

COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY

A General Conference Church Ministries Publication

July-Sept. 1992

WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH

The First Epistle of Peter



WHY SHOULD KIDS HAVE ALL THE FUN?

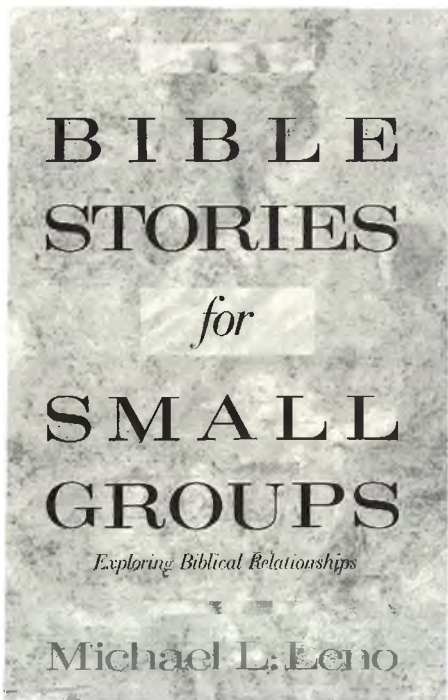
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The First Epistle of Peter

When the Going Gets Tough

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This Quarter's Artist

Having painted over 500 published illustrations in Adventist publications alone, Lars Justinen's work is familiar to many Adventist readers. A very diversified artist, Lars works in many media, including oils, casein, watercolors, scratchboard, and ceramics. He is also recognized for his strong design skills. The current standard adult quarterlies are examples of his design, illustrations, and calligraphy. Lars' artwork has won recognition in several national and international art publications, including the *New York and National Society of Illustrators Annual*, the *JCA International Annual of Contemporary Illustration*, *Communication Arts Annual*, and *Print Design Annual*.

Justinen graduated from Auburn Adventist Academy in 1974 and attended Walla Walla College, taking art and chemistry until 1979 when he began his art career in the visual fine arts, exhibiting several one-man shows in Victoria and Vancouver, British Columbia. In 1985 he accepted a call from Pacific Press Publishing Association and began a six-year stint as an in-house illustrator.

Today he and his wife, Kim, herself an accomplished illustrator, reside in Nampa, Idaho, with their pet skunk and magpie. They both work out of a large old heritage building they have converted to their studio. Lars is represented by his agents Jerry Leff and Associates in New York, and International Creators' Organization in Tokyo, Japan.

Lars' philosophy toward arts begins with the book of Genesis. "Man was made in God's image—to be Godlike. And the first thing we learn in the Scriptures is that 'in the beginning God created,'" he observes. "To create something is, in many ways, a spiritual act. It is certainly a privilege. I like the sentiments of Robert Frost, who expressed gratitude that he was able to 'unite his vocation and his avocation.'"

Getting the Most Out of the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY

Facts You Should Know

The COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY is based on the conviction that there is transforming power in the Word of God and that one important way of tapping into that power is through group study. It is prepared with Adventist college students and young adults particularly in mind. Its purpose is to provide this group with a resource for devotional study on mutual topics, which can then be discussed together each week in Sabbath School.

Additionally, many who use the adult quarterly find that the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY, since it deals with the same topics as the adult, enriches lesson study and discussion as a supplemental aid.

Adventist colleges and universities, along with young-adult church groups, work together in producing the quarterly. The writing at each school is coordinated by the campus chaplain's office. Approximately 200 individuals contribute to the quarterly each year.

Circulation of the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY is about 25,000.

Pointers for Study

1. Through prayer, open your mind to the Holy Spirit's guidance as you study.

2. The Bible passage to be studied for each week is indicated in bold type on the introduction page (Sunday's lesson). Read this entire passage in conjunction with the quarterly introduction to give you an overview of the lesson.

3. The Bible passage for the week is divided into sections on the Logos pages (Monday's lesson). When studying this section, carefully reread the Bible passages indicated in bold headings before reading the comments beneath the heading.

4. Read the remainder of the sections for the week with the perspective you have gained from your own study of the biblical passage.

5. Keep in mind the purposes of each section of the quarterly:

Introduction (Sunday) is designed to get your attention and focus your thinking on the week's theme.

Logos (Monday), as described above, is a guide for direct study of the Bible passage for the week.

Testimony (Tuesday) presents Ellen White's perspective on the lesson theme.

Evidence (Wednesday) approaches issues raised by the lesson from a historical, scientific, philosophical, or theological perspective. It is likely to be the most scholarly article of the week.

How-To (Thursday) discusses what the "theory" in the lesson means for day-to-day living.

Opinion (Friday), a personal viewpoint on the lesson, is meant to encourage further thought and discussion.

The CQ and the Church

The COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY is the General Conference-approved quarterly for the collegiate/young-adult age group. It upholds the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. *However, its contents should not be regarded as official pronouncements of the church.* Particularly in the Evidence and Opinion sections, views that are only individual opinion, not official denominational positions, are expressed.

Lesson 1, June 28–July 4

Church President Simon Peter?



“But Peter and John replied, ‘Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God’ ” (Acts 4:19, NIV).

Between a Rock and a Hard Place

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: 1 Pet. 1:1, 2

I don't know about you, but I've never been overly keen on circular letters. While they may be full of delicious gossip, somehow they muster all the personal warmth of a *Reader's Digest* leaflet! Oh, I can visualize the sender delivering the lines all right, but knowing they don't necessarily have me in mind somehow spoils the communication.

And so to Peter, who worked his way into the inner circle of discipleship, who was more at home exaggerating the size of the catch than discussing the meaning of life, whose profound profession of loyalty was most eloquently belied by his immediate and profane denial. For such a man, Simon Peter writes some strange things in his letter "to everybody."

The Bethsaida fisherman highlights the importance of such qualities as humility (5:5), submission to authority (2:13), and the power of silent witness (3:1). How quickly he has forgotten his request to be Jesus' prime minister. What about the small matter of resisting arrest and attempted murder in Gethsemane? And Peter, silent?

Either the writer of this letter is suffering from advancing Alzheimer's disease, or he is not the same man who is depicted in the Gospels. Unfortunately, there

is little textual support for glaring errors of memory in Peter's letter, and the writer claims to be the same Peter who witnessed Jesus' sufferings (5:1). So as readers we're between a rock and a hard place. But what about the writer?

Throughout his discipleship Peter suffered from exaggerated swings in his pendulum of belief. We contrast his virtually wanting to dive into the basin of water with his resistance to having his feet washed. We see his profession of undying commitment upstaged by his denial of ever having known "the man" Jesus of Nazareth. It is probably through the tears of his consequent shame that we catch a glimpse of the real Peter—a frightened, unstable, and essentially weak man. It's a very different image from Peter the rock.

Yet with the rolling away of the tombstone and Jesus' resurrection, Simon Peter did come to understand what discipleship meant. It is a different Peter who, in the twilight of his apostleship, writes to all and sundry in Asia Minor, for he has discovered the Living Stone (2:4-8) and knows there'll be no more wrestling between a rock and a hard place for him.

I still don't like circular letters, but I can warm to an older and wiser Peter who knows "the God . . . who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, . . . will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast" (5:10, NIV).

by Cal Durrant

Cal Durrant lectures in English at Avondale College, Cooranbong, N.S.W., Australia.

Monday, June 29

Supreme Rabbi or Representative Disciple?

LOGOS

Matt. 14:29, 30

Curriculum Vitae: Simon Peter

Family Home: Capernaum

Work Experience: Fisherman based at Capernaum, disciple of Jesus, early Christian leader in Jerusalem, Antioch (Corinth and Rome?)

Brother: Andrew

Marital Status: Married

Died: Information is uncertain.

Most think Peter died at Rome in the sixties of the first century A.D.

Supreme Rabbi or Representative Disciple?

The New Testament records quite a deal about Peter and his doings. We find Peter (together with his brother) among the first disciples whom Jesus called (see Matt. 4:18-20; Mark 1:16-18). In all the lists of the 12 disciples Peter is always mentioned first. In fact, Matthew's listing of the disciples identifies Peter as "first" (Matt. 10:2). Peter is part of the inner group of three disciples who were closest to Jesus. James, Peter, and John are frequently chosen to be the special companions of Jesus at important moments like the Transfiguration and the prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (see Mark 9:2; 14:33; c.f. Mark 5:37). Peter is generally the spokesman for the disciples (see Matt. 16:16; John 6:68). Peter remained very active in the

early church at Jerusalem. Paul describes Peter, James (the brother of Jesus), and John as "pillars" of the church (Gal. 2:9), and Peter was known to have the responsibility of the mission to the Jews (see Gal. 2:8).

As well as these positive accounts of Peter, several stories show him in a negative light. He is often portrayed as very impulsive. Perhaps the most negative story is his betrayal of Jesus at the arrest. All four Gospels record this incident (see Matt. 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:15-18, 25-27).

Peter's role in the early church has been a matter of conjecture since earliest times. Some highlight his role as leader and style him as the supreme rabbi, or the first pope. Others emphasize the fact that Peter is consistently portrayed *among* the disciples. He is their spokesman, but what is said of Peter is later said of all the disciples and the early Christian community (c.f. Matt. 16:19 and 18:18). According to this interpretation, Peter acts as a representative disciple, not as supreme rabbi.

Which of these extreme views is correct? They both contain elements of truth. Undeniably Peter was a prominent leader in early Christianity. But his role is not that of an official in an established church hierarchy. The early church began in the synagogues. It only slowly developed

by Robert K. McIver

Robert K. McIver is a lecturer in the theology department of Avondale College, Cooranbong, N.S.W., Australia.

any structures of governance. The Jerusalem church was important, but Paul could accuse Peter of hypocrisy to his face when he saw the need (see Gal. 2:11-14). The Antiochene church did not need to ask anybody's permission before sending out missionaries (see Acts 13:1-3). No clear organizational structure gave or obeyed orders.

This does not mean that leadership did not exist. Elders, deacons, and deaconesses served in the early church (see Acts 20:17; Rom. 16:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-13). And when a problem arose that affected the whole church, representatives of the different localities involved met at Jerusalem to deal with it (see Acts 15). But there was no formalized hierarchy. Peter was not the supreme rabbi of early Christianity. Neither could he be called the first pope. This is taking a title from a church structure that belonged to a much later time period. What, then, was Peter's leadership role? Perhaps the most helpful scene from the life of Peter that will give an answer to this question is that in which he walked on the water.

Peter Walks on the Water (read Matt. 14:22-33)

Part of the problem of understanding Peter's role in the early church results from the different pictures of Peter. At one moment Scripture portrays him as a church leader worthy of respect. At another moment he is a very fallible human.

Peter's walk on the water explains this. When Jesus called Peter to do the impossible—to walk on the water—Peter was able to do that as long as he kept his eyes on Jesus. The moment he took his eyes off Jesus (the mo-

ment his faith wavered) he sank. This is true of all that Peter did. He did remarkable things for his Master when his eyes were fixed on Jesus. But he also did some of the most terrible things when his attention wavered.

This was true also of his leadership. Peter was emboldened to speak on the day of Pentecost. He was led by the Holy Spirit to take the message to the Gentile, Cornelius. All of these incidents occurred when he was acting as a man of faith. But he failed to live up to his convictions consistently.

The message is clear: Peter as leader is a *Christian* leader as long as he keeps his eyes fixed on Jesus. But he is a fallible human being, and he does not always act in the way he should. The earliest Christians had no difficulty understanding and acting on this.

The first epistle of Peter is an important document because it comes from one of the most important leaders of the earliest church. We are put in direct contact with one about whom we know so much. We can hear what one of the disciples closest to Jesus would have us learn about how we should believe and conduct ourselves. First Peter is truly a letter deserving our close attention.

REACT

1. What does Paul's argument with Peter (see Gal. 2:11-14) suggest for a local church member who thinks something wrong is happening in the church organization? What is the proper role of church leadership?

2. What was it about Peter that made him a natural leader in the early church? Why did Peter's role change, and the leadership go to others such as James and Paul?

Tuesday, June 30

Hurdling

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 1 Pet. 4:13, 14

Do you ever admonish someone to be strong in an area in which you yourself have a noted weakness? That's what Peter appears to be doing in 1 Peter 4:13, 14. Why is he telling Christians to be glad of the persecution he once shunned when he denied Christ? Ellen White explains Peter's turn-about:

"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 what he had to say. But the converted Peter was very different. He retained his former fervor, but the grace of Christ regulated his zeal. He was no longer impetuous, self-confident, and self-exalted, but calm, self-possessed, and teachable. . . . Remembering his own weakness and failure, Peter was to deal with his flock as tenderly as Christ had dealt with him."¹

Peter crashed a few hurdles along the way, but he learned from his mistakes and finished the race. Judas, by contrast, was unwilling to overcome his personal barriers.

"Judas yielded to the tempta-

tions of Satan and denied his best friend. Peter learned and profited by the lessons of Christ, and carried forward the work of reform which was left to the disciples when their Lord ascended on high. These two men represent the two classes that Christ connects with Himself."²

If indeed "trial is part of the education given in the school of Christ, to purify God's children from the dross of earthliness,"³ then Peter learned essential lessons from his trials. "His own experience of suffering and repentance had prepared him [for his ministry]."⁴ He could now exhort his flock to face the trials he had once shunned, knowing how much they would benefit from the experience.

REACT

1. What was the difference between Peter and Judas, both of whom betrayed their Lord?

2. Does *all* trial have a purpose? Explain your answer. What bad experiences have made you a better person?

3. How do you respond to the statement that "only a real Christian will be persecuted"?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 812, 815.

2. *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 488.

3. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 524.

4. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 812.

by Andrew Skeggs

Andrew Skeggs is a fourth-year theology student at Avondale College, Cooranbong, N.S.W., Australia.

Wednesday, July 1

Rolling Stone or Firm Foundation?

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Matt. 16:18

Peter was a dynamic person, and like many dynamic people he could be as troublesome as he was inspirational. His impetuosity is well known. Once, in a crowd, after Christ remarked that someone had touched Him, it was Peter who took issue with his Master and tried to dismiss what He said (see Luke 8:45, 46). Peter objected to Christ's prediction that He would be crucified (see Matt. 16:21-28; Mark 8:31-38). In the Garden of Gethsemane, when the mob came to take Christ away, it was Peter who sprang, albeit ineffectually, to His defense (see John 18:10, 11).

Yet Peter was equally quick to deny Christ, even though he had been warned that he would—and then, when he realized what he had done—to go out and weep bitter tears of remorse. After all, Peter was the disciple who had responded when Christ asked whether they also would leave Him: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God” (John 6:68, 69, NIV).

Christ understood Peter and saw beneath the trouble spots in his character a committed, inspired, and inspiring person. He seems to have taken particular care of him. Peter was a privileged

witness of the resurrection of Jairus's daughter (see Mark 5:35-43; Luke 8:51), and he himself, through God's power, later restored Dorcas to life (see Acts 9:36-43). In instructing the women at the tomb to tell the disciples that Christ had risen, the angel named Peter as someone who should be told (see Mark 16:6, 7).

Again, Peter's experiences included a number of important object lessons about the Christian life. The episode of walking on the water was not only an opportunity for him personally to experience the sustaining power of Christ, but it was also a way of showing him and the other disciples just how strong their commitment needed to be. When, on another occasion, Peter asked whether Christ told His parables for the benefit of everyone or mainly for the benefit of His disciples, Christ replied: “From everyone who has been given much shall much be required” (Luke 12:48, NASB). Peter's subsequent ministry reveals that much was demanded of him.

Was Peter simply a rolling stone—someone whose enthusiastic and dynamic personality drew him to a radical sect such as Christianity? Or was he a solid person?

Peter was a rock, but he was a rock in the sense that parts of him needed to be bored out or blasted away before he could become one of the foundation leaders of the early church.

by Peter Kuch

Peter Kuch is a freelance author who lives in Mirrabooka, N.S.W., Australia.

Thursday, July 2

A Fire in Your Belly

HOW-TO

Key Text: 1 Pet. 1:5

My sociology professor told us, "I feel sorry for any of you who have no fire in your belly, as you are probably condemned to lead boring, useless lives." He urged us to use tertiary education to generate the fire that he spoke of.

As a Christian I am challenged by his words when I know I should do something. Sadly, when there is a cost or the risk of ridicule or failure, I usually wait for someone else to act. Simon Peter had no such reserve. He liked to be involved, not just to sit on a pink cloud of religiosity.

What characteristics do Christian young people with fire in the belly have?

They are idealistic. They take up just causes. They are action-oriented. They have a relationship with Christ. Their lack of resources and problem-solving skills is not used as an excuse to do nothing.

Overly cautious Christians sometimes label them as overly zealous or, at worst, as hotheads. As with Peter, impetuosity sometimes gets them in trouble. He was always first off the mark, making a positive statement as in his casting the fishing nets (see Luke 5:1-11, NIV) or lopping off Malchus's ear to defend Jesus (see John 18:10, 11).

But, sadly, in the denial and

betrayal the weakness of his humanity overcame him; the bold, courageous idealist transformed into a quivering coward. It took the conversation with Jesus recorded in John 21:15-19 to reaffirm, forgive, and commission him as a shepherd of the flock.

Life changed as dramatically for Peter as it can for us. God's grace wiped away the guilt that shame, penance, and remorse couldn't remove. Peter could then face his conscience and the judgment of his peers without fear. He realized that our intuition about paying for sin is wrong and that God's free grace is something to rejoice about (see 1 Pet. 1:3).

Peter responded positively to the universal question: "Do you love Me?" (see John 21:15). His response sent him out as a missionary, church leader, and shepherd, finally ending in his martyrdom.

His transformation of character came with his realization of God's sufficiency. He invites us to be among those "who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. 1:5, KJV).

REACT

1. What social issues should put "fire in my belly" and cause me to respond?

2. What evidence do I have that I've been "kept by the power of God" this week?

by Errol McDonald

Errol McDonald is a senior lecturer in the education department at Avondale College, Cooranbong, N.S.W., Australia.

Simple Simon

OPINION

Key Text: John 13:7

I've never been very favorably impressed by Simon Peter. From the period of Christ's ministry, Peter perhaps more than any other person epitomizes the weaknesses of the flesh. He was an uncomplicated man, lacking subtlety, the kind of person who acted first and thought about it afterward. Out of the boat and into the water—that was Peter all over. Jumping overboard was a rather rash deed for a nonswimmer! A moment later he realized where he was, and panic set in.

Then it was out with the sword and off with the ear of the high priest's servant. I'd say Peter missed—he was probably hoping to split the man's head! But why was one of Jesus' disciples wearing a sword in the first place? Was it because Peter still didn't understand what Jesus was about? Peter had begun to rebuke Jesus (rebuke Jesus!) when Jesus had tried to tell them that He must suffer (see Matt. 16:21-23). No, they weren't going to get Jesus if he had anything to do with it! Only hours later his fighting spirit evaporated as, with fright, he denied having anything to do with Jesus.

But, it is said, the darkest hour comes before the dawn, and some think this episode was the prelude to Peter's genuine conversion. It was certainly quite a

while coming, given three years of Jesus' personal attention and a front-row seat at the Transfiguration.

After Pentecost Peter put his aggression to good use. He seems to have generated a certain amount of awe, especially after dealing with the case of Ananias and Sapphira (see Acts 5:1-10). Even in those heady times he could still cave in under a bit of pressure. God sent Peter a vision (see Acts 10) of a great sheet filled with creatures of every kind. Peter correctly understood this to mean believing Gentiles should be added to the church. Later, however, because he was afraid of the Jews, he held aloof from the Gentiles. This led Paul to rebuke him strongly (see Gal. 2:11-14).

Thirty years farther down the road we find Peter in Rome. No longer simple Simon, he is now much wiser in the understanding of God's ways. This is the Peter I would rather meet. Through his life we see again that God can make the most of all kinds of people, even a boots-and-all fisherman like simple Simon.

REACT

1. How can you know when you are acting impulsively?
2. What can you learn personally from Peter's character?
3. Peter's name heads each of the four lists of the 12 apostles in the New Testament. What does this suggest to you?

by Howard J. Fisher

Howard J. Fisher is a senior lecturer in geography at Avondale College, Cooranbong, N.S.W., Australia.

Lesson 2, July 5-11

R.S.V.P.



“Who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance” (1 Pet. 1:2, NIV).

Sunday, July 5

Upside Down

INTRODUCTION

Scriptures: 1 Pet. 1:1, 2; 4:12, 13; 5:10

Sunday dawned bright and clear: not a cloud in the sky and a slight but steady breeze. An ideal day for a sail.

At last we had the yacht rigged and ready to go. As we glided quickly out onto the lake, I felt a rush of anticipation. Even though an inexperienced sailor, I had never had any major difficulties, so wasn't overly apprehensive about today.

As we left the shelter of the shore, the wind gusts began to be stronger. I noted nervously that I had never sailed in wind this strong before and so decided to head back into the sheltered water closer to shore. Just then one of the ropes on the foresail jammed. "I'll give you a hand," I called out to Rosalie, my enthusiastic but also inexperienced passenger. I let go the rudder and quickly moved to help her. Splash! I don't know what happened, but the next moment we were both in the water, and the yacht was upside down.

I knew the theory of righting an upturned yacht but had never actually put my knowledge to the test. Fifteen minutes of perseverance paid off, and we finally got it the right way up. Unfortunately our troubles were not yet over! The yacht came up so quickly that we were both thrown overboard, and it sailed off—without us! We were lucky that day. We managed to attract the attention of a passing boat, which rescued us and delivered us to our (by this time) distant craft.

One minute you're sailing right way up, and the next minute you're upside down.

