithfulness? Lam. 3:22, 23.

THINK IT THROUGH

Do I spend more time in fretting and fearing than in committing my soul to a faithful Creator?

"He is in heaven as our advocate, to make intercession for us. We must always take comfort and hope as we think of this. He is thinking of those who are subject to temptations in this world. He thinks of us individually, and knows our every necessity. When tempted, just say, He cares for me, He makes intercession for me, He loves me, He has died for me. I will give myself unreservedly to Him. We grieve the heart of Christ when we go mourning over ourselves as though we were our own savior. No; we must commit the keeping of our souls to God as unto a faithful Creator."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, page 391.

FURTHER STUDY

Selected Messages, Bk. 2, pp. 240-245.

THE TRIAL OF YOUR FAITH

By Ellen G. White

Not without a purpose does God send trial to his children. He never leads them otherwise than they would choose to be led if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling, as workers together with him. He subjects them to discipline to humble them, to lead them, through trial and affliction, to see their weakness and draw near to him. As they cry to him for help, he responds, saying, "Here am I." He is not regardless of the entreaties of his children. He bears long with their impenitence, and when they turn to him, he receives them graciously.

Of the trial of faith Peter writes: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." And James says, "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

Christians are Christ's jewels. They are to shine brightly for him, shedding forth the light of his loveliness. Their luster depends on the polishing they receive. They may choose to be polished or to remain unpolished. But every one who is pronounced worthy of a place in the Lord's temple must submit to the polishing process. Without the polishing that the Lord gives, they can reflect no more light than a common pebble.

Christ says to man, You are mine. I have bought you. You are now only a rough stone; but if you will place yourself in my hands, I will polish you, and the luster with which you shall shine will bring honor to my name. No man shall pluck you out of my hand. I will make you my peculiar treasure. On my coronation day, you will be a jewel in my crown of rejoicing.

The Divine Worker spends little time on worthless material. Only the precious jewels does he polish after the similitude of a palace, cutting away all rough

edges. This process is severe and trying; it hurts human pride. Christ cuts deep into the experience that man in his self-sufficiency has regarded as complete, and takes away self-uplifting from the character. He cuts away the surplus surface, and putting the stone to the polishing-wheel, presses it close that all roughness may be worn away. Then, holding the jewel up to the light, the Master sees in it a reflection of himself, and he pronounces it worthy of a place in his casket.

Blessed be the experience, however severe, that gives new value to the stone, causing it to shine with living brightness.

Christianity promises no exemption from sorrow. "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Faith is needed, strong, trusting faith, which believes that God will bring his children into no temptation greater than they are able to bear. What such faith has power to do is told by Paul in his letter to the Hebrews. Speaking of those who, in the face of persecution and death, had maintained an unshaken trust in God, he says:—

"Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented."

In this world these heroes of faith were counted unworthy of life; but in heaven they are enrolled as sons of God, worthy of the highest honor. "They shall walk with me in white," Christ declares; "for they are worthy." In the

courts of heaven there awaits them an "eternal weight of glory."

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

When the redeemed stand in the presence of God, they will see how shortsighted were their conclusions as to what Heaven records as success. They will see how petty were their supposed trials, and how unreasonable were their doubts. They will see how often they brought failure to their work by failing to show unquestioning faith in God. From the lips of the angelic choir and the redeemed host will peal forth the chorus: "Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy."—*Review and Herald*, March 7, 1912.

LESSONS IN HUMILITY



"In the same way you younger men must be subordinate to your elders. Indeed, all of you should wrap yourselves in the garment of humility towards each other, because God sets his face against the arrogant but favours the humble. Humble yourselves then under God's mighty hand, and he will lift you up in due time." 1 Peter 5:5, 6, NEB.

Peter, a veteran soul shepherd, expresses some final thoughts which are full of consolation and constitute an appeal to remain steadfast in the faith. His appeal for submission to one another can probably be traced back to his own experience of finally learning the fine art of submission. Our lesson begins with a special appeal to church leaders. Significantly, Peter does not use his own authority as an apostle to indicate that he is an official in a higher position, but rather places himself on the level as an undershepherd with the rest of God's

faithful leaders. Peace in the church and the advancement of the cause of God in the world are more dependent upon Christian traits of humility and love than upon talents, brilliance, and material blessings.

A marked contrast is seen in the simplicity of what might be called the constitution of the early church as compared to the policies of the church after its departure from the path of truth. There is nothing in Peter's writings to indicate that church leaders have supreme authority over the flock of God. No ritual, no priestly functions, no ceremonial rites are even hinted at in this passage. We are all one in Christ, and Peter's theme of leadership is one of protection and provision rather than of rulership. Finally Peter applies the same concept of humility and love, which is to be shown among God's leaders, to the entire membership, young and old alike.