This week we begin looking in detail at the message of 1 Peter. Peter also knew what it was like to end up in the water when everything had appeared to be going well. No matter how secure we may feel, the fact remains that we are in a foreign environment and at times face pain, trials, and challenges. Yet through these difficulties comes the reassuring message that we are chosen by God, that He has a destiny for us all. This week we explore some of the major themes of Peter's letter.

by Zane Edwards

Zane Edwards is a fourth-year theology student at Avondale College, Cooranbong, N.S.W., Australia.

Monday, July 6

The Privilege of Pain

LOGOS

1 Pet. 1:6

Christians in the first century, as today, lived out their faith within a society that was hostile toward their values. First Peter was written to encourage Christians in such circumstances.

The Fact of Suffering (read 1 Pet. 1:3-9)

"In this you rejoice, though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials" (verse 6, RSV).

According to Rabbi Harold Kushner, survivors of the Holocaust and victims of crime or war often lose their capacity to trust. To regain confidence, he suggests, such persons "will need a religious perspective which makes room for cruelty and suffering, yet affirms all that is good in the world."

In the real world people "do suffer for righteousness' sake" (3:14, RSV). Peter warns his readers of an imminent "fiery ordeal" (4:12). And yet he admonishes them to "rejoice" (verse 13). How is this possible?

The Asian Christians' religious perspective held their sanity together. In hope they accepted the trials of persecution "and entrusted[ed] their souls to a faithful creator" (4:19, RSV).

The people of God are resident aliens, temporarily living in a foreign land. Peter writes to "God's scattered people" (1:1, NEB). For-

eigners with a temporary-resident status, strange ways, and an allegiance to another country usually find little acceptance from the locals.

It is vital, then, that the Christian "maintain good conduct among the Gentiles" (2:12, RSV), and be "subject . . . to every human institution" (verse 13). The sobriety and humility of the Christians' lives are to be a rebuke to the abuse of the Gentiles (see 4:2-5, 15, 16).

In what ways do you sometimes feel like a member of "God's scattered people"?

The Formation of Suffering (read 1 Pet. 3:18-22)

"For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit" (verse 18, RSV).

Suffering may test the genuineness of one's faith, but God does not cause people to suffer. Some suggest that the role of patient suffering is to "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" (2:15, RSV) and even cause them to "glorify God on the day of visitation" (verse 12). But this affirms the power of a patient witness under duress; it does not make suffering good. And the pained will generally draw little comfort from the assurance that the present suffering is short-lived.

Suffering has no totally satisfying rational explanation. Peter's

by Norman H. Young

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best statement is not an explanation but an appeal to the inspiration of the passion of Christ. We "were ransomed from the futile ways . . . with the precious blood of Christ" (1:18, 19, RSV).

Since Christ has concluded His joust with sin and announced His triumph over it, Christians too are to arm themselves with the same resolve to "cease . . . from sin" (1 Pet. 4:1, RSV). And this is no abstract ideal but a dramatic break with the former life (see verses 3-6).

Just as Christ's sufferings were followed by "the subsequent glory" (1:11, RSV), so those who share in His sufferings will also partake in "the glory that is to be revealed" (5:1). Thus the persecuted Christians of Asia Minor gained strength from the past because Christ's death fulfilled the redemptive hope of the prophets, from the present because Christ's resurrection gave them a living hope in heaven, and from the future because "the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:7) was at hand.

How would you describe "Christian salvation" to someone who has never heard of Christ?

The Fruition of Suffering (read 1 Pet. 1:13-25)

"Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere love of the brethren, love one another earnestly from the heart" (verse 22, RSV).

Mankind has proffered various explanations for suffering. Christianity accepts that suffering is real, indiscriminate, and universal. Though Christianity believes that suffering is not outside God's will or control, it also affirms that God is merciful (see 1:3), kind (see 2:3), gracious (see 4:10; 5:10), and caring (see 5:7). His will, then, is not that His children suffer, but that if they suffer, they endure it to the glory of God.

Christians experience suffering in community because we share the burden of trauma with Christ, who suffered for us and with our fellow Christians in "unity of spirit, sympathy, love of the brethren, a tender heart and a humble mind" (3:8, RSV). Christians suffer in humility because suffering emphasizes our fragility and vulnerability. With "humility toward one another" and "under the mighty hand of God" (5:5, 6, RSV), we live out our odyssey. Finally, Christians suffer in hope because "with unutterable and exalted joy" (1:8) we anticipate the outcome of our faith, the salvation of our souls (see verse 9).

What has been your response to your own suffering?

What object lessons from everyday life can you think of to illustrate the idea that trials are meant to strengthen us?

*Harold Kushner, *Who Needs God?* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1989), p. 36.

Tuesday, July 7

Chosen for Obedience?

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 1 Pet. 1:1, 2

There's something special about being chosen. But how much more wonderful it is to know that "*from the beginning* God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth" (2 Thess. 2:13, NIV, italics supplied).

Peter confirms Paul's words, adding that such sanctifying activity of the Spirit will lead to "obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood" (1 Pet. 1:2). We have been chosen for obedience. How does this election operate?

In 1893 Ellen White wrote, "The Father sets His love upon His elect people. . . . These are the people whom Christ has redeemed . . . and because they respond to the drawing of Christ . . . they are elected to be saved as His obedient children. Upon them is manifested the free grace of God."¹

What part does obedience play in such election?

"If you would know the mystery of godliness, you must follow the plain word of truth. . . . Obedience must be rendered from a sense of principle, and the right must be pursued under all circumstances. This is the character that is elected of God unto salvation. The test of a genuine Christian is given in the word of God. Says Jesus, 'If ye love me, keep my

commandments' . . . [John 14:21, 23, 24 quoted].

"Here are the conditions upon which every soul will be elected to eternal life. Your obedience to God's commandments will prove your right to an inheritance with the saints in light. God has elected a certain excellence of character; and every one who, through the grace of Christ, shall reach the standard of His requirement, will have an abundant entrance into the kingdom of glory. All who would reach this standard of character, will have to employ the means that God has provided to this end. . . . Search the Scriptures, and you will see that not a son or a daughter of Adam is elected to be saved in disobedience to God's law."²

REACT

1. If we are "chosen for obedience," how can we enjoy freedom in the gospel?

2. How can obedience to God's commandments "prove our right" to eternal life, if we are saved by grace, not works? (Compare Rom. 11:5, 6.)

3. What are "the means that God has provided" to attain excellence of character? Consider 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2; and Ellen White's comment, "You can prove yourself the chosen of Christ by abiding in the vine."³

1. *Signs of the Times*, January 2, 1893.

2. *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 125, 126.

3. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1079.

by Allan G. Lindsay

Allan G. Lindsay is a senior lecturer in education at Avondale College, Coorabong, N.S.W., Australia.

Christian Snobs

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Pet. 3:13, 14

When Peter wrote his first pastoral letter, the explosive growth of the early Christian church was already well underway. The early missionaries had taken seriously the instruction of Christ that they should be His "witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8, NIV).

The unique beliefs and lifestyle of the Christians, however, attracted the hostility of non-Christians. Increasingly, converts to Christianity experienced the taunts and threats that had been hurled at Peter, Paul, and their fellow missionaries.

This animosity arose from at least three sources:

1. *From the community's animosity toward Jews.* Since Christianity was considered to be a Jewish sect, it attracted all the pagan contempt directed toward Judaism. Unfortunately, this anti-Semitism was at least in part "a protest against religious customs which seemed primitive and superstitious. It was a reaction against the apparent snobbery of a race which insisted on maintaining its exclusiveness."^{*}

2. *From the authorities.* Rome itself viewed Christians as a po-

tential danger to society. The execution of Christ in Jerusalem and Nero's indictment of Christians on the charge of arson in the great fire of A.D. 64 suggested to the authorities that this sect was not to be trusted.

3. *From the Jews.* Historically the Jews had hated Christians. They regarded the missionary zeal of the Christian church as a source of competition in the quest for proselytes. They attempted to convince the authorities that these Christians were religious and social evildoers who were turning "the world upside down" (Acts 17:6, RSV).

First Peter was written in just such a context of popular reaction against Christians. It was most necessary that Peter should write a pastoral letter encouraging believers to remember that although they were "strangers in the world," and "scattered" through the provinces (1:1, NIV), they were "chosen" and "sanctified" (1:2, RSV), and given grace "in abundance" (1:2, NIV).

REACT

How can Christians avoid having attitudes of exclusivism and alienation?

^{*}Jerry L. Daniel, "Anti-Semitism in the Hellenistic-Roman Period," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. 98, 1979, p. 65.

by Barry Oliver

Barry Oliver is lecturer in ministry and mission at Avondale College, Cooranbong, N.S.W., Australia.

Thursday, July 9

A Prayer for Peace of Mind

HOW-TO

Key Text: 1 Pet. 1:2

“May grace (spiritual blessing) and peace be given you in increasing abundance—that spiritual peace to be realized in and through Christ, freedom from fears” (1 Pet. 1:2, Amplified Bible).

Free Us From Fear, Lord.

Oh, Lord, there is much suffering and pain in this world. Comfort those of us who fear tomorrow. We do not ask that You remove from us the cause of our pain or fear, but that you give us the strength to bear our pain with fortitude and the courage to control our fear with dignity.

Comfort us, not with divine intervention, but with the knowledge that You feel our pain and You understand our fear. Remind us again that in the Garden You suffered for us, and

there You too could not see the tomorrow.

Give us the determination and the power to relive Your kind of life—neither for eternal reward nor for special protection—but simply because it is right.

Help us now to drag our thoughts away from ourselves and our own petty plights. Let us concentrate with all our strength upon those who need our help and our care—no matter how insignificant that help may be—for it is in thinking of the needs of others that our own fears dissipate like the morning fog on a clear winter’s day.

Grant us, O Lord, this prayer today.

REACT

1. What role, if any, should fear play in a Christian’s life?
2. What should be a Christian’s response to fear?

by Cedric Greive

Cedric Greive teaches in the education department at Avondale College, Cooranbong, N.S.W., Australia.

Strangers and Aliens in the World

OPINION

Key Texts: 2 Cor. 6:17; Isa. 58:6, 7

When Peter addressed his letter to "God's elect, strangers in the world" (1 Pet. 1:1, NIV), he drew attention to the contrast between the security and comfort of believers within the family of faith and the alienation of believers from those among whom they must live in the world. In 1 Peter there are images of certainty and belonging, a Father who has chosen us to become His children (see verse 2), who shields us by His power (see verse 5) and gives us an inheritance that will last forever (see verses 3 and 4).

There is warmth, acceptance, and support for those who belong to the family of God, but these characteristics emphasize the separateness of the Christian community from those outside it. These people, as portrayed by Peter, live lives of depravity (see 4:3, 4); they ridicule the faithful and often make their lives difficult. Thus God's children, who feel at home together, are "aliens and strangers in the world" (2:11, NIV), exiles who are not understood and can never really belong to the world in which they exist.

Peter plunged his readers straight into the problem of how they should relate to the world—those people, customs, and activities outside, and sometimes

inside, their community, that cannot be clearly and specifically labeled Christlike. For 2,000 years Christians, seeking security and godliness within their church, but concerned for the salvation and welfare of their neighbors, have struggled with this issue. They have resolved it in a variety of ways according to their interpretation of biblical instruction and the dictates of their personal needs and personalities.

Our decisions about how we will relate to the world are central to the way our faith functions, and there are a multitude of issues that have to be considered—and sometimes reconsidered on a daily basis—as we make our choices.

REACT

1. How can we accept our responsibilities to share the good news of God's love, fight injustice and oppression, and support those in need (see Isa. 58:6, 7) if we are not closely involved with the people and politics of the world?

2. Since there is truth and beauty and honesty in many of the people and things in the world, on what basis do I personally decide what is God-given beauty to be enjoyed and what is seductive evil?

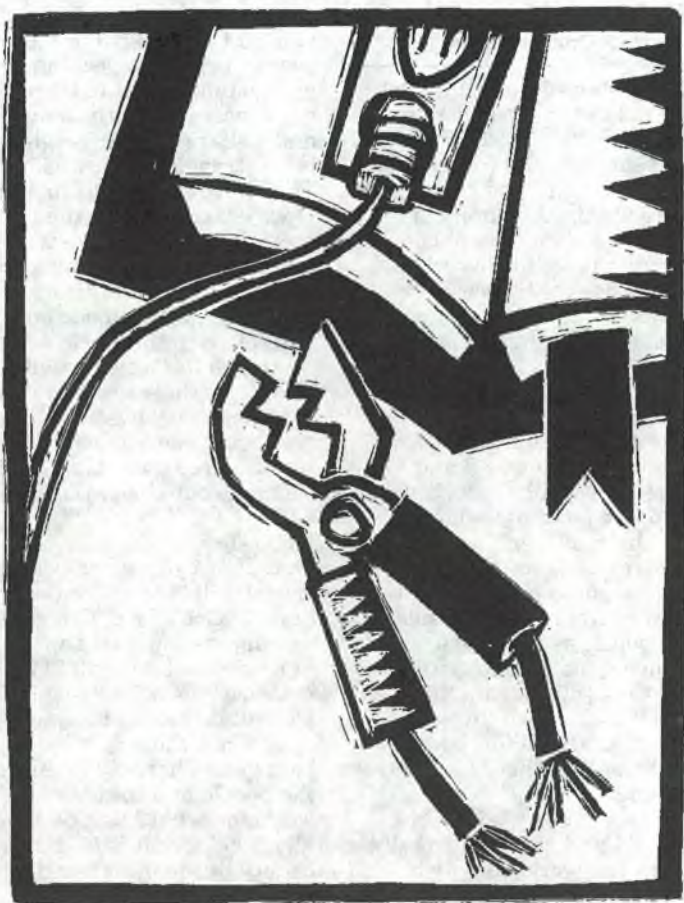
3. Explain why you agree or disagree with the statement that "because a Christian sees all things in the light of eternity, he is the best of all citizens."

by Robyn Priestley

Robyn Priestley is a senior lecturer in history at Avondale College, Cooranbong, N.S.W., Australia.

Lesson 3, July 12-18

Surviving Without a Jump-Start



“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet. 1:3, NIV).

I Hereby Bequeath . . .

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: 1 Pet. 1:3, 4

The room was filled with expectancy; the atmosphere was electric. The clan had gathered to divide the spoils. We had already laid our imaginary claims to the estate; now we would hear the official verdict.

The lawyer surveyed the covetous assembly and proceeded to recite the old man's will. "I hereby bequeath . . ."

Within minutes, we would know who would receive the antiques, the paintings, the vintage cars, the palatial mansion.

"My entire estate to be left to my faithful companion, Rosie, to be held in a trust fund for her upkeep until death." Is this a joke? Rosie inherits the whole lot? How could he cut us out of his will and leave it all to his mangy old dog? Maybe, after all our years of neglect, the old man had finally had the last laugh on us!

* * *

Slowly Sarah lifted the lid and gingerly peered inside. As she felt the contents, a musty smell wafted from the old wooden chest. It was 20 years since the box had been sealed. Now Sarah would discover her grandmother's legacy to her. Her grandmother had collected her treasures for more than five decades. Tapestries, silk, lace, and

silverware—all were precious pieces cherished through the years.

She delved into the antiques and slowly brought to light each piece. The ornate mirror, the tapestry rug, the lace shawl, the silk blouse. As she inspected her bounty, tears welled up and overflowed. Everything bore the marks of decay and corrosion. The ravishes of time had destroyed their beauty and marred their intrinsic loveliness. Sarah's inheritance lay in tatters, corrupted by voracious insects and time's relentless deterioration.

* * *

An inheritance on earth is no guarantee of happiness. We're all familiar with the lives of people such as Barbara Hutton, the Woolworth heiress, and Christina Onassis, the shipping heiress. Both inherited fabulous wealth, yet despite their millions, they died in abject poverty of spirit. No doubt their accumulated wealth was never intended to ruin their lives but, sadly, their inheritance became a curse. Broken relationships, failed marriages, desperate loneliness, and eventual wretchedness robbed them of the richness of life itself.

What inheritance awaits you? In Jesus we have "an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade" (1 Pet. 1:4, NIV)—and all His relatives will share in it for eternity!

by Bronwyn Reid

Bronwyn Reid is the director for public relations, John Hunter Hospital, Newcastle, Australia.

Monday, July 13

Chosen Aliens

LOGOS

1 Pet. 1:1-5

After the Second World War thousands of shattered families in Europe were invited to make a new beginning in Australia. The new arrivals received temporary accommodations in former army camps, where they lived in corrugated iron huts under the blazing Australian sun until they could find their own housing. As aliens they endured the prejudice of many of the local people. Yet they persevered in the hope that they would not always be strangers.

So it was with Christian believers addressed in First Peter. The new life in Christ to which they had been chosen brought social alienation and physical hardship. In verse 1 the word translated “strangers” (NIV), “exiles” (RSV), and “refugees” (TEV) indicates temporary residence in a foreign place (cf. Heb. 13:14). Believers were made to feel like strangers in their own community. Yet their experience in Christ brought a “living hope,” which sustained them.

In First Peter this hope is repeatedly held before the struggling believers. It is implied from the very first verse, in a terse paradox compressed in the Greek into two words: “chosen aliens” (my translation)—aliens in the world, precious to God.

The sublime passage that follows (see 1 Pet. 1:3-5) lifts the minds of the believers beyond

present difficulties to the spiritual blessings that God has lavished on them. In the midst of a cruel world the writer reveals the mercy of God; in discouragement, a living hope; instead of death, a new birth; in the midst of insecurity, “an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade” (verse 4, NIV); in persecution, preservation; in human frailty, the power of God; beyond suffering, the hope of a salvation.

The salutation and ascription of praise in the opening verses of First Peter follow a conventional form, but they are far from conventional in their significance. Almost every term in these opening verses introduces a theme taken up again in the rest of the epistle.

God’s Loving Initiative

A pervasive theme in verses 1-5 is God’s loving initiative on behalf of His people. Like Israel when called out of Egypt (see Deut. 7:6-8), the believers addressed in First Peter had little in themselves to commend them to God. Yet God in His “abundant mercy” (1:3, KJV) had elevated them to a position of almost inconceivable privilege. He had chosen them, given them “new birth into a living hope” (verse 3, NIV), provided an inheritance for them (see verse 4), and even now was preserving them for the salvation soon to be revealed (see verse 5).

If God does all this for His people—no matter how undeserving—

by John Cox

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how should we relate (a) to the disadvantaged and (b) to people we find repulsive?

Reborn Into a Living Hope

The “living hope” of verses 3-5 centers on a series of new beginnings in the past, the present, and the future. Jesus’ resurrection announced a new era in human history. At that moment all were potentially reborn. In the present this experience becomes actual for each person who is reborn into a relationship with Christ. Born into God’s family, we become His heirs and look forward with confidence to “an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you” (verse 4, NIV).

For some Old Testament writers the inheritance was more than a plot of land; God Himself was their inheritance (see Num. 18:20; Deut. 10:9; Ps. 16:5, 6; 73:25, 26; Lam. 3:24). To know God, to enter into a relationship with Him, to be possessed by Him, to share in His nature (see 2 Pet. 1:3, 4), to comprehend more of His being and purposes—all these things are included in the inheritance of God’s people. We begin to realize these aspects of our inheritance the moment we become Christians.

But the full realization of our inheritance is still future. It is “kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Pet. 1:4, 5, NIV). Yet we shall never know our inheritance completely. Always there will be new mysteries of God’s being to explore. Our inheritance has no boundaries.

Kept by God’s Power

While God is keeping the complete fulfillment of our inheritance

for us, He is also preserving us for it (see 1 Pet. 1:4, 5). We are “guarded” by His power (verse 5, RSV). It seems, however, that the protection here envisaged is primarily spiritual, for the believers are still suffering persecution. Jesus did not promise freedom from trouble on earth (see John 16:33). What He promised was the inner assurance in 2 Cor. 4:16: “Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day” (NIV).

The Salvation Ready to Be Revealed

“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Cor. 15:19, KJV). Our ultimate hope is “the salvation . . . ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Pet. 1:5, NIV). The New Testament sometimes speaks of salvation as already accomplished (see Rom. 8:24; Eph. 2:5, 8; Tit. 3:5), sometimes as a present experience (see Luke 19:9; 1 Cor. 15:2; 2 Cor. 2:15; 6:2), sometimes as not yet fully realized (see Rom. 13:11; Heb. 1:14; 9:28). The “living hope” of First Peter embraces all three possibilities. It includes the salvation made possible at Christ’s death and resurrection, and the developing salvation that we have in Christ in the present; but it also looks forward to the salvation to be consummated at Christ’s coming.

REACT

1. The hope offered in First Peter was based partly on a conviction that Christ’s return was imminent (see 1 Pet. 1:5). How does the passage of 2,000 years affect the immediacy of this hope for you today?

2. Explain why you agree or disagree that Christians’ hope for the future makes them too tolerant of the social injustices of the present.

Tuesday, July 14

Keeping Our Hopes Alive

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 1 Pet. 1:3

In 1 Peter 1:3 one can sense Peter's exuberance in the living hope—Jesus Christ and the inheritance promised to each one of us through our relationship with Him. But the devil knows that it will be to his advantage if he can destroy every vestige of hope in our lives.

“Satan is contending for the souls of men, and casts his hellish shadow athwart their path, in order that they shall not behold the light. He would not have them catch a glimpse of the future honor, the eternal glories, laid up for those who shall be inhabitants of heaven, or have a taste of the experience that gives a foretaste of the happiness of heaven. But with the heavenly attractions set before the mind to inspire hope, to awaken desire, to spur to effort, how can we turn from the prospect, and choose sin and its wages, which is death?

“Those who accept Christ as their Saviour have the promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come. . . . O that every one might make choice of the heavenly gift, become an heir of God to that inheritance whose title is secure from any destroyer, world without end! O, choose not the world, but choose the better inheritance! Press, urge your way toward the mark for the prize of

your high calling in Christ Jesus.”¹

Is it possible to maintain our hope when we meet discouraging situations that cause us to despair?

“[Hope] yields us consolation in affliction, it gives us joy amid anguish, disperses the gloom around us and causes us to look through it all to immortality and eternal life. . . . Earthly treasures are no inducement to us, for while we have this hope it reaches clear above the treasures of earth that are passing away and takes hold of the immortal inheritance, the treasures that are durable, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fade not away.”²

If we, like Peter, are excited by the living hope, what will be the result?

“It is impossible to hide the bright hope that comes to the soul who lays hold of Christ by faith. . . . Let the precious Saviour come into the heart, and His presence cannot be concealed. The heart will be full of hope, comfort, and love, and a divine light will illuminate the countenance.”³

REACT

Why is it often difficult to share spontaneously with others the hope that means so much to us?

1. *Review and Herald*, November 21, 1893.

2. *In Heavenly Places*, p. 352.

3. *The Youth's Instructor*, September 5, 1895.

by Eleanor M. Scale

Eleanor M. Scale is director of the Ellen G. White/SDA Research Center at Avondale College, Cooranbong, N.S.W., Australia.

A Future for the Disinherited

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Pet. 1:3, 4

“Power corrupts.” The cliché is so well-known that the first two words trigger our minds to add four more: “Absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

For Nero Claudius Caesar the temptations of absolute power became more and more irresistible. Made emperor of Rome during A.D. 54 at 16 years of age, Nero's reign seemed to start well. But by A.D. 68 he was ready to take his own life, lamenting as he did so, “What an artist dies in me!” History thinks of him more as profligate and cruel than artistic, a person wont to eliminate officials and relatives who threatened his power or challenged his plans. Even his mother was murdered when she crossed him.

Nero was the caesar to whom Paul appealed (see Acts 25:10, 11), the reigning emperor when Paul challenged Christians to submit “to the governing authorities” (Rom. 13:1-7). But, after a devastating fire gutted half of Rome in A.D. 64, Nero's moral decline accelerated when he accused the Christians of being responsible.

Thus it was that the early church came to list the names of

977 martyrs slain by Nero, including Peter from Galilee and Paul of Tarsus.

Peter was one of the disinherited of the first century who died knowing they had “an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven” (1 Pet. 1:4, NIV).

Sometimes the Christians were called “the third race.” The Romans saw themselves as first-class citizens, and Jews as second class. Nero helped to categorize Christians as third-rate—adherents of an evil, illegal religion. For more than a hundred years after Nero, “the church was condemned to the life of a suspected and unpopular Judaistic sect that had no legal standing.”*

REACT

1. Most Christians in the first century were among the disinherited. To what extent do today's Christians face the same prejudices?

2. In your own life, how have you felt disinherited?

3. How are the words “perish, spoil or fade” different enough that Peter may have felt the need to list all three?

*W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1984), pp. 109, 110.

by Arthur Patrick

Arthur Patrick is registrar at Avondale College, Cooranbong, N.S.W., Australia.

Thursday, July 16

Of Eagles and Turkeys

HOW-TO

Key Text: Isa. 40:31

“How can I soar like an eagle when I am surrounded by turkeys?” So runs a current saying. The contemporary world is characterized by a sense of considerable hopelessness. The global problems of poverty, war, greenhouse effect, and fragile economic systems have helped to create an atmosphere of despair.

Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* and the theater of the absurd capture the hopelessness of many today. This is no new development. Sophocles commented that not to be born at all was by far the best option, and that if one had the misfortune to be born then suicide was the second-best option.

But Peter tells Christian believers that we “have been born again into a life full of hope” (1 Pet. 1:3, Phillips). How can we have hope when those around us display hopelessness?

1. *Remember, you have been created in the image of God.* You are a son or daughter of the living God. This gives a basis for hope.

2. *Focus on Christ.* The confirmation of our hope lies in the resurrection of Christ. Because of this historical event, we too can conquer death. Nothing should frighten us. Further, Christ can re-create us despite the apparent hopelessness of both contempo-

rary society and our own natures.

3. *Observe the changes that occur when people acknowledge Christ as their Saviour and Lord.* I am greatly encouraged when I see people going out of their way to do something positive for others without any repayment or recognition.

4. *Bring hope to today’s disinherited.* Most of us, however hopeless our own lives may seem, are insulated and isolated from the grim hopelessness of those who endure life-threatening poverty. Most of these people live in the poor nations of earth, but there are increasing numbers in the inner cities of the Western nations. We need to bring hope to these people. Work for change in the lives of the poor near you. Your action may not seem to change the world, but it will certainly change the world of those you touch. It will also change you from a turkey into an eagle (see Isa. 40:31).

REACT

1. How does a “life full of hope” affect your relationships with (a) others in your family and (b) your friends and colleagues?

2. How does a “life full of hope” affect (a) your attitude to study or work and (b) your chief goal in life?

3. How does a “life full of hope” affect your attitude toward the homeless?

by Harwood Lockton

Harwood Lockton is a senior lecturer in geography at Avondale College, Cooranbong, N.S.W., Australia.

Things Hard to Understand?

OPINION

Key Text: 1 Pet. 1:5

In his second epistle Peter refers to the Pauline letters and observes that in them are "some things hard to understand" (2 Pet. 3:16, NKJV). Perhaps the same observation might be leveled at his own letters. Consider, for example, his assertion that believers are guarded by God's power and remain under His protection until they receive their final salvation at the end of time (see 1 Pet. 1:5).

These words seem to imply that in times of trouble and danger believers can look to God for deliverance, even as Peter himself, in prison and facing death, was delivered by a heavenly being (see Acts 12:7-10). But Peter must have known that deliverances of this kind have never been common. Further, as a contemporary of John the Baptist and the apostle James, Peter must have known that for them there was no providential deliverance. Instead, there was the executioner's sword.

So what did Peter mean when he referred to believers being under God's protection? Had he forgotten what had happened to his associates? Was he speaking figuratively, intending to comfort believers in times of crisis but not expecting that his assertions would ever be taken literally? Were there unstated but implicit conditions attached to this apparent promise of

protection? Or did he mean something other than physical protection from everyday dangers?

Perhaps the clue to the meaning of this passage lies in Peter's use of the term *salvation*. To Peter, salvation was man's ultimate goal, and the purpose of divine protection was to ensure the attainment of that goal. We tend to be preoccupied with our temporal well-being and, in particular, with anything that threatens our lives. God is far more concerned with our eternal destiny and directs His protective actions to that end. Temporal misfortune, accident, even death, do not ordinarily stand in the way of our salvation, and we therefore need not expect constant divine protection from these things. Our battle, as the apostle Paul points out, is "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12, NKJV). So it seems that Peter's reference to protection may well refer to protection against the powers of darkness, against which we would otherwise have no defense.

And if we adopt this interpretation, the apostle's observation is, perhaps, not so hard to understand.

REACT

Why is it difficult to feel that God is protecting us when we suffer misfortune and loss?

by Don Hansen

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Lesson 4, July 19-25

Standing Up to the Heat



“These [trials] have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed” (1 Pet. 1:7, NIV).

Dog-eared or Dusty?

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Heb. 12:1-12

They really cared for each other, and both knew that their relationship was unfolding into something beautiful. Then came circumstances that separated them for a while, and somehow his letters, although numerous, did not seem to have any reference to hers. Finally an opportunity came for her to visit unexpectedly. On arrival she found all her letters on a shelf, carefully bound together with expensive ribbon, but *unopened*. How would you feel if this happened to you? What do you think would become of such a relationship?

Letters from home or from someone you really care about can change your outlook on life and brighten a dull day. Writing a letter, on the other hand, can be either fun or a great responsibility. Peter had a burden for his children, the “elect” (1 Pet. 1:1, NIV). The Lord has not come back, yet they must not lose hope or their sense of urgency, even though they

have suffered “grief in all kinds of trials” (1:6, NIV). Can you imagine how Peter longs to be with them in person to comfort them and share their trials? But a letter of encouragement will have to do. With prayer and deep concern he writes, choosing his ideas with care and divine inspiration. It could be that this letter is his last chance to say anything to the believers. How important do you think these words should be for us “upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Cor. 10:11, KJV)?

Trials have a positive side: gold needs the heat of refining just as we need our faith strengthened. Many Bible writers have struggled with the problem of the suffering of good people. It is a relevant question today (see Heb. 12:1-12). In these times you and I need to learn as much as we can about God and His love so we can trust Him even when what is happening doesn't make sense—yet. As you make this week's lesson your own, remember His promise: “My grace is sufficient for you” (2 Cor. 12:9, RSV).

by Bob Bell

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Monday, July 20

A Faith That Can Stand the Heat

LOGOS

1 Pet. 1:6-12

The Fiery Refining of Faith (read 1 Pet. 1:6, 7)

"We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God." "In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (Acts 14:22, NIV; 2 Tim. 3:12, NIV).

How can you believe in the promises of the gospel when your friends and family turn against you? This seems to be the question that Peter was trying to answer for the believers of northern and central Asia Minor. There was no official persecution in the Roman provinces as yet, but the lifestyle of Christians contrasted so sharply with the normal practices of pagan society that their former friends turned on them (see 1 Pet. 4:4, 14). In this short epistle Peter finds it necessary to deal no fewer than four times with this problem of rejection and persecution (see 1:6, 7; 3:13-17; 4:12-19; and 5:8, 9).

How should Christians react to suffering and persecution? Peter's advice is to regard it as a blessing (see 3:13, 14; 4:14), worthy of rejoicing (see 4:13), and feeling proud about such a privilege (see 4:16).

Just as gold is refined in a furnace, so faith in Christ is tested and purified by suffering (see 4:12). Because suffering has this

effect, Peter tells us that it is in some mysterious way the will of God (see 1:6; 3:17; 5:6). No wonder Malachi pictures the coming Messiah as the one who "will be like a refiner's fire," purifying and refining His servants like gold and silver (Mal. 3:2, 3, NIV). Furthermore, they have Jesus as an inspiring example of suffering (see 1 Pet. 2:21-23; 3:18). This fellowship in the unjust suffering of Christ is, however, a pledge to share in His victorious glorification (see 1:11; 5:1, 4, 10).

Faith, the Foretaste of the Future (read 1 Pet. 1:8, 9)

"When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory" (Col. 3:4, NIV).

In his first epistle, Peter focuses on the "living hope" (1:3, NIV) of Christ's second coming (*apokalupsis*; 1:5, 7, 12, 13; 4:13; 5:1). But in common with the apostle Paul, his epistle reflects the new perspective on the last days that Jesus introduced in His parables on the kingdom of heaven (see Matt. 13 and Mark 4). The "secret" of this kingdom (Mark 4:11, NIV; Matt. 13:11, NIV), now revealed by Jesus, is that which was expected to be realized only at the end of this present age and has already become a present reality through the person of Jesus Christ (see Luke 17:21, margin). While Peter has a clear understanding of redemption as ultimately a future

by Johan A. Japp

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event (see 1 Pet. 1:5; 4:7, 17), he also teaches that Christians can begin now to experience that ultimate redemption in the present salvation of their souls (see 1:9).

As Old Testament prophets attempted to understand the times and circumstances of the promised salvation (see 1 Pet. 1:10, 11), their perspective of the future prevented them from clearly distinguishing between the redemption brought about by Christ, the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 (see 1 Pet. 1:11, 19; 2:22-24; 3:18), and His redemptive role as the king of Israel in Psalm 110 (see 1 Pet. 1:11, 21; 4:11; Luke 24:26). But through the apostolic preaching of the gospel (see 1 Pet. 1:12), Christians may know that "the last times" had already begun at Christ's first coming (see 1:20).

The bridge spanning future salvation and present salvation is faith, hope, and love (compare 1 Cor. 13:13 with 1 Pet. 1:3-13, 21). While faith keeps its meaning as the means of claiming salvation, it is also (as in the book of Hebrews) the means of retaining salvation through perseverance (see 1 Pet. 1:5, 7-9, 21; 2:5-9). Love is both for the invisible Christ (see 1:8), and for brothers in suffering (see 1:22; 2:17; 4:8; and 5:14). Hope, the golden thread that runs through the entire epistle, becomes the denominator for the entire gospel, of which Christians should always be prepared to testify (see 3:15).

Faith in Christ Comes From Christ (read 1 Pet. 1:10-12)

"Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17, NIV).

The revealing of Christ at His second coming (see 1 Pet. 1:7) is the final fulfillment of the revealing by Christ of the good news to the prophets (see 1:12). In the line of communication between God and man (see Rev. 1:1-3), Christ is the faithful witness of the new covenant (Rev. 1:5) who holds Himself responsible for communicating saving grace every step of the way. Christ was even responsible for the initial promise of salvation (see 1 Pet. 1:11). At Pentecost the Holy Spirit came in a new capacity as representative of Christ (see John 14:16; 16:7-15). But in Old Testament times the same Spirit operated as the prophetic voice of the preexistent Christ.

Together with 2 Pet. 1:20 and 21, 1 Pet. 1:10-12 strongly defends the divine origin of Scripture. In his first epistle Peter states emphatically that the preexisting and later incarnate Christ is the divine source of Scripture, who communicated His Word through the Holy Spirit. Certainly, the suffering Christians of Asia Minor accepted the good news of Scripture "not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God," which was dynamically at work in those who believed (1 Thess. 2:13, NIV).

REACT

1. Which elements of salvation can you experience now, and which aspects can be fulfilled only at the second coming?

2. Why would faith in the Bible as the Word of God not prevent us from investigating the grammatical and historical setting of Scripture?

Tuesday, July 21

The Heat Is On

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 2 Pet. 3:8

“Our heavenly Father does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men. . . . The Lord permits calamities to come to His people to save them from greater dangers. He desires everyone to examine his own heart closely and carefully, then draw near to God, that God may draw near to him. Our life is in the hands of God.”¹

“If Paul, troubled on every side, perplexed, persecuted, could call his trials light afflictions, of what has the Christian of today to complain? How trifling are our trials in comparison with Paul’s many afflictions. . . . They are God’s workmen.”²

“I have been shown that in the future we shall see how closely all our trials were connected with our salvation, and how these light afflictions worked out for us ‘a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.’”³

“It is by the trial of our faith that we gain spiritual strength. The Lord seeks to educate His people to lean wholly upon Him.”⁴

“[Faith is] the eye that sees, the ear that hears, the feet that run, the hand that grasps. It is the means, not the end.”⁵

“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.

“Christians are Christ’s jewels. . . . Their luster depends on the polishing they receive. . . . 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. . . . 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 . . . that gives new value to the stone.”⁶

REACT

1. What relationship is there between the trials of today and the end-time trials?
2. What does preparation for trials actually entail?
3. How does 2 Pet. 3:8 relate to a Christian’s response to trials?

1. *In Heavenly Places*, p. 265.

2. *Review and Herald*, May 6, 1902.

3. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1099.

4. *In Heavenly Places*, p. 265.

5. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1073.

6. *Review and Herald*, March 7, 1912.

by Delyse Steyn

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The Real Thing

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Pet. 1:9

A 10-year-old girl is dead, run over by a drunkard! Her mother is a good Christian, perhaps an Adventist, faithfully attending church, returning her tithe, a spiritual person, alive, and dedicated—and now this?

Peter, recalling his own experience with his Master and visualizing his brothers and sisters “scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia” (1 Pet. 1:1, NIV) in an environment that could not be called “pro-Christian,” writes about genuine faith, about trial, and victory at a time that will soon see the Neronian persecution of A.D. 64.

His topic is faith—not an emotional high or some unrealistic mystical experiences, but faith that is tried. Faith that works, that shows results! But aren't we told that faith is not a work, but rather a free gift from God?

Peter, the Jewish fisherman from the Sea of Galilee, writes in Greek. “Though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials,” Peter writes, “so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold . . . may redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:6, 7, RSV).

The Greek word for a test for genuineness, *dokimion* was used

in the Septuagint both in a literal and a metaphorical sense, contrasting worthless and genuine money (Isa. 1:22, Septuagint, uses the opposite, *adokimos*), and in Psalm 7:3, we find that God “tests” man. In the prophets God's trying the people becomes equivalent to judgment (see Jer. 9:7 and Zech. 13:9, RSV, “refine”).

Peter was aware of these connotations, but for him, having seen Christ himself, it was just “for a little while” (NIV) that one suffers trials that will expose faith as genuine. Although he was aware of the close relationship to judgment in the Old Testament context, he uses the phrase “genuineness of your [tested] faith” with a victorious undertone. Peter tells us today that testing and trials will lead to a more genuine, maybe more realistic, faith.

Trial, faith, genuineness, are not ends in themselves—they lead to a goal. That goal is “the salvation of your souls” (1 Pet. 1:9, NIV). The Greek for salvation, *soterion*, is closely related to the *soter*, the Saviour. Christ is salvation, and He is the goal of our faith. With Him we will overcome the challenges we are facing.

REACT

1. How do you handle crises in your life?
2. How can you help people whose faith is shaken by trials in their lives?

by Gerald A. Klingbeil

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Thursday, July 23

The Weight of Glory

HOW-TO

Key Text: 2 Cor. 1:4

Have you ever wondered how your suffering can become light afflictions, unworthy of thought? I have only just acquired the following personal knowledge! Ironically, part of the value of this experience is inherent in sharing this with you.

1. *Perspective.* One can forfeit the benefit of being “worthy of salvation” by choosing to concentrate on the momentousness of (rather than the moment of) problems. What is anything worth without a future perspective? Status, wealth, friends are “now” goals, but faith “makes us certain of realities we do not see” (Heb. 11:1, NEB). Suffering makes living serious business; it is a reality that opens our eyes to truth and meaning.

2. *Communication in specifics.* When I ask God for specifics, and He meets my needs in unique

ways, then I know God is interested in me and my situation.

3. *Benefits.* “Those who have borne the greatest sorrows are frequently the ones who carry the greatest comfort to others, bringing sunshine wherever they go.”*

If Hebrews 11 were updated, maybe your name would be listed along with many others who were special enough to suffer for Christ’s sake!

REACT

1. What is the difference between the “momentousness” and the “moment” of suffering?

2. Why is it important to see one’s suffering in the light of the cross?

3. Make a list of the benefits of your own suffering.

4. How does the expression “worthy of salvation” relate to the tension between faith and works?

* *Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 274.

by Delyse Steyn

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Of Wimps and Worms

OPINION

Key Text: 1 Pet. 1:6, 7

"In this you greatly rejoice, though . . . you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith . . . may be proved genuine" (1 Pet. 1:6, 7, NIV).

The apostle Peter addresses himself to those far-flung, thinly lined pockets of Christians dotted about Asia, and facing every kind of social ostracism because of their faith.

His tone is one of quiet reassurance. We see in him the spirit of enduring fortitude, of resolute forbearance, of rock-solid tenacity in the face of opposition—such as only the strongest, most stable characters possess. Here is someone we can rely upon; here is no fickle, vacillating wimp who squirms under the gaze of a waitress; here is one who would never deny his Lord three times in one night.

Are we talking about the same Peter? We all know *that* Peter—that bold, brash, hollow Peter who talked a good line, but who had a spine like a wet noodle.

But Peter identifies himself beyond doubt as being both that vacuous hothead and the present tower of strength writing to give support to the beleaguered troops. Something radical has happened in the meantime, radical enough to turn a worm into a warrior. And that radical something is the

very thing that vindicates the Word of God as the power source for changed lives.

Long before, Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness, but he didn't believe God all at once. How could he have a child? It was physically impossible for Sarah. Better help God out. Better make out the will in favor of Eliezer, better marry Keturah, better sleep with Hagar—doubt, doubt, doubt. But God did not give up with Abraham, and the time came when, without a moment's hesitation, and without a second's doubt, he found himself with such faith in God that he could bring himself to do that one thing he can reasonably be expected to have refused.

His faith could withstand all the heat that could be brought against it. This same life-transforming faith is a theme from Abraham to Peter (see Heb. 11), and it continues to happen to those who allow God to go to work in their lives. May God grant us the faith of Abraham and Peter, so that we too may be refined like gold and bring honor to His name.

REACT

1. What is the relationship for a Christian between suffering and faith?

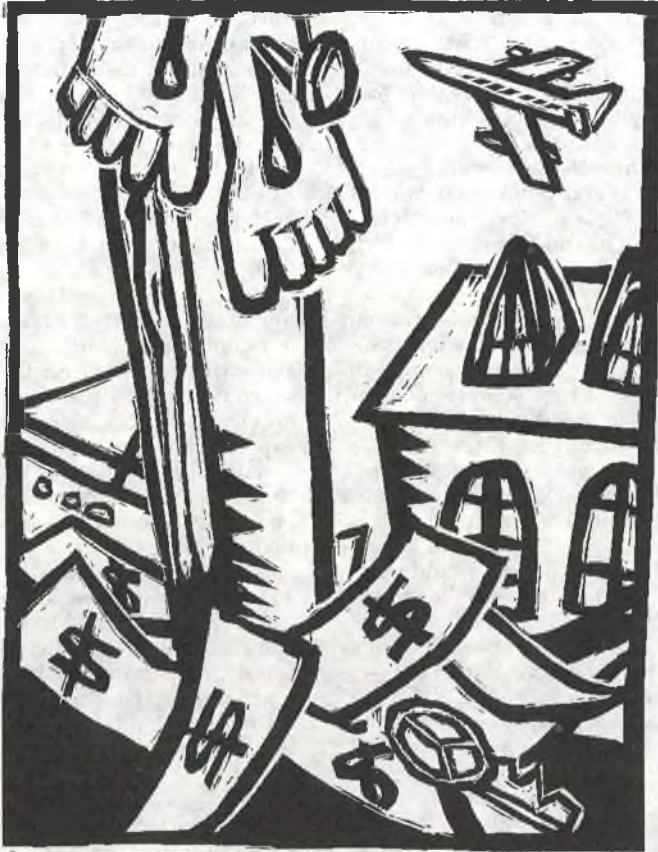
2. What kind of faith do you need to "withstand all the heat" of life today? How can you acquire such faith?

by Anthony Tainton

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Lesson 5, July 26–August 1

The One With the Most Toys Wins?