Part 1
RESPONSIBLE
LEADERSHIP
1 Peter 5:1, 2

"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind."

These words along with others in his writings are strong proof for the fact that Peter, after his conversion, never considered himself or any other man to be a pope. As a fellow elder, he simply gives advice to his colaborers. True, his personal "witness of the sufferings of Christ" placed him in a unique position. But he never claimed or assumed any higher position than that of an elder in the church.

What was Paul's attitude as a leader toward the believers in Corinth? 2 Cor. 1:24.

"Constraint." "A word used of the intimidation of slaves, of the forcible conscription of soldiers, and of compulsion by torture."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on 1 Peter 5:2. God wants in the shepherd's heart the power of love for the sheep. There is no force involved in Christian pastoral ministry. The basic qualification for tending the flock of God is not education, eloquence of speaking, or riches. Rather it is love. Education, eloquence, and riches wrapped up in love may make a man a more effective overseer of the flock of God. But without love, he is incompetent. A person must have a shepherd's heart if he is to do a shepherd's work.

The shepherd-teacher is not motivated by "filthy lucre." The spirit of self-seeking and grasping for gain is foreign to the true spirit of the gospel.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is my motive in the work I do for the church?

"Peter had been restored to his apostleship, but the honor and authority he received from Christ had not given him supremacy over his brethren. This Christ had made plain when in answer to Peter's question, 'What shall this man do?' He had said, 'What is that to thee? follow thou Me.' Peter was not honored as the head of the church. The favor which Christ had shown him in forgiving his apostasy, and entrusting him with the feeding of the flock, and Peter's own faithfulness in following Christ, won for him the confidence of his brethren. He had much influence in the church. But the lesson which Christ had taught him by the Sea of Galilee Peter carried with him throughout his life."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 817.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, Vol. 1, pp. 208, 209.

Part 2
LEADERSHIP
BY EXAMPLE
1 Peter 5:3, 4

"Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

Sermons which are both seen and heard are surely the best. If a choice has to be made between seeing and hearing a sermon, most would choose to see one. "The unstudied, unconscious influence of a holy life is the most convincing sermon that can be given in favor of Christianity."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, page 511.

What similar instruction did Paul give to Timothy? 1 Tim. 4:12.

A true spiritual leader is a model Christian. He shows himself a pattern to be copied by the flock. He patterns his life after that of the Chief Shepherd, Jesus. He does not quarrel but rather is gentle, and in meekness he instructs those who oppose him. Love, not compulsion, must be the Christian leader's basic principle. Just as the shepherd goes before his flock, so the elders are an example before their flocks.

What did Christ state to be a quality of a good shepherd? John 10:4.

The reward of those who lead exemplary lives is a non-fading crown. The phrase "that fadeth not away" can be traced to a word which is the name of a legendary flower, the amaranth. It was claimed that the amaranth never faded or died. Thus it became a symbol of immortality.

THINK IT THROUGH

What am I doing to stimulate others to walk in the Christian pathway?

"Those who occupy the position of undershepherds are to exercise a watchful diligence over the Lord's flock. This is not to be a dictatorial vigilance, but one that tends to encourage and strengthen and uplift. Ministry means more than sermonizing; it means earnest, personal labor. The church on earth is composed of erring men and women, who need patient, painstaking effort that they may be trained and disciplined to work with acceptance in this life, and in the future life to be crowned with glory and immortality. Pastors are needed—faithful shepherds—who will not flatter God's people, nor treat them harshly, but who will feed them with the bread of life—men who in their lives feel daily the converting power of the Holy Spirit and who cherish a strong, unselfish love toward those for whom they labor."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, page 526.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, Vol. 3, pp. 194, 195.

Part 3
EXALTATION
VIA HUMILITY
1 Peter 5:5, 6

What reason does Peter give for teaching submission and humility in human relations?

"Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."

After counseling the shepherds, Peter now turns his attention to the flock. He counsels the church in general to assume an attitude of submission and humility toward one another. Key words for the mature Christian, according to Peter, are submission and humility. His recommendation includes everyone in the church from leaders and elders to the youth.

If the youth in our churches are to exhibit an attitude of submission and humility, the older and more mature Christians should be worthy of their respect and submission and should set the example in this regard. A question which ought to be prominent in the minds of older persons is, "Am I living a life which warrants the respect of the younger members of the church?"

When tempted to yield to feelings of superiority, think of Jesus washing the dusty feet of men whom He created. Then pray for the grace of humility.

What is the admonition of Leviticus 19:32?

The clause "God resisteth the proud" is very expressive in the Greek. It is a military term. God is pictured as set up in battle array.

THINK IT THROUGH

In what ways do I fail to be humble?