“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect” (1 Pet. 1:18, 19, NIV).

Making a Spectacle of Yourself

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Jer. 35

Judah was in trouble. Babylon had conquered the land, taken captives, and even taken vessels from the temple. Jeremiah seemed to be the only voice calling to repentance, but Judah's people were ignoring God's admonition and acting as they pleased. Shocking things were happening: God showed Ezekiel 25 men worshipping the sun, not in hiding, but in "the inner court of the house of the Lord" (Ezek. 8:16, RSV). Amazingly, the people still believed Jerusalem and the temple would not be destroyed. These actions seemed to suggest that God needed the shelter of the temple in bad weather, and they could do as they pleased and not suffer consequences. In the midst of this, God tells Jeremiah to test the Rechabites and uses them as an object lesson (see Jer. 35).

Jeremiah calls them together and says, "Drink some wine." But they reply, "We do not drink

wine, because our forefather Jonadab . . . gave us this command: 'Neither you nor your descendants must ever drink wine'" (verses 5, 6, NIV).

Jeremiah was asking them to do something that was accepted by the others in their society, but they were faithful to their earthly father's instructions. God could use them to teach a lesson. God also honored their faithfulness (see verses 18, 19).

Our lesson this week has a lot to say about how Christians should act so that they will be blameless and an object lesson to the world. People assess your family by what they see in you. You may feel that this is unfair, but that is the way life is. Ideally, we should all be proud of our family and hold its name high.

We are called Christians. "We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe" (1 Cor. 4:9, NIV). Do you like being in God's display window? Praise His name that He supplies the garments and the power when we allow Him (see Zech. 3).

by Bob Bell

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Monday, July 27

The Narrow Door

LOGOS

1 Pet. 1:13-25

By Beholding We Become Changed (read 1 Pet. 1:13-16)

“Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature” (Rom. 13:14, NIV).

The faith refined by suffering will manifest itself in holy living (see 1 Pet. 1:15, 16). The apostle James said that if faith is not accompanied by action, it is dead (see James 2:17, 26). When your faith and hope are in God, they become a firm and secure anchor for the soul, grounded in the very presence of God in the heavenly sanctuary (see Heb. 6:19, 20).

Holiness is therefore not the meticulous observance of a multitude of rules and regulations. It is standing in a relationship of faith and hope to God. He is faithful to His promises (see 10:19-23) and has poured out His love into the hearts of the believers (see Rom. 5:5). Paul reminds the Galatians that the only thing that really counts is faith expressing itself through love (see Gal. 5:6).

Sanctification has both positive and negative sides. Positively it consists of such things as disciplining the mind to be mentally alert and ready for action. This is accomplished by controlling all thoughts and habits that might impede clear and sensible thinking (see 1 Pet. 1:13). Negatively, it consists of a refusal to conform

to evil desires (see 1:14; 2:11), to the empty way of life handed down from the forefathers (see 1:18), to pagan practices (see 4:3). Overcoming evil with good simply means this: “Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (Phil. 4:8, NIV).

Respect Is Knowing the Price (read 1 Pet. 1:17-21)

“By his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many; and he will bear their iniquities” (Isa. 53:11, NIV).

Appreciating the greatness of God and God’s gift of His Son will induce reverence to God. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus encourages Christians to strive toward perfection, as their heavenly Father is perfect (see Matt. 5:48). But the context of this command emphasizes not only the moral perfection of God, but especially His impartial love and care for His creation. God will be able to judge Christians impartially on the basis of their deeds for the very reason that children of God (see 1 Pet. 1:14) can be expected to be like their Father in conduct motivated by love (see Matt. 5:43-47). Moreover, the fear of God gives one such a positive hatred for sin that avoiding sin will be a matter of natural consequence (see Prov. 1:7; 8:13; 16:6).

The greatest encouragement toward this attitude is the great-

by Johan A. Japp

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ness of the price that God was willing to pay for man's redemption. So relevant is the cross of Christ to suffering Christians that the first epistle of Peter refers to it in no fewer than three key passages (see 1:18-21; 2:21-25; 3:18-22).

Because of the clear reference to a sanctuary setting of redemption, the Old Testament concept of sacrificial substitution is central to this passage (see Exod. 13:11-16; Lev. 17:11). This means that the cross is, in the first place, the means by which Christians are saved, and only in the second place the motivation for that salvation. The only door to the kingdom of God is the cross of Jesus (see Luke 13:24; Matt. 19:17, 26).

How You Can Begin Again

"No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born from water and spirit. Flesh can give birth only to flesh; it is spirit that gives birth to spirit" (John 3:5, 6, NEB).

A well-known saying tells us that "the grace of Christ purifies while it pardons."* This is possible because conversion and the forgiveness of sin involves rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit (see Titus 3:5). In his first epistle Peter writes that Christians "have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God" (1 Pet. 1:23, NIV). After Peter's quotation from Isa. 40:6-8, he identifies this word as the gospel of Jesus Christ (see especially John 1:14 and James 1:18).

The fact that the Word of God

is the source of spiritual life has far-reaching doctrinal implications. In the first place, it challenges the whole idea of predestination. If rebirth comes through the preaching of the gospel, then anyone who hears that Word may experience rebirth (see Rev. 22:17).

The Word of God as the source of life means, in the second place, that it is not bound to books or imprisoned in history. It is living and active and enduring (see 1 Pet. 1:23; Heb. 4:12). Through the preaching of the Word, every revelation of truth, every divine act of God in history, especially the cross of Christ, becomes a dynamic, living, present reality that demands an encounter with God.

Christ is the Seed of Abraham (see Gal. 3:16, 19). He is the Word who became flesh (see John 1:14). When the seed of that Word falls into our hearts, we will love one another as He loved us (see 1 Pet. 1:22; John 13:34) and live the life He lived when He made His dwelling among us, full of grace and truth (see 1 Pet. 1:13, 22; John 1:14).

REACT

1. With so much evil in the media, what can the Christian do to keep from being overwhelmed by evil?

2. Where does one draw the line between holy living and fanaticism?

3. What does Scripture mean by truth, when it has the ability to purify?

*Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, July 14, 1891 (see also *That I May Know Him*, p. 336).

Tuesday, July 28

Convincing Evidence

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 2 Cor. 10:12

I don't look like Miss Texas, Miss RSA, or Miss Universe! I've tried being a loud-mouthed, life-of-the-party personality, and now I'm quiet, meditative, and a loner. Who am I really? Is it any use hanging around until I find out?

The idea of the key text is that it is foolish to compare oneself with oneself or with anyone else who commends himself. What would be wise then? "But, 'Let him who boasts boast in the Lord'" (2 Cor. 10:17, NIV).

"It was a wonderful thing for God to create man, to make mind. The glory of God is to be revealed in the creation of man in God's image and in his redemption. One soul is of more value than a world. God created man that every faculty might be the faculty of the divine mind."¹

"The Son of God gave all—life and love and suffering—for our redemption. . . . Every moment of our lives we have been partakers of the blessings of His grace, and for this very reason we cannot fully realize the depths of ignorance and misery from which we have been saved."²

"Christ's character stands in

place of your character, and you are accepted before God as if you had not sinned."³

"So we have nothing in ourselves of which to boast. . . . Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imparted to us, and in that wrought by His Spirit working in and through us."⁴

"Oh, what love, what wondrous love the Father has shown in the gift of His beloved Son for this fallen race! And this Sacrifice is a channel for the outflow of His infinite love, that all who believe on Jesus Christ may, like the prodigal son, receive full and free restoration to the favor of Heaven."⁵

"Many who in this life are looked upon as superior to others will one day see that God values men according to their compassion and self-denial."⁶

REACT

1. Why is comparing ourselves to others so dangerous?
2. How can we avoid comparing ourselves to others?

1. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1105.

2. *Steps to Christ*, p. 45.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

5. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 950.

6. *In Heavenly Places*, p. 68.

by Delyse Steyn

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Action, Please!

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Pet. 1:16

Peter uses the image of a man gathering the folds of his long garment and tucking it into his belt to enable him to move freely and quickly. In Palestine, in Rome, and in Asia Minor everybody knew how difficult it was to plow a field with a long garment that was not tucked up. To us this idiom communicates very little. We could rather translate it as "So then, have your minds ready for action."

The imperative statement *nephontes* (verse 13) can be translated as "live soberly" related to abstaining from excessive use of wine, and it often indicated intellectual and spiritual sobriety and balance. After the call to readiness there is the call to careful thought and even intellectual temperance.

"Set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (verse 13, RSV). Peter's third piece of advice concerns the main objective of the Christian life: to trust fully in the grace of Christ revealed in His second coming. For the past 2,000 years this was the force that gave Christianity its drive.

Peter's last imperative is really

the most awkward. The Greek form he used is found only once more in the New Testament in Romans 12:2: "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (NIV).

Actually, Peter's warning is of utmost importance. There are only two alternatives: either you are an obedient child of God, or you become conformed to the world. No other choice.

We are being molded according to certain "patterns" and lifestyles through the media and society. If you do not choose, the choices will be made for you.

In the end we are where Peter wanted us to be all the time: at the feet of Jesus. "Be holy, because I am holy" (verse 16, NIV) is not only a quote and a command from the Old Testament (see Lev. 11:44, 45), but it is also an invitation to look at Jesus, who demonstrated the ultimate Christian lifestyle for us.

REACT

1. How can you be holy without being weird, old-fashioned, or narrow-minded?

2. On which basis do you decide questions of lifestyle? To where do you look for guidance?

3. How would you define *intellectual temperance*?

by Gerald A. Klingbeil

Gerald A. Klingbeil is a graduate of Helderberg College, Somerset West, Republic of South Africa, and the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa.

Thursday, July 30

Such as I Have

HOW-TO

Key Text: 2 Cor. 3:3

Some churches have resorted to advertising: "From the people who brought you Christmas, they now bring you . . ." and "Come, party in God's house—wine, song . . ." How effective would this one be: "From the remnant who have the truth, universities, colleges, primary schools, hospitals, publishing houses, growing membership, low cholesterol levels, anti-smoking programs . . ." Is our goodness the basis of our worth? Or is it the individual sensitivity to the task at hand, a recognition of the Source of power, a willingness to supply a need? Are these not the most powerful advertisements for the greatness of God?

Is it possible that the phrase "silver or gold" (1 Pet. 1:18, NIV) reminded Peter of the unforgettable experience that he and John had shared with the crippled beggar at the gate Beautiful? How ironic it was that Peter almost missed the task at hand by explaining that his poverty prevented him from making his compassion tangible in a gift of silver or gold. But "such as I have" I give you.

Not only was this event an advertisement of the power of Christ, but so was the joy of the crippled beggar, the amazement

of the crowd, and the enriched experience of Peter and John. "Such as I have" is enough when it miraculously fulfills the need of a crippled beggar, along with a reciprocal transformation of the giver's self-esteem. Silver and gold have attributed value—the stock exchange evidences this—but the gift of salvation has intrinsic value whether or not it is accepted. Everything else, however brilliant the advertisement may be, is a poor substitute for fulfilling human needs.

One can live one's life restricted by one's desires and bound by one's human nature, but to have the power of the resurrected Christ over one's human nature is to be truly victorious and free. "Give up yourself, and you will find your real self."* The individual, joyous testimony of customer satisfaction to this daily miracle is the greatest advertisement—even in a consumer society.

REACT

1. How can the exercise of compassion and self-denial affect one's self-concept?
2. What does it really mean to be a loving and lovable Christian?
3. Is "such as I have" adequate? Identify your unique contribution.

*C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (London: Collins, 1952).

by Delyse Steyn

Delyse Steyn is a lecturer in education and communication at Helderberg College, Somerset West, Republic of South Africa.

You Are What You Own

OPINION

Key Text: 1 Pet. 1:18, 19

We live in an age that has all but banished the Bible and has re-defined human value in terms of purchasing power. Today it is no longer who you are that determines your standing in society, it is what you possess. Self-worth counts for little by today's standards—net worth is the measure of all things, including man.

Your stretch limo simply has to have two cellular telephones in it; and, by the way, that had better be a real Rolex you are wearing; and, oh, yes, the Porsche is paid for, isn't it?

It is as though this frenetic pursuit of the latest in everything from designer jeans to cigarette boats is going to equip us better to face our appointment with the leveler. If we can die with a lot of toys, we have won!

How desperately empty, how baseless, all the hype turns out to be. People who have never wanted for anything come to the point of having to deal with approaching death, and all that confidence in their own ability evaporates, all that self-assurance dissolves into a haunted fear of D-day.

Then it is that the real winners begin showing up. Those who have based their lives upon God's eternal word have an inner peace and security that fears no unknown. Those people who, as obedient children of God, did not conform to evil desires, but who lived their lives as they were called to do, as holy in spirit before God—those are the ones who hold a winning prize that all the wealth in the world can never hope to buy.

It is on the sickbed that Peter's words become the source of greatest comfort for some and the source of gnawing terror for others. There comes a time in life when all the cars and all the houses and all the bank balances might as well be blades of grass that wither and fade and come to nothing. Will we be the winners then, at the only time when winning really matters?

Will we be bought from the power of sin, at a price already paid, by a Redeemer who sees us as more valuable than any money can buy? It's easier than we think!

REACT

Of all your possessions, which is of the most value to you? What does this indicate about your relationship with Jesus?

by Anthony Tainton

Anthony Tainton is a junior theology student at Helderberg College, Somerset West, Republic of South Africa.

Lesson 6, August 2-8

Spiritual Cloning



“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Pet. 2:9, NIV).

True Religion Is a Community Thing

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: 1 Pet. 2:1-10

In the first part of his letter, Peter has been dealing with the new Christian life from the perspective of the individual believer—what each one of us does by himself or herself. Now he turns to the believer in community.

The transition begins in 1 Pet. 1:22–2:3. In verse 22 he says that the demonstration that one's soul has been purified is "genuine mutual love" (NRSV). If you are obedient to the truth of Christianity, you will show it by how you treat others. Individual religious experiences are of little value unless they can enable the believer to relate to others in a new and loving way.

Chapter 2 begins with a list of characteristics that the Christian should reflect in his life. "Rid yourselves, therefore," the disciple urges, "of all malice, and all guile, insincerity, envy, and all slander" (verse 1, NRSV). Notice that each trait involves how the individual responds to or treats others. Religion is more than just what is inside the soul. It is how we live in the world around us, in community and fellowship.

With verse 4 the author employs a collection of metaphors or images to depict Christians in community, both toward one another and toward Jesus Christ.

The first series would be especially familiar to a land that was increasingly running out of timber forests and that lacked the large deposits of river mud for bricks along the Nile or the rivers of Mesopotamia. The people of Palestine constructed most of their buildings from the abundant stone of its rugged hills.

Next Peter selects an image from their religious life—that of the priesthood. The aspect of the priesthood that he emphasizes is that of speaking for God, of proclaiming "the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (verse 9, NRSV). Again the stress is on others, on what the community of faith must do both as a witness to itself and to the world as a whole.

Finally, in this week's section, Peter reminds the church—the community of faith—that it did not always exist. Through an act of grace, God brought it into being. His mercy and initiative established it (see verse 10). The church depends upon God for its existence and fellowship just as each individual depends upon God for salvation. Both the cross and the church are free and unmerited gifts.

In the rest of the book the author will show how the community of faith should relate to the culture and social institutions around them, institutions such as government, slavery, and marriage.

by Gerald Wheeler

Gerald Wheeler is editor of *The Winner* at the Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, Maryland.

Monday, August 3

What It Means to Be a New People

LOGOS

1 Pet. 2:1-10

As we saw earlier Peter shifts in this passage from the personal or private aspect of being a believer to its corporate aspect. Christians do not exist in isolation, but as part of a whole. But to be a part of that whole, one must reach a certain level of maturity. We have been born again, but we cannot remain as spiritual infants. We must seek pure spiritual milk so that we can grow.

Alan M. Stibbs comments that Peter is saying that the newborn Christian needs "milk of the word" for spiritual nourishment.¹ Such spiritual food will help us to become guileless toward others. Stibbs feels that 1 Peter 2:1, 2 "suggests that wrong relations with our fellow-Christians may put us off our food. Only those Christians who cut out unworthy attitudes and activities toward their brethren, can have a proper, healthy appetite for their necessary spiritual food. And only those who thus take such food will grow to Christian maturity and so experience full salvation."²

Too often we have been more concerned about cravings for chocolate than we have been about how we treat others. We consider murder, adultery, and stealing as terrible sins, but character assassination as acceptable. But if Christians do not learn how to

live with their fellow believers they cannot become a part of the community portrayed by the series of corporate metaphors the disciple presents next.

Peter depicts the Christian community as a living building or house. Ps. 118:22 spoke of Israel as the head cornerstone. But Jesus applies it to Himself (see Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17). He also sees Himself as the tested cornerstone of Isa. 28:16 and the stumbling stone of Isa. 8:13, 14. Jesus becomes the cornerstone of the Christian community, supporting it and holding it together. But if the individual believers, the blocks that make up the rest of the building, mistreat one another, the whole structure will collapse.

In the words of the New Testament commentator William Barclay, "Clearly that means that *Christianity is community*; the individual Christian finds his true place only when he is built into edifice. 'Solitary religion' is ruled out as an impossibility."³ The trend of recent decades toward a highly individualized religion that attempts to live outside the church or congregation can only destroy Christianity. The church has problems, but Christianity cannot long survive outside the congregation of believers.

Next Peter portrays the community of believers as a divinely "chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (1 Pet. 2:9, NRSV).

by Gerald Wheeler

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The community of faith has as one of its primary responsibilities telling others what God has done for it. We must speak of God's redemptive acts. The very existence of the community of faith is one of God's acts—an act of grace. We have no right to be God's people, but He demonstrated mercy by making us into His people.

Everything we are as Christians is a result of God's doing. He calls us "out of darkness into his marvelous light" (verse 9, NRSV). We come to know Jesus, and through Him, God. Life takes on meaning and purpose. But we could never have discovered that if God had not acted first. He can be known only as He first reveals Himself. Everything begins at God's initiative.

But though God acts first, we must respond. He makes us into a royal priesthood. We must offer the sacrifices that are the responsibility of such a priesthood. Our sacrifices are our lives—all that we do and are. "Everything is done for God; and so even the meanest task is clad with glory. The Christian makes his *worship* an offering to God; and so the worship of God's house becomes, not a burden but a joy. The Christian makes *himself* an offering to God. . . . What God desires most of all is the love of our hearts and the service of our lives. That is the perfect sacrifice which every Christian must make."⁴

But we give God that love and sacrifice within the community of faith. We cannot love God without loving others, nor can we serve

Him without taking care of the needs of others. Worshiping and serving God by oneself is an impossibility and a denial of biblical religion.

Christ is the cornerstone that makes the church a holy house of service. In the words of Stibbs, "the company of erstwhile outsiders with no status and deserving judgment as sinners who, because of God's mercy towards them in Christ, and because they have come to Him, and believed in Him, are told that they now constitute a community characterized by election, royalty, priesthood, holiness and privileged relation to God as His special people. They are also told that what has happened to them, and what they now are by God's doings, is intended to proclaim or advertize to the universe the worthiness of God's works and ways."⁵

REACT

1. What unique kinds of temptation must a Christian overcome to learn "to live with his fellow believer"?

2. What does being a member of a "royal priesthood" mean to a Christian in everyday terms?

3. What kinds of "spiritual sacrifices" (2:5) can the Christian offer to God?

1. A. M. Stibbs and A. F. Walls, *The First Epistle General of Peter: A Commentary* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1959), p. 96.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 96, 97.

3. William Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter*, revised edition (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), p. 195.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 196, 197.

5. Stibbs and Walls, p. 105.

Tuesday, August 4

Solid Rock

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 1 Pet. 2:6-8

Even today Jerusalem is a city built of stone. A municipal law requires that the major building material of every structure be the abundant local Cenomanian limestone that has a golden hue in the late-afternoon sun. The hills the city sits on are honeycombed with underground quarries as for centuries its inhabitants searched for the special *mizzi* stone that can withstand the extremes of heat and cold of Jerusalem's climate. As you study the massive blocks of stone of the temple mount, the flaking rock crumbling off some of them shows the varying quality of even the most carefully chosen material.

"When the temple of Solomon was erected," Ellen White wrote in *The Desire of Ages*, "the immense stones for the walls and the foundations 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. . . . 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. . . . 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 this 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. In prophetic vision, Isaiah was shown that this stone was a symbol of Christ. . . .

"In infinite wisdom, God chose the foundation stone, and laid it Himself. He called it 'a sure foundation.' The entire world may lay upon it their burdens and griefs; it can endure them all. With perfect safety they may build upon it. Christ is a 'tried stone.'"*

REACT

How do you explain the rejection of God's beloved Son by God's creatures (humans)?

*Pages 597, 598.

by Gerald Wheeler

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Priesthood Is Equal- Opportunity Employment

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Pet. 2:9

When we say that Amun Re and Thoth were gods of ancient Egypt or that Marduk and Shamash were deities of the Mesopotamians, that does not mean that the average man or woman worshiped them. Such deities were national gods and were worshiped by the state and the ruling classes. Only the rulers and the professional clergy entered the elaborate temple complexes of Karnak and Babylon.

The common people worshiped other, lesser divinities at street-side shrines or in corners of the home where a family kept its household gods. The ancient Egypt exhibit at the Field Museum in Chicago, Illinois, has a reconstructed shrine of the cat-god, Bes, that shows what such a place of worship was like. It is a small structure, about the size of a walk-in closet. Such shrines would not have had a large staff of professional priests acting as go-betweens between the deity and the worshiper.

The priesthood of the Israelite tabernacle and temple were also God's servants, but they had much more contact with the average worshiper. An ancient Egyptian might see the image of a national god only once a year

when its priesthood took the statue to visit another temple. The Israelite, who had no image of Yahweh, could have contact with God every day at the tabernacle or temple. God's priests acted as true intermediaries between Him and the average person.

In the wilderness, after the Exodus from Egypt, God established both a nation of priests (see Exod. 19:6) and a hereditary priesthood to represent Himself before His people and the rest of the world. But after the cross, God again commissioned all believers to be His priests. Such priests are not like the exclusive servants of pagan deities, dedicated to catering to every whim of a secretive god. Instead, we are to represent Him before the whole world, seeking to make the inhabitants of that world fellow priests. The emphasis in 1 Peter 2:9 is not on feeding and housing a capricious and self-centered deity but on communicating divine love to others and meeting *their* needs. We serve God by serving our fellow human beings. Nor is God's priesthood an exclusive caste. All may become one of His priests. The God of the Bible is the God of all people, not just some ruling class. As His people, we are to represent Him before the world by seeking to do everything possible in an inclusive way.

by Gerald Wheeler

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Thursday, August 6

Church Supper

HOW-TO

Key Text: Acts 2:43-47

We often cite 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 to show the unity and interrelatedness of all the members of the church. From Paul's metaphor of the church as a body we recognize the importance of each individual. But we tend to view the church as something primarily organized for work. But living things do more than work. Human beings are social creatures, and so is the church.

The book of Acts says of the early church in Jerusalem, "Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts" (Acts 2:46, NRSV).

The church is more than a worshiping and witnessing entity—it is also a social organism. The breakdown of social ties has been one of the forces weakening the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

When Seventh-day Adventists were considered odd by the majority of North American society, Adventists clung together more. They shared their social lives and amusements. Church members around Adventist schools and other institutions flocked to the Saturday-night programs. But as society has become more open and receptive to Adventists, Adventists participate more actively in the general culture. They can work almost anywhere they want

to and find social acceptance. Television, the VCR, and other forms of amusement and recreation, combined with convenient transportation, have all allowed members to meet their social needs anywhere but the church.

The decline of camp meetings and the disappearance of other church gatherings, such as the Friday-evening MV program, have reduced the contact Adventists have with each other outside of church-service time. Church potlucks may not be as frequent as in the past. For some, Seventh-day Adventist life has shrunk to two-and-a-half hours on Sabbath morning.

God's people in the Old Testament had Passover, the Feast of Tabernacles, and the other yearly religious feasts to tie them together. The early church ate together. The Lord's Supper was not the somber occasion it is too often today—so much so that Paul had to caution the church at Corinth about abusing the agape feast (see 1 Cor. 11:17-22, 33, 34). Also consider how often the Gospels mention meals and parties. If Adventist biographies and histories mentioned them in the same proportion, we would be extremely concerned.

The church is a body of fellowship, as well as of evangelism and spiritual communion. We need occasions when we can gather just to be together and weave bonds and ties that will hold us together during more difficult times.

by Gerald Wheeler

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Who Are the People?

OPINION

Key Text: 1 Pet. 2:10

One of the major biblical themes is that of the people of God. A widespread misconception is that in the Old Testament one is born into it (thus it is exclusive), while the individual believer becomes part of it by personal choice in the New Testament (thus it is inclusive). Both testaments teach one common theme: God's people are a constantly growing body that seeks to include everyone. Belonging to the people of God is always by invitation on God's part and personal decision on humanity's part.

God called Abraham to found His people. But that does not mean that the Jews were all the patriarch's descendants. Abraham was the head of a large group of servants and other retainers. The sons and daughters of his herdsmen, warriors, and other servants would have considered themselves as full-fledged members of Abraham's family. Thus from the very beginning God's people consisted of people who belonged to Israel but were not physical descendants of Abraham or Isaac. There would be much intermarrying, but the fact remains that belonging did not depend on physical heredity.

When Israel left Egypt, the mixed multitude accompanied them. Despite all the problems

they may have caused, they were still regarded as a part of Israel. Once in Canaan, Israel began to absorb and include many of the land's inhabitants. For example, in Joshua 9 the Gibeonites are local inhabitants who escape destruction by making a pact with Israel through deception. In Nehemiah they are listed among God's people returning from exile and those who helped rebuild the temple (see Neh. 7:25; 3:7). First Chronicles 8:29 and 9:35 include them in the genealogy of Saul.

Israel absorbed the inhabitants of Canaan. The Jews did more proselytizing than we give them credit for, but they still failed to live up to their full mission.

The New Testament takes up the theme of the ever-growing, ever-more-inclusive people. We see this especially in Christ's Sabbath miracles and Paul's resistance to the circumcision party and certain food laws.

The book of Revelation summons a people out of Babylon at the end time (see Rev. 18:4), and they become a multitude beyond numbering. Finally, in the new heaven and new earth, God declares that they are all His people, and He is their God.

We as God's people today must fully capture the biblical vision that His people's goal is to witness until all honest people, nations, and language groups become His all-inclusive one people.

by Gerald Wheeler

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Lesson 7, August 9-15

Are We the World?



“Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us” (1 Pet. 2:12, NIV).

Heirobics: Spiritual Fitness

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: 1 Cor. 9:24-26

He'd show them! This would be the ultimate ego-boost. But then his support began to disappear, and there came that sinking feeling inside, as well as outside. His great feat becomes a humiliation, and Peter prays: "Lord, save me!" What had gone wrong? Experience taught Peter that trust must be complete and continuous, and this thought is mentioned in the passage for this lesson.

James Fixx states in his book about running "that the chief restraints on world-class athletes are not physical but psychological. . . . The physical and the mental aspects of racing are inseparable. No matter how fit you are, you won't run a good race unless your mind is on what you're doing. . . . On a track your main task is to concentrate on what you're doing; if you let your attention wander, you're sure to slow down."¹

First Peter 1:13 uses the words

"Gird up the loins of your mind."

The commentary explains that this is translated from the word that was used to describe the action of tucking the long folds of the outer garment into the girdle in preparation for action.² Are we in a race? If running a road race requires concentration, what about the mental race we're in? The NIV uses a phrase that reminds one of war: "Prepare your minds for action." The writer of Hebrews describes the Christian experience like this: "Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith" (Heb. 12:1, 2, NIV).

Peter encourages us to weigh the things of this world against the price paid to ransom us (see 1 Pet. 1:19). What choice will you make?

1. J. F. Fixx, *The Complete Book of Running* (New York: Random Books, 1977).

2. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 554.

by Bob Bell

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Monday, August 10

In But Not Of . . .

LOGOS

1 Pet. 2:11-20

The Best Argument in Favor of Christianity (read 1 Pet. 1:11, 12)

"Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16, NIV).

Peter seems to sense the ambivalence between the fact that Christians are God's chosen people (see 1 Pet. 2:9), and yet experience sufferings, suspicions, and misrepresentations. To comfort them, Peter reminds them that in this world they are aliens and exiles away from their real home (see 2:13; 1:1, 17). The very holiness of behavior that characterizes them (see 2:9), coupled with the hostility of those who reject God (see 4:4), has changed their home into a refugee camp and alienated them from their friends. The only safe place for them during their earthly sojourn is being with Jesus, the Shepherd and Overseer of their souls (1 Pet. 2:25; John 10:14). To them, He is their gate of entrance and protection (see John 10:7-9, 11), their home away from home.

Christians should, however, be worthy ambassadors for God (see 1 Pet. 1:12). The honor of God should prevent them from allowing bodily desires to control them. Unlike Jesus, who was like a lamb without blemish or defect (see 1:19; 2:22), Christians constantly have to wage a war

against the flesh. But if they daily take up their cross to follow Jesus, then their exemplary lives among the pagans may eventually have positive results. The transparent consistency of Christian behavior will not only silence pagans and make them feel ashamed, but will arouse interest (see 3:15) that may lead some in the end to glorify God in the day of visitation (see 2:12). Here the day of visitation may point to the day of judgment, but it can also be the day of conversion. While Christian living is not the basis on which a person becomes more acceptable to God, it certainly makes God more acceptable to the world (see 1 Pet. 3:1, 2; Matt. 5:14-16; *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 69).

Freedom With Responsibility (read 1 Pet. 2:13-17)

"We know that the law is good if one uses it properly" (1 Tim. 1:8, NIV).

You cannot be respectful to God without showing respect to persons of authority in society (see 2:13, 14). The fact that Christians are aliens and strangers in the world does not absolve them from their civil responsibility. Since it is the duty of civil authorities to maintain law and order, and since they are the servants of God to restrain evil (see Rom. 13:4; 1 Tim. 1:8-11), it is the duty of Christians to show these authorities the proper respect. In fact, Christians will go further than that by showing respect to all people (see 1 Pet. 2:17).

by Johan A. Japp

Johan A. Japp is an associate professor of theology at Helderberg College, Somerset West, Republic of South Africa.

The persecution of Christians had not yet become official policy in the provinces. This explains Peter's unqualified encouragement to obey civil authorities. But there is an implied presupposition that these authorities will be executing their duties in compliance with the demands of justice (see 1 Pet. 2:14). When Christians are forced to make a choice between God and Caesar, then the advice of Peter to the Sanhedrin must be kept in mind: "We must obey God rather than men!" (Acts 5:29).

Christianity is not freedom from obedience, but freedom *in* obedience. Rejecting legalism should not lead the believer to indulge the sinful nature and use freedom as a coverup for evil (see 1 Pet. 2:16). Jesus freed us from our fatal relationship to law, since all have sinned and stand condemned before God. Law as an instrument of condemnation on the cross frees us from law as an instrument of condemnation in the Christian life (see Gal. 2:19). Rightly understood, legalism was the very embodiment of the foundation principle of sin, namely pride. As such, it shackled the sinner only further into a state of lostness. But when Jesus nailed the guilt of man to the cross, law could through Him become an instrument of life instead of an instrument of death.

When Grace Is All You Have (read 1 Pet. 2:18-20)

"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you" (Luke 6:27, 28, NIV).

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus spelled out requirements for Christian living that, for all in-

tents and purposes, are humanly impossible to observe. One such requirement was the command to love those who treat you abusively (see Matt. 5:39-44). One wonders whether Christ was asking too much, especially from the modern perspectives of democracy, trade unions, human rights, and the rule of law. But the world of the New Testament was a very different world from the one we know. For one thing, slavery was commonplace. Even the New Testament does not categorically reject it. Peter advised Christian slaves and servants to submit to their masters, regardless of their treatment (see 1 Pet. 2:18). "God will bless you for this," he says, "if you endure the pain of undeserved suffering because you are conscious of his will" (2:19, TEV).

Like it or not, this seems to indicate that violent revolt against oppression is not His will. This does not mean that God condones autocratic behavior or that Christians should not participate in social action. But in widespread slavery and harsh Roman rule, the commendable thing for Christian slaves and servants at that time was to be living object lessons of Christ's suffering (see 2:21). To them, as to Paul, the Lord says: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9, NIV).

REACT

1. What effect do our houses, cars, appliances, friends, and recreational habits have on our status as aliens and strangers in the world?

2. What should be the Christian's role, if any, in overcoming oppression today?

Tuesday, August 11

You and the World

TESTIMONY

Key Text: John 17:8

Can the Christian make any difference in the world? Is it Seventh-day Adventist thinking that one can change the world, or is it humanistic, Utopian, or even New Age thinking?

“God requires the training of the mental faculties. He designs that His servants shall possess more intelligence and clearer discernment than the worldling, and He is displeased with those who are too careless or too indolent to become efficient, well-informed workers. . . . This lays upon us the obligation of developing the intellect to its fullest capacity, that with all the mind we may know and love our Creator. If placed under the control of His Spirit, the more thoroughly the intellect is cultivated, the more effectively it can be used in the service of God. . . . We should not let slip even one opportunity of qualifying ourselves intellectually to work for God.”¹

“The world is our field of missionary toil, and we are to go forth to labor surrounded with the atmosphere of Gethsemane and Calvary.”²

“The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy

for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’ ”³

“If we would humble ourselves before God, and be kind and courteous and tenderhearted and pitiful, there would be one hundred conversions to the truth where now there is only one.”⁴

“God imparts His gifts to us that we also may give, and thus make known His character to the world.”⁵

“So also with the gifts and blessings of this life: whatever you may possess above your fellows places you in debt, to that degree, to all who are less favored.”⁶

REACT

1. What principle from Christ's life can we implement in our efforts to minister to the world?

2. What is the relationship between working in the world and coping with worldliness?

3. If God is controlling history, why should a Christian bother to exercise the right to vote in democratic elections?

1. *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 333, 334.

2. *Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 12.

3. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143.

4. *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 189.

5. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 300.

6. *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 136.

by Delyse Steyn

Delyse Steyn is a lecturer in education and communication at Helderberg College, Somerset West, Republic of South Africa.

Positive Submission

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Phil. 2:6, 7

Submission is a term with few positive connotations. "Submit yourselves" (1 Pet. 2:13, NIV). The Greek word used here by Peter is a compound word containing *tasso*, meaning "to order, to determine" and the preposition *hupo*, meaning "under (control)." In the Septuagint it was used for different Hebrew terms denoting "to subject oneself," "to place under," "to submit (especially to God)." One could translate the imperative "command yourselves under."

Peter tells us that we have to make a choice. Submission is not natural. Behind this phrase lies the underlying concept of a "Christian who does not seek his own interests but rather assumes a voluntary ordination of himself to others."* But why?

Peter gives us only one answer: "For the Lord's sake" (verse 13). This could be understood in two ways: (1) because Jesus gave us an example of submission while living on earth and (2) because God Himself is the author of the principle of submission. In verses 13 and 14 Peter uses two titles translated in the NIV as kings and governors. Both titles were used in the East to designate the Roman emperor and his legates, procurators, or proconsuls.

Although Peter saw his Master

die at the hands of the Romans, he does not call for a Christian revolt. In a time full of "liberation movements," "liberation theology," and "liberation wars" (what a contradiction!), we have to live with Peter's "submit yourselves." To understand and apply this phrase, we have to find the principle behind Peter's statement. The answer lies in verse 15: "For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men" (NIV). The key phrase is "doing good," living a lifestyle against the pattern of our societies, because by our doing so, people around us are amazed.

Peter's message is also Jesus' message on the Mount of Blessing. And Peter's message shows again the incredible sacrifice of our Saviour, who "being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant" (Phil. 2:6, 7, NIV). What a challenge!

REACT

1. How can you practically live Peter's "submit yourself" at home, at school, at work?

2. Where is the borderline between submission and compromise?

*F. E. Gaebelien, ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), vol. 12, p. 233.

by Gerald A. Klingbeil

Gerald A. Klingbeil is a graduate of Helderberg College, Somerset West, Republic of South Africa, and the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa.

Thursday, August 13

Worldly/Otherworldly

HOW-TO

Key Text: 1 Cor. 2:16

If we retreat as an other-worldling to a place where everything is safe and true—to Christian news, Christian music, Christian friends—then we're escaping Christ's command to be in the world but not of it. Roger Dudley suggests three possible approaches to the world:

1. *Culture-rejecting.* John Fischer describes this as "from-ming." "When our only distinctiveness in society comes from avoiding certain things, we can easily fix our gaze on the evil and view the rest of the world judgmentally. But this earns us a negative identity."¹

2. *Culture-affirming.* This approach seeks to make Christianity relevant to the world. The cultural achievements of man have potential spiritual worth. However, it could be that we are mere passive receivers, and that we do not discern between lies and truth.

3. *Culture-transforming.* Fischer suggests that the world needs to be infused with the light and flavor of life in Christ. What man actually needs is a deep look into the Word of God so that his eyesight is reconstructed in order that he see things correctly, rather than having to be protected from them. "With our new-found eyesight, we begin to sift out truth from wherever we

find it."³ It is axiomatic that living in the world as a Christian means thinking Christian about that world. It is a terrible thing to waste a mind created by God. It is a terrible thing to forget that we have been made in the image of God.

The truth is that the Christian could seek to relate to his world in such a way that the non-Christian will have occasion to understand better the character of God, to think well of Him, and to accept personal salvation.

A 12-year-old Russian took a pot of flowers from the fields to the captain of the jail where his mother had been tortured to death for her faith. "It is my mother's birthday today, and I want you to take these home to your wife. Tell her of my mother and that Jesus loves her." This act was the final influence on the captain, and he became a Christian. One day the cell door opened, and the captain was thrown into a cell with other Christians, who ministered to his needs and accepted him as a fellow believer.

REACT

1. How can you as a Christian make a difference where you are?
2. What changes do you need to make in your own life?

1. Roger Dudley, *The World; Take It or Leave It* (Washington: Review and Herald Publishing Association).

2. John Fischer, *Real Christians Don't Dance* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1988), p. 141.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 153.

by Delyse Steyn

Delyse Steyn is a lecturer in education and communication at Helderberg College, Somerset West, Republic of South Africa.

What Was Peter's Intention?

OPINION

Key Text: 1 Pet. 2:11-20

Anyone reading 1 Peter 2:11-20 is forgiven if he thinks that slavery is condoned by the New Testament and that belief in the divine right of kings, as practiced during the Dark Ages, is actually supported by this passage. The divine right of kings allowed a sovereign to so abuse his subjects as to commit genocide if he so wished—and Peter would seem to condone this and spell out blind submission to the will of man as being the will of God.

And if this were true, then the Bible could be blamed for untold suffering among untold millions of the human race who have been reduced to incredible bondage and poverty by the extortionate lusts of overlords.

Even Martin Luther took Peter at his word and prohibited the peasant uprising that his revolutionary talk had inspired. He sided with the nobles against the desperate peasants, and thousands were massacred as the insurrection was suppressed.

We know that there are several instances in Paul's letters where he is addressing heathen practices that had crept into the newly formed churches, and that his instructions in these instances bear relation to those particular problems.

Could it be that Peter is also speaking of a time and place in

history when the new church had to be ever so careful not to incite persecution on the grounds of insurrection? One of the biggest problems faced by the early Christians was the practice of emperor worship. By refusing to worship the Roman emperor, they excited the distrust of people who not only looked on their refusal as unpatriotic but began to ask whom it was that they did serve.

The Christians were therefore at pains to show that the God they worshiped was not in competition with local government, and they could best demonstrate their loyalty to those in authority by ensuring that they carefully obeyed all instructions and gave no one any cause for alarm. Any absence of meek compliance would simply convert nagging doubt into certain affirmation that the generally held suspicions against them were well-founded.

Perhaps Peter sought to alleviate the perceived threat of a strange and powerful enemy in the form of the Christian King. Perhaps it was not his intention to lay down a law for the future of mankind that would encourage and sanctify the cruelest oppression of man upon his fellowmen. What say you?

REACT

On which social issues of today should the Christian church speak out, and on which should it remain silent?

by Anthony Tainton

Anthony Tainton is a junior theology student at Helderberg College, Somerset West, Republic of South Africa.

Lesson 8, August 16-22

Photosynthetic Christians



“To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps” (1 Pet. 2:21, NIV).

Cruel Necessity

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: 1 Pet. 2:21

The woman plunged in with the blade. Where the skin had protected, it now formed the banks of a river of blood. At the base of the river lay trembling organs. With an effortless slice of surgical steel the body had been exposed and made painfully vulnerable.

This description seems to portray an act of vicious cruelty. Would not the woman be punished if caught? Could the body possibly survive such an event?

In truth, the body could not have survived without the event, for it was the surgical removal of cancer. In order to be saved, the body had first to be injured. It was by brutal kindness that the body underwent surgery.

The story is told of Oliver Cromwell, who, after overseeing the execution of Charles I, crept into the dark room where the body lay. He leaned over the corpse and whispered, "Cruel necessity."

That which at first sight appears cruel can often be the very thing that saves. This is certainly nothing new to a church that holds at its center the sufferings

of Christ, in which we share and by which we are saved.

Yet many of us have blamed God for the suffering we see and feel. The surgery is so painful that we lose sight of the eventual recovery; it is easy for us to blame the surgeon not only for the pain or inconvenience of the operation but also for the disease itself. But an operation is a saving process.

It is true that this presentation of suffering as a "cruel necessity," such as we find in Romans 8, seems too clear-cut. The sufferings of children are inexplicable and can hardly work in our model of healing pain.

Dostoevsky realized that there is too much suffering to fit into any tidy explanation. In *The Brothers Karamazov* he says that "if the sufferings of children go to swell the sum of sufferings which was necessary to pay for truth, then I protest that truth is not worth such a price."

It is, however, worth the price. We know the price is not too high, because it was not too expensive for Christ. By His example He showed us that sufferings can be endured and that they are nothing compared to the glory we will receive.

by Eric Merrifield

Eric Merrifield, from Florida, is a senior English and history major at Newbold College, Bracknell, England.

Monday, August 17

Christ: Example, Sin-Bearer, and Shepherd-Protector

LOGOS

1 Pet. 2:21, 24, 25

“Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps” (1 Pet. 2:21, NIV).

Peter was approaching the end of his life on earth. The time was not far off when he would be crucified because of his faith by the Roman emperor Nero. Through many trials and temptations the self-confident and forward fisherman from Capernaum had become a humble disciple who, no longer self-confident, now trusted completely in the sustaining power of his Saviour.

Peter desired that fellow Christian believers, especially those new in the faith (he talks of “new-born babies” in 1 Pet. 2:2, NIV), in their trials would keep Jesus’ example of patient suffering fresh in their mind. Throughout His life on earth, and especially during the three-and-a-half years of His public ministry, Jesus was misunderstood, maligned, ridiculed, abused, despised, and finally rejected. However, He never retaliated; He never abused anyone or spoke harshly or deceitfully. When sinful hands nailed Him to the cross, He did not curse or threaten, but He prayed: “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34, NIV). His true followers will manifest the same forgiving

spirit as He did.