"The apostles differed widely in habits and disposition. . . . These were brought together, with their different faults, all with inherited and cultivated tendencies to evil; but in and through Christ they were to dwell in the family of God, learning to become one in faith, in doctrine, in spirit. They would have their tests, their grievances, their differences of opinion; but while Christ was abiding in the heart, there could be no dissension. His love would lead to love for one another; the lessons of the Master would lead to the harmonizing of all differences, bringing the disciples into unity, till they would be of one mind and one judgment. Christ is the great center, and they would approach one another just in proportion as they approached the center."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 296.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies to Ministers, pages 491-496.

Part 4
GOD'S CARE
FOR US
1 Peter 5:7-9

"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

These three verses contain elements of invitation, assurance, warning, and a secret. The invitation is to cast all of our care upon Christ.

What did Jesus point out as the reason to banish anxious thought? Matt. 6:31-34.

Anxiety is destructive of good mental health. The basic problem of anxiety is unbelief in Jesus. Believing on Christ goes much farther than a mere belief in His existence or that He is the Saviour. It leads a man to a trusting belief, an abiding confidence in God's care. The person who is under God's control can also believe that he is under His care. So why worry?

Peter's warning reveals that the Christian must have a constant vigilance against the devil. Our only weapon against him is faith in Christ.

Peter adds an additional element which is one of positive, aggressive action against Satan. Passive resistance spells failure. We must resist Satan steadfastly! This type of victory is accomplished by a daily communion with Christ and a constant looking heavenward toward Him who personally overcame Satan so triumphantly in the wilderness.

THINK IT THROUGH

What should I trust to God that now causes me anxiety?

"The Elder Brother of our race is by the eternal throne. He looks upon every soul who is turning his face toward Him as the Saviour. He knows by experience what are the weaknesses of humanity, what are our wants, and where lies the strength of our temptations; for He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. He is watching over you, trembling child of God. Are you tempted? He will deliver. Are you weak? He will strengthen. Are you ignorant? He will enlighten. Are you wounded? He will heal. The Lord 'tellethe the number of the stars;' and yet 'He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.' Ps. 147:4, 3. 'Come unto Me,' is His invitation. Whatever your anxieties and trials, spread out your case before the Lord. Your spirit will be braced for endurance. The way will be opened for you to disentangle yourself from embarrassment and difficulty. The weaker and more helpless you know yourself to be, the stronger will you become in His strength. The heavier your burdens, the more blessed the rest in casting them upon the Burden Bearer."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 329.

FURTHER STUDY

Selected Messages, Bk. 2, pp. 52-54.

Part 5
MATURING
CHRISTIANS
1 Peter 5:10, 11,
RSV

What did Peter say would follow the suffering of the believers?

"And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, and strengthen you. To him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

These verses express a promise, not a wish as the KJV suggests. Peter believed that God could be counted on to complete our salvation.

The maturing Christian recognizes that the source of all spiritual power and help for every moment of life is the One "who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus." "You must, indeed, look to Jesus, keeping your eyes fixed on the glory at the top of the ladder. Through Christ alone can you make sure of heaven, where all is purity, holiness, peace, and blessedness, where there are glories that mortal lips cannot describe. The nearest we can come to a description of the reward that awaits the overcomer is to say that it is a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. It will be an eternity of bliss, a blessed eternity, unfolding new glories throughout the ceaseless ages."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 8, p. 131.

It is Christ who makes us perfect, not we ourselves. The phrase "make you perfect" has the connotation of mending or repairing. It means to fit or join together. It is the putting of the life into right relationship and connection with God. The work of salvation is to mend the lives of Christians and thus equip them for greater usefulness in His cause. Nowhere do the Scriptures teach perfection that is inactive and apart from service. To focus attention on the goal of being perfect with no thought of serving others is opposed to the idea of love, which is the goal of perfection.

THINK IT THROUGH

What evidence is there that I am becoming more mature spiritually?

"It is the privilege of the children of God to have a constantly enlarging comprehension of truth, that they may bring love for God and heaven into the work, and draw from others thanksgiving to God because of the richness of His grace.

"We have reason for everlasting gratitude to God in that He has left us a perfect example. Every Christian should strive to earnestly follow in the footsteps of the Saviour. We should offer grateful praise and gratitude for giving us such a mighty helper, a safeguard against every temptation, against every species of impropriety in thought, deed, and word."—*Counsels on Health*, page 594.

FURTHER STUDY

Steps to Christ, "Growing Up Into Christ," pages 67-75.

Part 6
CONCLUDING
ASSURANCES
1 Peter 5:12-14,
NEB

In what are the believers to "stand fast"?

"I write you this brief appeal through Silvanus, our trusty brother as I hold him, adding my testimony that this is the true grace of God. In this stand fast.

"Greetings from her who dwells in Babylon, chosen by God like you, and from my son Mark. Greet one another with the kiss of love.