Some Christians have difficulty with the idea that Christ is our example. How can the perfect, sinless Son of God be an example for sinful human beings with inherent tendencies to sin? If we phrase the question in this way with the implied assumption that it would be possible for us to become exactly like Jesus, then the question is raising an expectation that cannot be met. No other human being could claim to be sinless. For that reason the Scriptures set Christ before us as the only perfect pattern of what we should be like.

Christ, Our Sin-Bearer

“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree” (1 Pet. 2:24, NIV).

Many Christians have become discouraged or disturbed in their experience. Some have tried again and again to follow Jesus’ example and found that they could not do it. So, finally, in discouragement they gave up. Others have focused so strongly upon their own efforts that they lost sight not only of the all-sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross but also of His promise to enable us to obey Him. Both groups need to listen carefully to what Peter has to say and to take a long look at the cross and the mediatorial ministry of Christ.

What did Christ accomplish when He died? Peter says that He

by Peter van Bemmelen

Peter van Bemmelen is a senior lecturer in religion at Newbold College, Bracknell, England.

bore our sins. It is obvious that the apostle is using an expression from Isaiah 53, where you can read that a Man, whom the Lord calls "my righteous servant" (verse 11), will bear the iniquities, or the confessed and forsaken sins, of many. Peter alludes to Isaiah 53 at least five times in the brief passage that is the subject of our study for this week. It is not surprising that Peter explains the suffering and death of Christ in the light of this famous chapter, for Jesus did so Himself (see Luke 22:37). To understand what Peter means, we have to listen to Isaiah, who prophesied about the coming Messiah, that "he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed" (53:5, NIV). Christ took upon Himself our sin, its guilt, and its terrible consequences, so that we, through faith in Him, could receive His righteousness. Let us never forget that we are perfect and righteous only in Him. Do not be discouraged; Christ has already died for you, and He will give you strength to overcome.

Christ, Our Shepherd-Protector

"You were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls" (1 Pet. 2:25).

Peter, following Isaiah 53:6, compares erring sinners with sheep who have gone astray. Like lost sheep, human beings are in a hopeless plight from which they cannot escape by themselves. Sinful humans need a Saviour to deliver them from sin, unbelief, and guilt. Peter knew that very well. Many times he had lost his faith, finally even denying that he knew the Lord. But Jesus did not forsake Peter. Not only did He freely forgive him, but He recon-

firmed him as His apostle (see John 21:15-19).

Peter certainly speaks from his own experience with Jesus when he writes to fellow Christians that they are like sheep who have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of their souls. Jesus had called Himself the Good Shepherd because He would give His life to save us, and Peter could never forget how Jesus had died on the cross, forsaken by God and men and denied by the very disciple who had boasted that he would die with his Lord even if all others would forsake Him.

Not only does Peter refer to Jesus as Shepherd, but also as the "Overseer" of our souls. One meaning of the Greek word *episkopos*, translated as "overseer" in the New International Version of the Bible, is that of protector, and that is probably why Peter used this word here. He wanted to help us understand that Jesus is there not only to guide us but also to protect us.

Again Peter speaks from his own experience. A few hours before Peter denied his Lord, Jesus had warned His disciple that Satan wanted to destroy his faith and so sever his relationship with God. However, Jesus had reassured him, "I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail" (Luke 22:32, NIV).

As surely as Jesus prayed that Peter's faith would not fail, so He is praying for us today. Just when you have made a mess of things, Jesus says to you: "Take courage and come back to Me, for I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail."

REACT

1. What does Paul mean when he says in 1 Cor. 11:1 (NIV), "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ"?

2. What are the staggering implications of the fact that Christ is bearing our sins?

Tuesday, August 18

Too Great a Sacrifice?

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 1 Pet. 2:24

Christ came to this earth and died for us. This is the glorious truth, but it does not stand by itself. In that act Christ gave us the gift of eternal life, but we need to accept the gift for eternal life to be ours. God, through the Bible and the writings of Ellen White, shows us the power of Christ's death and resurrection.

"Christ bore our sins in His own body on the cross, that God might be just and yet the justifier of all those who believe in Him. There is life, eternal life, for all who will surrender to Christ."¹

"He has borne our sins in His own body on the tree; and through the power He has given us, we may resist the world, the flesh, and the devil."²

Ellen White continues by talking about the power over sin that Christ's sacrifice has for us today if we come to Him. "Then let us not talk of our weakness and inefficiency, but of Christ and His strength. When we talk of Satan's strength, the enemy fastens his power more firmly upon us. When we talk of the power of the Mighty One, the enemy is driven back. As we draw near to God, He draws near to us."³

Jesus came to this world to save His people. His desire was to give man a second chance, a way

back to a perfect relationship with God. Ellen White describes it in this way: "He had a work to do to bring man into harmony with the divine plan . . . and He counted no sacrifice too great for the accomplishment of the object."⁴

The apostle John gives us a powerful example of a Christian's response to Christ's redeeming sacrifice. White cites his example in connection with personal sacrifice. He was faced with a cauldron of boiling oil for following Christ. She records John's words in *The Acts of the Apostles*:

"[Jesus] gave His life to save the world. I am honored in being permitted to suffer for His sake."⁵

For the apostle John, suffering for Christ included enduring boiling oil. For us, suffering for Christ is unlikely to mean intense physical pain. It could mean persecution. It could just mean not being ashamed to call yourself a Christian.

REACT

1. What does it mean to put my will under God's loving will?
2. How is dwelling on Satan's strength destructive to Christian living?

1. *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 193.

2. *Messages to Young People*, p. 105.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 422.

5. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 570.

by Rein-Andre Paulsen

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Potato or Onion Christians

EVIDENCE

Key Texts: 1 Pet. 2:24; Isa. 43:2, 3

A yam farmer in tropical countries prepares the land in much the same way all lands are prepared for cultivation: clearing and plowing. He then digs holes about two feet wide and three feet apart in the ground, mounding up the soil to one side. When it is time for planting, the soil in the mound is worked and used to fill in the hole, forming a yam-hill some 18 inches above the ground. A piece of tuber is then cradled on top of the yam-hill and covered over with more soil. A long stake is now placed in the ground to one side of the yam-hill in readiness for the growing vine.

Initially the piece of tuber has no roots, so it cannot obtain food from the soil to provide energy for growth. Neither are there any leaves to enable photosynthesis to take place. The tuber itself provides all the food the vine needs in its early stages of growth, and then it gradually dies. As the vine runs up the stake, leaves form, allowing the photosynthetic process to manufacture food for the sustained growth of the plant and for storage as a new tuber is formed.

Sometimes a storm may damage the vine, or a stake may topple over. After the storm the farmer will restake the fallen vine to facilitate maximum exposure of leaves to sunlight during growth and development.

The growth process involved in producing onions from sets contrasts with that of the yam. While the yam tuber dies so another may live, the small onion bulb is protected on the outside by a papery, water-resisting covering. It becomes bigger from inside out as each new tubular leaf stores food in the enlarged base. The onion just gets bigger and bigger—there is no sacrifice.

In the Gospels the life of Christ is portrayed as a preparation for His death to save us from sin. But through it all, God has been there. God is like the yam farmer who meticulously prepares the soil and plants the tuber, which subsequently dies so that the species might live on. He guides the vine to the stake, where the corolla of leaves have maximum exposure to the sun and carbon dioxide: these ingredients enhance photosynthesis and maximize the growth of the new tuber. Furthermore, we may liken the tuber that dies to Christ, who died so that we might live; the stake as the path, the example Christ has set us; the photosynthetic process as the invisible working of the Holy Spirit, which transforms us into Christ's righteousness.

When you encounter undeserved suffering, you must endure it (see 1 Pet. 2:24), knowing that God is in the storm with you (see Isa. 43:2, 3). He will lift you up, restake you if necessary, and facilitate the effective work of the Holy Spirit.

by Albert A. C. Waite

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Thursday, August 20

Three Ways to Handle Suffering

HOW-TO

Key Text: 1 Pet. 2:23

Suffering is a constant reality that is entwined with human experience. We realize it globally as children starve in underdeveloped countries, and we feel it personally in broken relationships or in the death of a loved one. Often nothing tries faith in God more severely than struggling with the problem of suffering.

We doubt the goodness of God, even the very existence of God, and we are angry and perplexed that God could allow such pain and unhappiness to enter our lives. Many times we actually accuse God of deliberately inflicting suffering upon us.

1. *Remember that Christ understands completely how we feel when we suffer.* Christ experienced all the doubt, uncertainty, and anguish that accompany suffering. He struggled with accepting His role on the cross when He prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me" (Luke 22:42, NIV), and He felt the enormity of isolation from God when He cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34, NIV). Don't turn away from God because you don't believe He can understand what you are going through. The Father had to watch His Son die on the cross, and Jesus had to bear the weight of all our sins. Nobody could possibly empathize more fully with our pain than

God can in His infinite love.

2. *Treat suffering as an opportunity to follow Christ's example.* Because Christ suffered for our sakes, our suffering is a privilege that enables us to try to emulate Christ in His patient and loving nature in the face of adversity (see 1 Pet. 2:21). When people hated Him, He did not retaliate, and when they hurt Him, He did not desire revenge (see 1 Pet. 2:23). When we commit ourselves to following Christ, we must be willing to respond to suffering the way He did.

3. *Don't allow your suffering to destroy your faith in God.* Dealing with suffering and grappling with your anger and doubt can actually strengthen your faith tremendously. As Peter says, there is no virtue in submitting to a beating you know you deserve; the real test is when you suffer unjustly and are able to respond in a Christlike manner (see 1 Pet. 2:20). Christ lived a completely sinless life, and yet He suffered enormously. Instead of yielding to resentment and bitterness, "he entrusted himself to him who judges justly" (1 Pet. 2:23).

REACT

1. How does Jesus' divinity affect our ability to follow His example in terms of dealing with suffering?

2. How is Christlike behavior really accessible to us?

by Alicia Homer

Alicia Homer is a senior English and history major at Newbold College, Bracknell, England.

Is Suffering in Your Plan?

OPINION

Key Text: 1 Pet. 2:21

The trees stand there, naked of all the leaves, so colorless and harsh. As I look up into the sky, I'm met by a gray mass; I thought the sky was meant to be blue! The cold wind blows straight through my bones. I shiver. At least it's not raining today; yet, as I continue my walk, I think of my warm bed and a hot drink. It is one of those days when I don't want to face the English weather. Surely God could have placed me somewhere else, like under a palm tree enjoying the warmth of the sun and the sound of the ocean—a relaxing holiday instead of this. Why did I have to experience the coldness of life?

And there is Peter calling us to suffer—telling us that it is part of the Christlike experience! Suffer? How can a loving God call us to suffer? It sounds just too painful! “No thanks, God, I don't feel like suffering. I need to finish my degree so that I can work for You and fulfill Your call for me. Sorry, but suffering doesn't really fit into my plan!”

Is it not enough for me to realize the existence of suffering? Must I really experience it?

We realize quite early in our Christian experience that Christ suffered on our behalf. But is it necessary for us to take part in His suffering in order to gain a fuller understanding of just what

Christ must have experienced? Do we, as Paul writes in Romans 8:18, share in His suffering in order to share glory? It seems as though suffering and glory are combined, and that “the deeper the sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can contain” (Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*). Suffering and pain are not something we would choose. Still, it is not our choice whether or not to suffer. And when suffering does come, it also can bring joy along—perhaps in a different way and maybe not immediately.

Joy and sorrow are like a coin, for there are two sides to the same coin. The coin cannot exist with merely one side, yet you can hardly look at both sides at the same time! In 1 Pet. 2:20 Peter is telling us that it is commendable before God to endure suffering. In itself it sounds so unfair. But when we consider that suffering is only one part of the coin, and that there is something more on the other side, when looking at it in completeness, it somehow makes sense. Then I too can respond to the call to suffering. I do not always see the joy in my sorrow; my suffering does not always have a meaning, yet suffering has become part of my life and something irreplaceable in my Christian experience.

REACT

What part does suffering play in the Christian experience? Is it inevitable?

by Kirsten Oster

Kirsten Oster is a final-year religion major at Newbold College, Bracknell, England.

Lesson 9, August 23-29

Wedlock or Deadlock?



“Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers” (1 Pet. 3:7, NIV).

Who's in Charge Around Here?

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Gen. 3:16

Turmoil reigned in the palace of King Ahasuerus. This powerful monarch, whose authority was unquestioned throughout the length of his vast, sprawling empire, had been publicly humiliated by his wife Vashti. She had refused to obey his summons to appear before him and his high-ranking officials in the midst of their revelry. What was to be done about this act of defiance?

An advisor called Memucan suggested that the queen's disobedience might spark an empire-wide insurrection by wives against their husbands' authority. The men must show they were still in charge, so Vashti had to pay the price. The resultant edict that issued from the Persian court was designed to encourage wives to respect their husbands and to confirm male domination in the household.

The bond between man and woman was one of the casualties of sin recorded in Gen. 3, the chapter of broken relationships. Both sexes were cursed in the aftermath of the Fall, but a consequence for women was that their husbands would rule over them (see Gen. 3:16).

What form was this rule to take? Whatever response may be made to this question, the reality is that the Old Testament reveals a male-oriented society in which

women were held with little regard. The degraded position of women is amply borne out by the diverse cultures of apostolic times. In Greek society a woman was supposed to be dutiful, to be obedient, and to stay out of sight. Roman law regarded a woman as a child forever. While a virgin, she was subject to her father; on her marriage, she passed under the charge of her husband.

In stark contrast the New Testament ethos regarding women is much more sympathetic. Jesus treated women with great respect and fairness. A positive view of women appears prominently in the writings of Luke. It became clear to the early church that the gospel upheld the fundamental equality and dignity of women.

Submission and headship emerge as key biblical concepts in any discussion on marriage. The former term sounds negative, but Sarah, an example of a submissive wife, was no doormat, as evidenced by her dealings with Abraham and Hagar. Leadership in the framework of marriage has its model in Christ's authority over the church. Male leadership and female submission—what do they mean? Do the Old and New Testaments contradict each other on this subject? Is this a recipe for holy wedlock or unholy deadlock? The Bible holds these concepts in a fine tension; we are challenged to apply these principles in a balanced and meaningful way to this most intimate of human relations.

by David McKibben

David McKibben is a theology major at Newbold College, Bracknell, England.

Monday, August 24

Creative Submission

LOGOS

1 Pet. 3:1-7

Submission of citizens to the emperor, submission of slaves to the master, and now submission of wives to husbands. At first glance this letter from Peter seems to be encouraging hierarchical relationships. The English word *submit* has its roots in two Latin words, *sub* meaning “under,” and *mitter* meaning “send.” It is translated from the Greek word *hupotasso*, which is a military term meaning “arrange under.” Submissive relationships create neat hierarchies—everyone under or above everyone else. Wives and slaves submit to husbands and masters, masters submit to the emperor. The twin mottoes of this society are “Know your place” and “Do as you’re told.”

Something about such a picture of relationships seems incompatible with the model of relationships between Christians given to us in the life and teaching of Jesus. It is true that the angel announced to the virgin Mary that her Son would take His proper place at the top of what sounds like a similar hierarchy:

“He will be great; he will bear the title ‘Son of the Most High’; the Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David, and he will be king over Israel for ever; his reign shall never end” (Luke 1:32, NEB).

But what sort of relationships did Jesus envisage among the people in this kingdom? In some of His teachings at least, Jesus turned the hierarchy on its head:

“You know that in the world the recognized rulers lord it over their subjects, and their great men make them feel the weight of authority. That is not the way with you; among you, whoever wants to be great must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be the willing slave of all” (Mark 10:42-44, NEB).

In an effort to move His disciples away from power-dominated hierarchies, Jesus pointed them to a model in which power was exercised, not by making men “feel the weight of authority,” but by serving. The task of a slave is to enlarge the master’s ability to achieve. Servant leadership, Jesus taught, is to perform such a function for our brothers and sisters in the Christian community. To serve one another is to enable one another.

Jesus reminded His disciples: “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give up his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45, NEB).

On the throne of David sits not a macho monarch, but a slain lamb, not a political potentate, but a crucified craftsman. He demonstrated that the God-King at the top of the hierarchy was willing to submit to a degrading death at the unknowing hands of those at the bottom of the hierarchy.

by Helen Pearson

Helen Pearson is a lecturer in journalism at Newbold College, Bracknell, England.

And yet, it seemed, Jesus recognized that even in the model of servant leadership there were dangers. Distortion in our understanding of what service to others means may create an unequal relationship in which the one serving neglects her own needs, supposedly for the sake of the other. Service that diminishes rather than develops the servant is not service, but slavery, not redemption, but reduction.

And so Jesus provided us with another model of relationships between Himself and His people—a model that took us away from hierarchy toward mutuality:

“I call you servants no longer; a servant does not know what his master is about. I have called you friends, because I have disclosed to you everything that I heard from my Father” (John 15:15, 16, NEB).

On the surface it seems that Peter was still some way from understanding the egalitarian relationships between men and women that Jesus had taught and modeled. He spent six verses telling wives to submit to their husbands and only one verse telling husbands to understand and live considerately with their wives. For some, such an imbalance suggests that Peter was a paternalistic male chauvinist. By the standards of the late twentieth century, perhaps he was.

But the standards of the first century were different. The New Testament provides ample evidence that Peter took some time to realize that Gentiles were equal in God's eyes. Other new Christians were still far from being convinced. As he taught, he had to move slowly, holding onto as much of what was familiar as possible. He wrote about the relationship between Abraham and Sarah, a comfortable point of reference. This was not the time to remind his hearers that at one point God told Abraham to do as

Sarah told him (see Gen. 21:12). But he moved on to teach the principles that Jesus had taught—equality and mutuality.

For the Jews it was enough that men received the sign of circumcision, the sign that they were received by God. Christians had already moved away from such an idea, baptizing women as well as men (see Acts 8:12). To suggest that a woman should be treated with respect not just because she was weaker but because she, like the Gentiles, was a potential recipient of God's grace, sharing in God's gifts with her husband—this was revolutionary. Peter was moving toward equality, in the direction that his Lord had mapped out.

His final suggestion is even more radical. As he comes to the end of this section, he explains the grounds for his concern—the purpose of all this submission—“then your prayers will not be hindered” (1 Pet. 3:7, NEB). Submission between spouses, Peter suggests, has a direct connection with an unhindered prayer life for those who are married. The relationship between a husband and his God is closely affected by the way he treats his wife, and, by implication, the relationship between a wife and her God is closely affected by the way she treats her husband.

Peter seems to suggest that our most intimate family relationships are in some senses practice grounds for our relationships with God. If with our spouses we can learn creative submission, if we can learn to listen to each other quietly, to identify with the other's needs, to modify and adjust our behavior for their sakes and to enjoy that mutual understanding and nurture which is the highest form of friendship, we shall be enriched in all our relationships and in our capacity to know God.

Tuesday, August 25

Love of Christ in Action

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 1 Pet. 3:1, 7

In her writings to the married and dating couples of her time, Ellen White seems to have used considerable tact and understanding. However, because many of her writings were directed to a particular audience in a specific situation, one should be careful before drawing hasty conclusions from them. Nevertheless, she did make some general statements that can clarify the ideal relationship between husband and wife.

Concerning the possible power struggle of the spouses, for example, Ellen White writes the following: "Neither husband nor the wife should attempt to exercise over the other an arbitrary control. Do not try to compel each other to yield to your wishes. You can not do this and retain each other's love. Be kind, patient, and forbearing, considerate, and courteous. By the grace of God you can succeed in making each other happy, as in your marriage vow you promised to do so."¹

As a medicine for possible problems within a marriage relationship, Ellen White suggests Christ's rulership in the hearts of the spouses. This, in turn, would lead to more unselfish behavior and respect of the other as an

equal heir of salvation. "If the will of God is fulfilled, the husband and wife will respect each other, and cultivate love and confidence. Anything that would mar the peace and unity of the family should be firmly repressed, and kindness and love should be cherished. He who manifests the spirit of tenderness, forbearance, and love, will find that the same spirit will be reflected upon him. Where the Spirit of God reigns, there will be no talk of unsuitability in the marriage relation. If Christ indeed is formed within, the hope of glory, there will be union and love in the home. Christ abiding in the heart of the wife will be at agreement with Christ abiding in the heart of the husband. They will be striving together for the mansions Christ has gone to prepare for those who love Him."²

REACT

1. How does seeing your spouse, boyfriend, or girlfriend as a joint heir of salvation change your behavior toward that person?
2. In which practical ways could you show your spouse through your own behavior how much Christ actually loves him or her?

1. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 361.

2. *The Adventist Home*, p. 120.

by Kertulli Kauppinen

Kertulli Kauppinen, from Finland, is a theology major at Newbold College, Bracknell, England.

Reasons to Submit

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Pet. 3:1

Wives submissive to their husbands as slaves to their masters? Really? Besides Peter, most of the Greco-Roman world thought so. Plato, Aristotle, Seneca—all argued for proper authority and subordination in the household. Their “household code” required obedience and submission, essential qualities for harmony both at home and in the city-state.

In practical terms submission meant that a wife should confine herself to her home. It meant silence and a veiled head if and when she appeared in public. It also meant acceptance of her husband’s gods and his religion. Other “inferior” places like Egypt might allow a different order, but they were to be pitied. Surely Aristotle had it right when he wrote, “Freedom in regard to women, is detrimental both in regard to the purpose of the constitution and in regard to the happiness of the state.”¹

During the first century A.D., Rome and its governors were increasingly troubled by strange Eastern religions—Judaism and Christianity among them. Both had infiltrated the capital and caused disruption around the provinces. Both were considered subversive because both significantly qualified the submissiveness that the ancients required in their households. “Christianity . . . brought a new understanding of

personhood” to slaves and wives “by teaching that they had a right to choose their own God.”² Pagan critics accused these converts of disrupting the harmony of households and state.

The submissiveness of wives that 1 Peter advocates is a submissiveness in view of these times and circumstances. Yes, Christians worshiped a new Lord, but such faith would strengthen society, not undermine it. Christian women should show by their chasteness, modesty, simplicity, virtue, and submission that their pagan critics had misunderstood. They might also win over their pagan husbands.

In time Christianity’s new understanding of personhood brought other radical changes for slaves and women. Christian women found there could be as much virtue in speaking as in silence. They also found that there was a world in need beyond the household door. And no doubt there will be further changes yet.

REACT

1. Is Peter’s counsel still relevant? What if your husband is already converted? What if pagans no longer misunderstand?

2. When is submission not important for harmony and for the good of the church? (see 1 Cor. 10:24, 32).

1. *Politics II*, 1296b.

2. David L. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (Society of Biblical Literature, Monograph Series #26, 1981).

by Gilbert Valentine

Gilbert Valentine is chaplain at Newbold College, Bracknell, England.

Thursday, August 27

Love, Honor, and Obey

HOW-TO

Key Text: 1 Pet. 3:7

There is no getting away from the fact that the Bible teaches that husbands have a certain authority. It's not just Peter's idea; right back in Eden God distinctly said to Eve, "[Thy husband] shall rule over thee." It was not God's original intention, to be sure, but it is the situation that has existed since the Fall.

How should wives submit and yet retain personal identity? How should they put someone else first, and yet not become a doormat? People are so different, marriage dynamics so varied, each couple will have to work out their own relationship. There are some absolutes, however, that should help.

1. *The eternal triangle is just what you need—Christ, wife, husband.* The more you love each other, the closer you grow to each other, the fewer the chances for strife to arise.

2. *Pray often, individually and as a couple.* Ask for wisdom and patience. God knows what you need and is only too willing to help you grow in grace.

3. *Study the other's mind, moods, interests.* Be sensitive, and learn when to speak, and when to be silent.

4. *In matters of choice, swim with the tide; in matters of principle, stand firm as a rock.*

The beauty of character that develops as God works with you toward your perfect maturity (see Phil. 2:12, 13) will not depend on external props. This beauty is eternal and internal; it will not go gray or wrinkle or tarnish. Do you value the "imperishable ornament, a gentle, quiet spirit" (1 Pet. 3:4, NEB) as much as God does? In His eyes, submission to one's husband is an adornment to a believer. We may find it painful at times, but we cannot forget that Christ wore a crown of thorns, an adornment of mockery, and a mockery of adornment.

Husband, in the same way, follow the example left to you by Christ in all things. Understand and honor your wife, Peter says. Spend time with her, listen to her, let her share her hopes and fears with you, and don't laugh at her if her perceptions of life differ from yours. The four points listed above apply as much to husbands as to wives, and as you pray, work and play, laugh and love together, you will grow in grace together. Sooner or later you will both discover that there is no need to think of submission, or of weaker or stronger; to borrow a phrase from next week's lesson, you will be "one in thought and feeling" (verse 8, NEB).

by Jonquil Hole

Jonquil Hole is the assistant librarian at Newbold College, Bracknell, England.

Slavery, Murder, and Submission

OPINION

Key Text: 1 Pet. 3:1-8

One of the small annoyances that, I think, almost all girls face as they go through Adventist schools is the many smug male recitations of texts such as the one for this lesson.

Once during academy I heard two of my male friends plotting how, in the next Sabbath School lesson, they could use these verses to make the girls angry. Text by text, they pored over it, reading each verse aloud with great reverence and conviction.

By the time Sabbath came, I was prepared. After they had read the texts, flipped their Bibles shut, and fixed their eyes on us with looks of victory, I read *my* passages—first the one counseling slaves to be submissive to their masters, then the one commanding the Israelites to slaughter everyone in a certain village. “Does that mean slavery and murder are right?” I asked, flipping *my* Bible shut, as I and the rest of the girls fixed them in a withering stare.

I don’t think that little episode did much for us. But the questions raised made us realize that the Bible is not an easy book, nor can we slap rigid, simplistic interpretations on it.

With greater maturity, I think, comes a desire to dig deeper, to understand difficult concepts even though they may be complex. For

me, greater understanding of the concept of submission did not come until recently, while studying *Paradise Lost* for a Milton class. In *Paradise Lost* Satan throws many accusations at God, the worst being that He is an unjust tyrant who demands blind, unquestioning submission from His creatures. At one point one of the angels loyal to God speaks up, answering Satan’s accusation.

“You are not made less important by God’s sovereignty,” he tells the assembled angels. “In fact, in a sense, God becomes the lowest of all by occupying the highest position: for in this position, He is serving His creatures by finding every means possible to make them happy.”*

Christ humbled Himself to the very lowest position, and as a consequence was exalted even higher. Christ’s example shows that the essence of the Christian life is giving, from wives to husbands, from husbands to wives, from parents to children, from each of us to our friends, and the list could go on.

God calls each of us to give up our cherished desires, to learn when to compromise, and to work constructively in our relationships with others, thereby each fulfilling the special role He has given us. This is what it means to submit, and God not only asks it, He requires it of all dedicated Christians.

*Paraphrased.

by Jenny George

Jenny George is a senior English major at Newbold College, Bracknell, England.

Lesson 10, August 30–September 5

Doing the Right Thing



“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (1 Pet. 3:15, NIV).

Hooligan Evangelism

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: 1 Pet. 3:15

Throughout the dreary English winter the national obsession is football (soccer to Americans, but properly named football since the ball is kicked throughout the game, not just when it can't be run or passed anymore). Before coming to England I had learned of the violence and rowdiness that plagued the sport—that is, in the stands. However, when I had the opportunity to attend a game, I jumped at the chance, justifying it as a chance to observe English culture.

The game I attended was the most important game of the year, with the Liverpool club visiting London to play Arsenal. Beforehand I assumed the role of neutral observer. The lights illuminated the mist over the football pitch and the stands—literally that—were packed. After the start of the game, the real action was in the stands. Supporters sang chants and anthems continuously to exalt the London team. “We love you, Arsenal, we do!” they bellowed, and when Arsenal scored the first goal, waves of hands taunted the Liverpool goalie singing, “One-nil, one-nil, one-nil.” The songs were simple and lacked a complex melody, but as an observer I kept silent.

My observer status faded quickly. The excitement was over-

whelming. I found a passion for the sport and for Arsenal somewhere among the crowding, chanting, and vulgar epithets. Only halfway into the first half, I lost all traces of my Americanness and blurted out, “C'mon lads!” It went downhill from there. “Go on, y'mugs!” I yelled as a London player was fouled by Liverpool, and the rest of the game was lost in a fast flow of chanting and bellowing, ending my observer status for good. When the game was over and the London team had left the ground victorious, I loved Arsenal, I did.

The theme of this week's lesson is witnessing in all circumstances. During the game I was witnessed to as I listened to the choruses and praise heaped upon the football club by its supporters. Even after the game the streets were packed with flag-waving fans still singing their fighting songs as if to keep the euphoria of victory alive well after the game ended. Witnessing can be as easy as a football game. All we must do is choose Christ's side and make it our own. Then we can wear His banners, sing His songs, and bellow to our heart's content of His greatness. (And it's not hard to attract attention that way.) As Christians, we are winners, and as witnesses we will be merely spreading the joy that will come when our team, already ahead one to nil, scores the final goal at the buzzer.

by James Dittes

James Dittes, from Tennessee, is a second-year English major at Newbold College, Bracknell, England.

Monday, August 31

Coming to God

LOGOS

1 Pet. 3:18

Speaking Well of Others (read 1 Pet. 3:8-12)

“Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing” (verse 9, NIV).

Christians had to be tough in Peter’s time. Ridicule, loss of work, and persecution faced the believer. Peter is not looking for meek nonconformists. Unity of spirit, being of one mind, is not uniformity, but unity of purpose.

The motivating force is love for the family of the church. That love expresses itself in sympathy and a tender heart. (Pitiful has changed its meaning since the KJV translators.) This was a community under siege, and it may have been difficult to be sure of who could be trusted. But Peter wants Christians to be frank, open, and loving to one another. Much more difficult, Christians are to bless those who are unkind to them. Bless means more than just give a friendly reply to hostile people. It means actively praying to God for them.

What is Peter telling Christians about being submissive?

How were Jesus and Paul models for those who speak up for their rights?

Conduct Under Fire (read 1 Pet. 3:13-17)

“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you

to give the reason for the hope that you have” (verse 15, NIV).

When you are attacked, what bothers you more, outrageous lies or half-truths? Have you ever found yourself becoming angry over an attack because you felt there really was some truth in it? Christians under fire were tempted to answer back, either openly or, if that was too dangerous, to mutter under their breath. If they answered in bad temper, it suggests their arguments were weak in the first place. Peter sets the statement about explaining the faith in the context of Christ dwelling in the heart.

When people ask you about your faith, do you feel challenged, threatened, and therefore defensive and apologetic? Do you become angry or flustered because you don’t have very good answers? The point in answering questions is not just to satisfy curiosity, but to witness.

What effect does our everyday life have on the quality of our witness?

The Heart of the Gospel (read 1 Pet. 3:18)

“For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God” (verse 18, NIV).

In the preceding section Peter has been looking at the possibility of suffering for the faith, and that could include death. So he introduces the thought that Jesus also died. The verse is packed with

by Hugh Dunton

Hugh Dunton is the librarian at Newbold College, Bracknell, England.

meaning. Jesus died once for all. There is no further sacrifice (see Heb. 9:28).

The purpose of the sacrifice was to bring us to God. One way of reading the text would be to see the whole Trinity involved. God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself (see 2 Cor. 5:19). The body was killed but made alive by the Holy Spirit. However, the majority of commentators believe the translation should be, "killed as to the flesh/in flesh but made alive as to the spirit/in spirit." The death was the supreme sacrifice; the resurrection was the supreme triumph. Without the resurrection of Christ, Christianity, as Peter and Paul knew it, would be meaningless.

How can you make the resurrection a reality in your life?

Spirits in Prison—Where, When, How? (1 Pet. 3:19, 20)

"He . . . preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah" (verses 19 and 20, NIV).

This is one of the most difficult passages in the New Testament. The Apostle's Creed states, "He descended into hell" (cf. Acts 2:27; Eph. 4:9; 2 Pet. 2:4). The doctrine of the "harrowing of hell" has been built on these texts. There are two difficulties. The Greek word *hades*, used in Acts 2:27, had pagan associations of a conscious state in death. Second, the Greek doctrine of the immortality of the soul came to the Christian church as apologists tried to reconcile Greek and Christian ideas. The immortality of the soul is the oldest recorded lie (see Gen. 3:4). But from other statements of Scripture we do not believe in a hell full of departed spirits. So

what does Peter mean? The *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 575, 576, suggests three possible explanations: that the gospel was preached to the people in Noah's day by Noah, by Christ in His pre-existent state, or by the Holy Spirit. God preached through Seth, Enoch, and Noah (see vol. 1, p. 1088). The Flood is a type of the final destruction and deliverance. Those who lived before the cross and heard Seth, Noah, and Enoch had equal opportunity with those who live after the cross.

Why is the state of the dead so important a doctrine even today?

Baptism, Meaning, and Purpose

"Baptism . . . the pledge of a good conscience toward God" (1 Pet. 3:21, NIV).

What is baptism? It symbolizes Christ's burial and resurrection. It is the burial of dead sinners, not an attempt to drown the sinful nature. The Book of Common Prayer calls it "an outward sign of an inward and spiritual grace." There are three steps in conversion: faith, repentance, and baptism. Baptism represents true conversion by the renewing of the Holy Spirit.* Baptism is a covenant, a symbol of joining Christ's church and admission to the communion table. Baptism is for those who know what they are doing in committing their lives to Christ. It has no power in itself, but the divine and human cooperate when the believer makes this public profession and symbol.

How does baptism relate to salvation?

*The Faith I Live By, p. 143.

Tuesday, September 1

The Gospel According to You

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 1 Pet. 3:8, 9

When we hear the word *witnessing* we naturally think of telling others about God. But when I think of my own Christian growth, I realize that the people who have portrayed Christ to me in the most positive way were not those who *told* me about Him, but were those who *showed* Him to me through their actions. The most effective technique to witness is through simply living as Jesus did, demonstrating genuine love for others. Ellen White explains:

“If you would always manifest kindness, respect, noble love and generosity, toward even wicked men, you might render effectual service to Christ. If the spirit of Christ dwelt in you, you would represent Him in your words, in your actions, and even in the expression of your countenance.”¹

Simply through our attitude—a smile or kind word in passing—we reflect the love of Jesus. The results of such behavior are vast:

“The more closely we resemble our Saviour in character, the greater will be our love toward those for whom He died. Christians who manifest a spirit of unselfish love for one another are bearing a testimony for Christ which unbelievers can neither gainsay nor resist. It is impossible to estimate the power of such an example. Nothing will so successfully defeat the devices of Satan

and his emissaries, nothing will so build up the Redeemer’s kingdom, as will the love of Christ manifested by the members of the church. Peace and prosperity can be enjoyed only as meekness and love are in active exercise.”²

Through Christ’s love we have gained so much. What can we do for Him in return? The answer is so simple and so easy: show those around us just how incredible our Lord really is. “The fact that we are under so great obligation to Christ places us under the most sacred obligation to those whom He died to redeem. We are to manifest toward them the same sympathy, the same tender compassion and unselfish love, which Christ has manifested toward us.”³

Actions really *do* speak louder than words. What we say is important, but what we do—the way we live our lives and relate to others—will leave the greatest impression on those to whom we seek to witness. Just as Jesus brought happiness to people’s lives, so should we try to spread joy in Christ.

REACT

1. What actions of others have done the most to draw you toward Christ?

2. What could you do today to bring someone joy and show him or her Christ’s love?

1. *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 331.

2. *Ibid.*, vol. 5, pp. 167, 168.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 170.

by Amanda Sheffield

Amanda Sheffield is an English major at Newbold College, Bracknell, England.

No Harm If I Do Good?

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Pet. 3:12-14

In 1 Pet. 3:13 (NEB) the apostle asks, "Who is going to do you wrong if you are devoted to what is good?" A fair question indeed! We are quite familiar with stories of deliverance in which God intervenes to save His righteous heroes. Joseph is miraculously freed from a life sentence in Potiphar's jail to become Pharaoh's viceroy and save all Egypt from famine. Daniel, about to become the lions' lunch, escapes the Persian courtiers' clutches and walks unharmed from the subterranean den. Peter receives an angel escort through the locked gates of Herod's prison in Galilee. In modern times the Calkinses, a tithe-paying Minnesota farm family, are spared from a plague of grasshoppers while neighbors' crops for miles around are stripped to stubble. Annie Taylor, pioneer missionary to Tibet in 1890, is given a rice-and-egg dish laced with poison by hostile natives who have been praying to their gods for her death. She eats the food, prays for healing, and lives to preach to the astounded Tibetans. Praise God! we exclaim.

But then there is Job, "a good man who feared God and stayed away from evil" (Job 1:1, TLB), yet loses his children, most of his

flocks, and suffers painful boils. Paul, missionary to the Roman Empire, is finally beheaded by the evil Emperor Nero. Closer to home, scores of Seventh-day Adventists in Tennessee and Georgia, during the 1890s, suffered imprisonment and chain-gang mistreatment for working on Sunday, while Sunday-keeping neighbors who did the same escaped arrest! Anne Frank, the Jewish girl from Amsterdam captured by the Gestapo during World War II, dies from typhus at 15 in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, an innocent victim, as were six million other Jews, of satanic brutality. Do we *still* say, Praise God?

In this passage (1 Pet. 3:12-14), Peter appears to be saying two contradictory things: first, if we choose to do good, God will protect us and block the harmful plans of the wicked; but second, persecution will come, so Christians should be prepared for it and, indeed, count themselves "happy" (or blessed, as Matt. 5:10-12 puts it) when mistreated for righteousness' sake.

REACT

1. Why do bad things happen to good (innocent) people?
2. Why does God spare some from harm and not others?
3. How might I consider persecution a "blessing" (see Matt. 5:10-12)?

by Brian E. Strayer

Brian E. Strayer, now associate professor of history at Andrews University, was teaching at Newbold College, Bracknell, England, when he wrote this lesson.

Thursday, September 3

Always on Duty

HOW-TO

Key Text: 1 Pet. 3:15

The command “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” has always made me feel quite uneasy. For whether I am on a bus, plane, taxi, or train, I feel this divine obligation to share my faith—which always seems to be a summary of the 27 fundamental beliefs. Are there other aspects of witnessing?

1. *Be prepared.* Careful Bible study is a part of what I believe. But the main qualification for being a witness of my faith is mentioned in the beginning part of the verse: “But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord.” If Jesus is not part of my daily life, I really have nothing to give.

2. *Share yourself.* Sometimes I am afraid to use the opportunities I get because I can't really explain all our 27 doctrines on the spot. People may sometimes be interested in arguments and proof texts, but most often they are more interested in how my beliefs affect my life, whether they give me hope for the future

and assurance and peace with God.

3. *Life is full of opportunities to share.* Once we overcome our fear of not being able to explain the “ten horns of the fourth beast,” the number of opportunities we perceive to share our faith and hope will greatly increase. If you have your eyes open, you will soon discover people close to you who are asking questions or are crying out for support.

4. *Meet others with humility.* We may be able to convince people theoretically by bombarding them with proof texts, but they may feel offended. They easily sense whether we have an I'm-better-than-you attitude. When we are witnessing, Peter urges us in our text to “do this with gentleness and respect.” This excludes arrogance, aggressiveness, and stereotyped methods of soul winning. We need to have a humble attitude and to ask God to give us a genuine interest in their well-being, their needs, and their questions.

REACT

In practical terms how can a Christian take a real interest in other people as persons?

by Siv Tollevik

Siv Tollevik is studying for her M.A. in religion at Newbold College, Bracknell, England.

Hope or Cynicism?

OPINION

Key Text: 1 Pet. 3:15

The key text for this week's lesson strikes me as good advice, and I would like to leave it at that, but when it says, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have," it implies that I have hope. Do I have hope? Do we as a church have hope, or has a cynical attitude replaced the hope we once had?

Cynicism is a problem that plagues many Adventists today. Cynicism is dangerous because it seems so harmless. A few joking attacks on someone else's sincerity when one is struck by a sermon that is too sentimental, too contrived, or too idealistic to meet one's needs seems harmless but represents a destructive attitude. Evaluation and examination of motives are necessary for church growth, but cynical comments and attitudes do not achieve growth for those being attacked or for the attackers.

Several factors underlie our cynicism: different understanding of Christian principles, personal dissatisfaction with life, or a wrong concept of the purpose of worship services, to suggest a few. As humans with different backgrounds, we interpret Christian principles in different ways. We need to learn from each other

rather than to criticize.

Also, a person who is personally dissatisfied with life may express dissatisfaction by attacking others rather than addressing his or her own problem. It takes only one such person to introduce a cynical attitude to a whole group.

A friend of mine has become a cynic, and I believe it is because she has a wrong concept of worship. She is a perfectionist, and she does not gain a blessing from any service unless it reaches her standard of perfection; she is obsessed with analyzing such details as the soprano's tone and the minister's eye contact.

Church is not a show; it is a form of praise to God and a means of fellowship. I think God accepts our best; we should not expect anything more from others.

Cynicism and hope cannot co-exist. Hope comes only from what Christ has done for us; when we are cynical we concentrate on what man cannot do for us. The only solution is to redirect our focus. "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:13, NIV).

REACT

1. What other problems cause us to lose hope?
2. What is the reason you do or do not have hope?

by Jana Graham

Jana Graham is an English and history major at Newbold College, Bracknell, England.

Lesson 11, September 6-12

When Praying and Paying Aren't Enough



“Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin” (1 Pet. 4:1, NIV).

Trading Up

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Rom. 6:4

I'd been wearing them for years, amassing as many pairs as I could, purchasing even more whenever a new color came out. Maybe you've seen them—cool, canvas oxfords, as the ads go. Blue Label originals. The tennis shoe. Keds.

I kept buying them, year after year. Really, they weren't very practical, Mother reasoned with me. I knew she was right. You have to replace them often because holes tend to pop up in the toes, and the white ones get muddy and bleach-yellowed all too soon. Still, they're comfortable and versatile, and they stayed at the top of my favorite-shoes-to-buy-even-if-I-don't-need-them list.

Then one day I saw a pair of Birkenstocks. "Jesus sandals" my friends called them. But I had heard they were the most comfortable shoes my feet would ever experience. I was preparing to move to Asia for a year, and I knew that I'd be spending a lot of time on my feet. Grudgingly, I purchased my first pair.

Initially, they felt cumbersome and huge on my feet. Birkenstocks were fairly new to the members of my parents' generation, too, and I sometimes saw my father staring at the "boats" on my feet and mumbling something about having a leftover sixties' child. *I paid \$70 for this?* I asked myself. I began to wonder about my deci-

sion to leave the Keds behind.

"It takes a while to get used to them," the salesclerk had said. So I just kept slipping them on my feet every day. Gradually, I got to know my Birkenstocks, and I did get used to them. I began to appreciate the way they molded to my feet, and I liked the little indentations at the end in which my toes rested.

I can't really remember the moment when I realized the truth about Birkenstocks. Maybe it was that day I spent shopping every square inch of downtown Seattle with Dora. Her feet in Keds were killing her by 3:00 p.m.; my feet felt great! The truth was, I liked Birkenstocks better than Keds. Moreover, they were better for my feet than Keds ever were.

Maybe it's a silly idea, but my "conversion" to Birkenstocks reminded me of what many Christians experience. Often we choose a lifestyle that is colorful and attractive, assuming it will be the best for us. We stroll along happily in our Keds, never realizing that there is something better out there.