"Peace to you all who belong to Christ!"

Silvanus is usually identified as Silas, who was Paul's chosen companion on his second missionary journey, and his associate in writing the letters to the Thessalonians. See Acts 15:40; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1. Luke calls him Silas in the book of Acts. See Acts 15:40. He was both a Jew and a Roman citizen. He may have been Peter's secretary as well as the bearer of the epistle.

One outstanding quality Silvanus had was faithfulness. He was evidently well-known to the readers of Peter's epistle and was undoubtedly esteemed by these church members for his former labors and friendship. Silvanus's loyalty to Peter and the members in the church was a source of encouragement, not only in early apostolic times, but to us today.

Peter climaxes his letter with another appeal for Christians to stand fast. His awareness of Satan's activities undoubtedly caused him to urge the Christians repeatedly to stand fast against the enemy. It is only by standing firm in the "true grace of God" that victory is assured. And the admonition that Peter gives in this letter he declares is the "true grace of God."

Most commentators agree that the term "Babylon" is a reference to mystical Babylon, or Rome, as described in the book of Revelation. Both tradition and inspiration claim that Peter's closing labors and violent death occurred at Rome. See *The Acts of the Apostles*, pages 537, 538. Ancient Babylon was a world center of organized godlessness. Rome in Peter's day was now sharing this questionable honor.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can I stand fast in God's grace?

"But the Peter who denied Christ in the hour of His greatest need was the impulsive, self-confident disciple, differing widely from the Peter who was before the Sanhedrin for examination that day. He had been converted; he was distrustful of self, and no longer a proud boaster. He was filled with the Holy Spirit, and through its power he had become firm as a rock, courageous, yet modest, in magnifying Christ. He was ready to remove the stain of his apostasy by honoring the name he had once disowned."—*The Story of Redemption*, page 251.

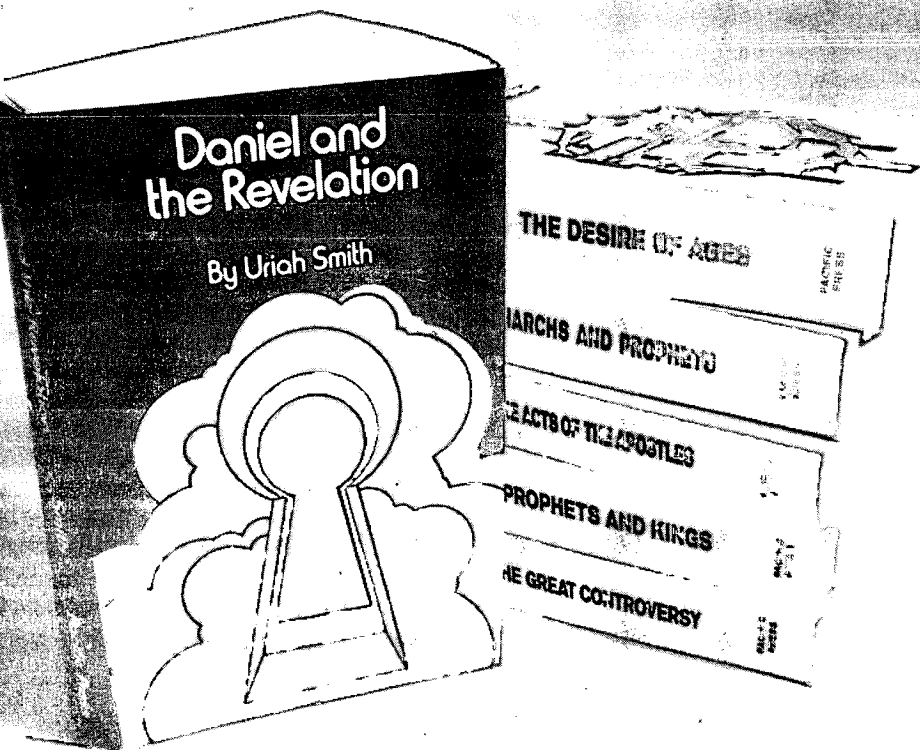
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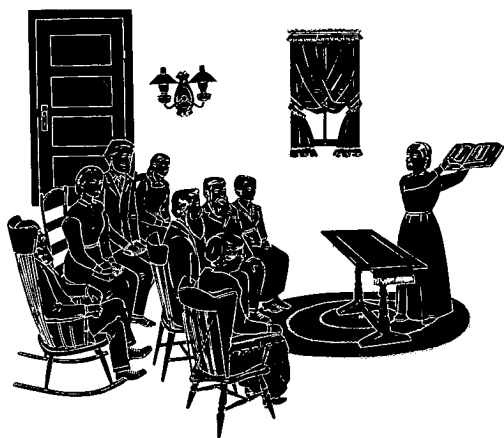
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