Sometimes coming to Christ seems expensive. I could have bought four pairs of Keds for the price I paid for that one pair of Birkenstocks. But spending a little more, sacrificing a little more, isn't always a bad idea. When we come to Christ, we die to sin. Our old nature is buried, and we rise with Him in newness of life. Suddenly, we are willing to leave our Keds behind, slip on a pair of Birkenstocks, and follow Him.

by Kelli Dunks

Kelli Dunks is a junior English-premed major at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

Monday, September 7

Living in His Presence

LOGOS

1 Pet. 4:9

When to Say No and When to Say Yes

"Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling" (1 Pet. 4:9, NIV).

Halfway down the street called "First Peter" let's stop the car, put the keys in our pocket, walk for a block or two, and keep an eye on the scenery. . . .

Our stretch of the street for this week, 4:1-11, comes at the end of the second main part of 1 Peter, 2:11 to 4:11. Peter begins both the second and third parts (4:12 to 5:14) with a special greeting to the readers as *agapetoi*, which in English means something like "Loved Ones" or "Dearest Friends."

Actually, our stretch is divided into two little blocks: verses 1-6, on making a clean break with sin, and verses 7-11, a little piece that starts with "The end of all things is near!" and ends with an "Amen!"

Much of what we can see in this piece of 1 Peter looks familiar. We have already met the sufferings of Christ (see 2:19-21) and the dangers of human passions (see 2:11) earlier in the book.

But in both of these little blocks Peter shows us something new. In 1 Pet. 4:3 he urges us to turn down invitations to drinking parties. At least some of the original readers of the letter regularly joined in these wild events before

they became Christians. The temptation to fall back into the old ways could be particularly strong for early Christians, since most of them lived in apartment buildings in tightly packed cities with the sounds and sights of immorality close at hand.

In verses 8 and 9 Peter urges us readers to open our homes "without grumbling" to fellow Christians. For Christians of the first century this hospitality probably took two forms. First, traveling Christians didn't like to stay in the public inns, where all sorts of temptations were for sale. They preferred staying overnight in the homes of other Christians.

Second, during the time First Peter was written, Christians couldn't get permission to erect regular church buildings. So the Christians with the biggest living rooms would be asked to open their homes for fellow Christians who wanted to worship God together.

You can see how Peter's two new bits of advice fit together. Peter wants us to say Yes to the needy members of our Christian family and to say No to old drinking partners who want to pull us back into old habits. To say Yes to one means saying No to the other.

Peter admits that turning down the invitations to wild parties will shock the old drinking buddies and could earn some heavy abusive insults from the mouths of blasphemers (see verse 4). But he reminds us that Jesus

by Ernest J. Bursey

Ernest J. Bursey is associate professor of biblical studies at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

received a lot of abuse (see verse 1). Besides, there isn't much time left, and we could use it best by doing what God wants us to do (see verse 2). Furthermore, those abusive characters will have to answer to One who is ready to judge them (see verse 5).

Getting Leverage Over Sin

"Love covers over a multitude of sins" (1 Pet. 4:8, NIV).

Peter likes to use pithy little phrases that could be misunderstood if we apply them too precisely. Here are two: "He who has suffered in his body is done with sin" (verse 1), and "Love covers over a multitude of sins" (verse 8). The first saying has been explained a number of different ways. Peter means to point to Jesus, who conquered sin by His death and suffering. Peter probably didn't make up the second saying about love covering many sins but plugged it in for effect.

Both sayings show how we can stay free from the power of sin. First, suffering abuse at the hands of outsiders can actually strengthen our resolve to do what is right if we deal with suffering as Jesus did. To offer a pithy phrase of our own: Stumbling blocks can be turned into stepping stones for the Christian who has Jesus' point of view.

Second, loving behavior among Christians actually counteracts or even blocks out the sinful deeds that take place between people when love is absent. We know from experience that an atmosphere of love can suffocate sin.

Is the love in my church so strong that I want to do what is right? How can I help the love in my church to grow? What gifts do I have that I can use in my church?

Life at the Edge of Eternity

Peter begins the final block, verses 7-11, with the warning, "The end of all things is at hand!" Christians ought to live the same way, regardless of whether Christ comes in 10 minutes or a thousand years. Admitted. But Peter doesn't live in a dream world. Being reminded that the end is near can catch your attention, especially if you've been careless and know you aren't ready to meet the Judge.

Yet Peter knows that fear can't really be the engine that drives the Christian. His ideal is a God-centered life. Peter shows us that the best way to be ready for the end of all things is to live in God's presence now.

Peter believes our abilities and spiritual skills are gifts from a generous God who wants us to use them wisely to help others (see verse 10). Even the words we speak to each other are to be chosen as carefully as if they were the very words God would choose to say (see verse 11).

Earlier Peter had urged us to "live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us" (2:12, NIV). Now, at the end of the second section, Peter reminds us that it is God who gives us the strength to do good. Once more he invites us to aim at glorifying God in every single thing we do (see 4:11). Imagine that everywhere—whether among believers or scoffers, in every thought, every word, every deed—everywhere, to be consumed with that one aim. No wonder Peter shouts "Amen"!

Is it possible or even wise to live with a lively sense of God's presence all the time? Isn't that distracting?

Tuesday, September 8

Spiritual Gifts

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 1 Pet. 4:10, 11

Although we often have difficulty recognizing our gifts or feeling that they are profitable, we must realize that God uses all types of gifts to reach as many people as possible. Mrs. White reminds us "that there are varied minds to be reached, and that some will reject the truth as it is presented by one laborer, only to open their hearts to God's truth as it is presented in a different manner by another laborer."¹

As examples of different gifts, Ellen White recounts the biblical stories of John the Baptist, Pentecost, and the widow with her two mites. God gave John the Baptist a specific message that "was designed to startle . . . [people] from their lethargy, and cause them to tremble because of their great wickedness."² Thus, through John's teachings, "persons of all ranks submitted to the requirement of the Baptist, in order to participate in the kingdom he announced."³

Similar to John's testimony was the apostles' witness at Pentecost. God gave the apostles the gift of tongues so they could spread the gospel to the people of many nations. Among those people, explains Mrs. White, "were devout Jews, who were sincere in their belief. The power that accom-

panied the words of the speaker convinced them that Jesus was indeed the Messiah."⁴

Although God gave John and the apostles specific gifts that were used to bring many people to Him, the widow with her two mites illustrates how God also uses common people and small gifts to spread His message. "[The widow] believed the service of the temple to be of God's appointment, and she was anxious to do her utmost to sustain it. She did what she could, and her act was to be a monument to her memory through all time."⁵

John the Baptist, the apostles, and the widow illustrate how various gifts can be used to bring glory to God. "God has different ways of working, and He has different workmen to whom He entrusts varied gifts."⁶ "These gifts He returns to us purified and ennobled, to be used for His glory in blessing our fellow men."⁷

REACT

What would you say if someone were to ask you why so many talented non-Christians are more successful and beneficial to society than talented Christians?

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1. *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 145.
 2. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 103, 104.
 3. *ibid.*, p. 105.
 4. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 43.
 5. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 615.
 6. *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 144.
 7. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 328.

by Kellie Bond

Kellie Bond is an English major at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

Preaching to the Dead

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Pet. 4:6

Like schoolchildren huddled around a wall-mounted hologram, Bible students have attempted to interpret 1 Pet. 4:6. Individuals view the subject from differing angles and try to position themselves for the sharpest focus and best resolution.

Our author jolts us a bit with his reference to the living *and the dead* as recipients of the gospel proclamation! Attempts to bring focus and resolution to the text have produced several options:

1. *The dead in verse 6 are spiritually deceased.* Those viewing the passage from this angle would point to biblical sources like Eph. 2:1 and Col. 2:13, which seek to encourage people who are dead in trespasses. Unfortunately, others insist this interpretation does not fit the context well, since the dead in verse 5 appear to be physically dead.

2. *The dead correspond in some way to "the spirits in prison"* in 1 Pet. 3:18, 19. Some have seen in these verses a reference, as in contemporary popular literature, to demons that descended from the time of Noah. In popular thought these spirits generated oppression for Christians. If this is the case, then Peter is using widely circulated stories to illustrate something new, something else:

God is in control even when you feel persecuted.

3. *The dead are dead.* Many Christians feel that the text speaks of the spirits or souls of the Gentile dead. This perspective runs counter to an Adventist reading of the Bible's view of the state of the dead and borders on providing a second chance for the departed.

4. *The dead are dead, but were alive when they heard the gospel preached.* In other words, the gospel *was* preached to those who *are* dead. Some would limit these to Christians only; others would include all whose lives had brought them into contact with the gospel proclamation at one time or another. Criticism of this view has pointed to weak links with the preceding verses.

Perhaps, given the complexities of 1 Pet. 4:6, none of our perspectives will give us a completely focused or thoroughly resolved image on the hologram. Ultimately, however, the larger message to ancient and modern audiences of the letter should be clear from any angle. This message signals divine judgment on oppressors, proclaims courage to the oppressed, and calls for loving and moral living within the community of faith.

REACT

How important is it to have complete answers to all biblical questions?

by Douglas R. Clark

Douglas R. Clark is dean of the school of theology at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

Thursday, September 10

Watch and Pray

HOW-TO

Key Text: 1 Pet. 4:7

Prayer is not best defined to mean “words we say,” but to express a relationship encounter with God. In 1 Thess. 5:17 we figure Paul is just kidding when he advocates: “Pray without ceasing.” Nobody can talk to God all the time. Right? If, however, prayer means a relationship encounter, then much, if not most of the time, we ought to be listening. We can listen to music while doing other things. We can listen to God while doing other things. Pray without ceasing thus takes on feasibility and priority. If the end of all things is at hand, “Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer” (1 Pet. 4:7, KJV).

“Watch and pray” comes from the Garden of Gethsemane on the western slope of the Mount of Olives when Jesus really needed the disciples and found them sleeping: “What, could ye not watch with me one hour?” (Matt. 26:40).

Why Watch and Pray?

First, there is the safety factor. “No man is safe for a day or an hour without prayer.”* This compelling sentence from the chapter in *The Great Controversy* entitled “Snares of Satan” provides a chilling indictment of final tactics.

You can utter a simple prayer, “Jesus, I love You!” before every

telephone call. At stop signs. When anybody addresses you by name. When you use the restroom. At any transition from one physical or emotional situation to another.

Second, there is the spiritual growth factor. We hear a lot about church growth. This is fine if we don’t limit our thinking and efforts to numerical growth. Numerical growth happens naturally when spiritual growth is occurring.

After you are born again you don’t suddenly turn into a mature grown-up. You need to watch and pray through the “terrible two’s” and adolescence. Eve learned how dangerous it is for a child of God to wander off. It happens. Jesus said to watch and pray that we enter not into temptation. Temptation happens when we wander off.

A third reason to watch and pray involves the credibility factor. Some of our baby boomers are opting out of the church and using tithe money to buy power suits. One of the arguments is that we have hypocrites in the church, which we do. If we cite the potter and the clay metaphor (see Jer. 18), we are reminded that clay cannot take credit for being good or blame for being unfinished—as long as the clay stays warm and pliable in the potter’s hands!

**The Great Controversy*, p. 530.

by Dick Jewett

Dick Jewett is pastor of the Stateline Seventh-day Adventist Church in Milton-Freewater, Oregon.

More Than Conquerors

OPINION

Key Text: Rom. 8:35-39

This week we've been focusing on coming to Christ, dying to sin, and rising to newness of life. Isn't that what being a Christian is all about? But in these uncertain times—famine, wars, and rumors of wars—can I be certain that God can live in me, making my life different from that of before? What do I do when the unexpected happens? Do I “let this mind” be in me, which was also in Jesus?

Whenever my mind starts wandering like this, I inevitably recall Pastor M. S. Nigri, a General Conference official who visited my home in Uganda. When he returned to Washington, D.C., he remembered to send cassava recipes to vary our diet. That may seem a simple gesture, but for this busy man to take time to remember us proved that he cared; he practiced what he preached. Once I read in the *Adventist Review* about what happened after he retired and returned to Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Two young men with guns once forced Pastor Nigri to take them into his house. They went from room to room, picking and choosing from his possessions.

After they had pointed out whatever they fancied, they made the pastor carry it to his car.

Mrs. Nigri talked to the young men and offered them supper. They all went down to the kitchen, where she cooked a wonderful homemade meal. Finally they all sat down to eat. The pastor asked everyone to bow for grace. The two young men joined in that prayer. Then, after enjoying the tasty meal and good conversation, the “robbers” went out to the car and carried everything back into the house!

The pastor asked why they had changed their plan. They replied that they were touched by the elderly couple's attitude, and besides—Mrs. Nigri's face reminded them of their mother! In the face of such kindness, how could they think of returning evil for good?

REACT

1. How do I behave under pressure? Do I allow God's love to control me under all circumstances?
2. How can the pattern of my daily life determine my response in times of stress?
3. What does it mean to “live with a lively sense of God's presence”?

by Jean Sequeira

Jean Sequeira is office manager at Walla Walla College's campus computer center and a senior English major at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

Lesson 12, September 13-19

Down in the Pits



“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you” (1 Pet. 4:12, NIV).

The Patience of Justin

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: 1 Pet. 4:12

Justin, business graduate from a Christian college, employee of a high-powered Wall Street firm, loving husband to a beautiful wife, and owner of a new, shiny BMW convertible, was having a bad day. The moment he showed up at work, he knew something disastrous had happened. The stock market had fallen through the floor, and being the newest member of the firm, Justin was given notice that his belongings would need to be removed from his office immediately. He tried to call his wife, Jill, but she didn't answer. Justin had to clear his head, so he decided to take a drive into the country. As he walked to the parking lot, he was overcome by an offending odor. Looking around for the cause, he realized in horror that a New York garbage truck had inadvertently dumped its contents onto his car.

By this time, he was wondering what he had done to deserve all of this. He returned to the regu-

larly, went to church weekly, and conducted a Wednesday Bible-study group. Surely he didn't deserve such extreme misfortune.

Upon finding out that his insurance company did not cover this disastrous event, he grudgingly headed toward the nearest subway station, wishing this day had never begun. He finally caught the subway that would drop him off nearest his neighborhood and sank down into the seat—but suddenly he sensed that something didn't feel right. Justin hurriedly checked his pants pockets, only to discover his wallet had been stolen. Upon arriving home, he found a note from Jill tersely stating that she would not be returning. He went into their bedroom, hoping it was a sick joke, only to find all of her possessions gone. Justin sat gloomily in the middle of the room wondering why all of this had happened to him.

Sound familiar? The sufferings of a modern-day Job. Even when disastrous things occur to us, we can still say something positive about God in the way we deal with adversity.

by Sean and Mindy Fresk

Sean Fresk is a junior engineering major, and Mindy a senior English major at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

Monday, September 14

From Shame to Vindication

LOGOS 1 Pet. 4:12

The surprise, shame, and uncertainty surrounding those events that try our faith to the core can be experienced as occasions of deep personal satisfaction—when we who suffer realize what our ordeals mean to the One who will ultimately vindicate us.

The Fiery Ordeal (read 1 Pet. 4:12)

“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you” (NRSV).

Peter understands the emotional impact of oppression and abuse on people new to the faith. At times like these, many question the whereabouts of God and His love. How important for new Christians to be assured that they are *agape*-loved, valued, and respected. Whether or not the folk in Asia Minor were suffering the level of persecution that would come with Nero and later Domitian, their changes in lifestyle were causing them to experience rejection, social losses, and uncertainty.

It was important to help them find meaning in their pain and confusion. As a first step in that process, Peter reminds them of a refined and toughened faith that will grow out of their ordeal, a faith that tenaciously grips the affirming love of God and the fel-

lowship of the community of believers. As a result, they need not see themselves as startled, helpless victims, but as victors, for they have made a choice to be followers of the Way, which in turn leads to the cross. Who would know this better than Peter, who carried with him a very vivid memory of his lakeside conversation with Jesus in which Jesus told him of His own personal ordeal? (see John 21:18, 19).

What difficult times have you encountered because of your decision to be a Christian? How have these experiences affected your faith?

Suffering for Christ (read 1 Pet. 4:13, 14)

“But rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ’s sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you” (NRSV).

Peter’s second way of finding meaning in adversity reflects the language of Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (see Matt. 5:10, 11). The Christian life begins with an awareness of one’s spiritual poverty and a desperate desire for something better. The developmental process that follows is one of deepening trust and reflection upon God’s ways of love until God, in turn, trusts the believer to reveal His love in such

by Larry Veverka

Larry Veverka is associate professor of pastoral care at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

difficult circumstances as persecution and slander.

Many biblical scholars, because of the final judgment motif in chapter 4, see the references to rejoicing as taking place when Christ is glorified in connection with His second coming. There is also some uneasiness about joy and gladness as healthy responses to suffering. Yet Peter's upbeat optimism is difficult to ignore. When the beleaguered Christian realizes the incredible gift that he gives to God when he reveals the glory of His character and ways in the "teeth" of adversity, there is an unmistakable, deeply satisfying sense of worth and value that grows in the heart of the Christian who keeps faith with God and senses the affirmation of God's appreciation and approval.

How powerful is the promise of future glory in motivating your faithfulness to Christ?

How powerful a motivator is the promise of the spirit of glory resting on you right now?

A Matter of Honors (read 1 Pet. 4:15, 16)

"But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, a criminal, or even as a mischief maker. Yet if any of you suffers as a Christian, do not consider it a disgrace, but glorify God because you bear this name" (NRSV).

Of course Peter had to put the brakes on anyone who might abuse this teaching by intentionally inviting prosecution. He parodies his point through overstatement, and then reminds the new believer that his/her identity comes not from the scornful mockery of a hostile environment, but

from faithfully bearing the Christian family name. *Christian* was initially a term of derision. Here Peter empties the word of its shame and encourages his readers to wear it with the dignity and honor that accompany the loving ways of God.

What does it mean for you to be called "Christian"?

Faithfulness Reciprocated (read 1 Pet. 4:17-19)

"For the time has come for the judgment to begin with the household of God; if it begins with us, what will be the end for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And if it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinners? Therefore, let those suffering in accordance with God's will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator, while continuing to do good" (NRSV).

Peter portrays the judgment as beginning in the present with God's family. In this way he stresses how important the believer's personal testimony under fire is to God as He makes His case. That case is first made here in the daily arena of human interaction, and finally before the onlooking universe. Again, the encouragement to faithful living comes with the reassurance that God will in the end put all wrongs right. Therefore, the judgment is not something to be feared, but to be embraced as an opportunity for reciprocal faithfulness, a time in which God gives to each faithful one His praise and appreciation.

What do you think God might say about your faithfulness?

Tuesday, September 15

Behind the Scenes

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Prov. 11:18

“He who sows righteousness reaps a sure reward” promises Prov. 11:18, NIV. Reality makes it less simple though. Often we see the righteous suffering, and we wonder why. Ellen White reveals the reason for this apparent unfairness.

“Hatred of the pure principles of truth, and reproach and persecution of its advocates, will exist as long as sin and sinners remain. . . . ‘All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.’ 2 Timothy 3:12.”¹

“Every manifestation of God’s power for His people arouses the enmity of Satan. Every time God works in their behalf, Satan with his angels works with renewed vigor to compass their ruin.”²

If His people could only know it, God’s love is as strong as ever. He is working to make good come—from even the most difficult trials.

“God’s love for His children during the period of their severest trial is as strong and tender as in the days of their sunniest prosperity.”³

“The trials of life are God’s workmen to remove the impurities and roughness from our

character. Their hewing, squaring, and chiseling, their burnishing and polishing, is a painful process. . . . But the stone is brought forth prepared to fill its place in the heavenly temple. Upon no useless material does the Master bestow such careful, thorough work.”⁴

“Through tribulation and distress, the Christian becomes purified and strengthened, and develops a character after the model that Christ has given.”⁵

Our Father is with us—in spite of difficult trials. He provides strength to face disappointment, loss, and persecution; He is planning our reward.

“Then let us take up our work just where we find it, believing that whatever may come, strength proportionate to the trial will be given.”⁶

“Whatever crosses they have been called to bear, whatever losses they have sustained, whatever persecution they have suffered, even to the loss of their temporal life, the children of God are amply recompensed.”⁷

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. 507.

2. *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 168.

3. *The Great Controversy*, p. 621.

4. *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 10.

5. *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 143.

6. *Steps to Christ*, p. 125.

7. *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 180.

by H. J. Bergman

Dr. Bergman recently retired from the presidency of Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

Wednesday, September 16

In His Safekeeping

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Pet. 4:19

When we read about the suffering of Christians in 1 Peter, images may come to mind of godly people being devoured by lions, burned at the stake, or stoned to death. The recipients of Peter's letter, however, scattered through Asia Minor, probably weren't undergoing such brutal trials. Instead, they were being "reproached" or "insulted" by unbelievers around them.

Misconceptions were common at the time. After all, didn't some Christians in the past zealously stress the seemingly illogical ceremony of circumcision? Didn't Christians eat their founder's "flesh" and drink His "blood" at their special Communion suppers? Wasn't this same key figure dead—a shamefully crucified criminal?

With such gossip circulating, it wasn't surprising that many unbelievers regarded Christians as foolish and fanatical. Although the government didn't actively persecute the new converts, the harassment and mocking from the rest of society made life difficult. The Christians felt discouraged and disappointed that their new life contained such pain.

In the midst of their troubles, Peter asks them to rejoice. Too often we view this as the theme in this week's passage. Actually, verse 19 sums up the teaching of

the entire letter. There, Peter writes that Christians who suffer "should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good" (NIV).

The word *commit* in this verse deserves special mention. Peter chooses this verb because of its specific connotations. At that time safe banks were not available to the common people. Most kept their money at home, but when they traveled they would commit or deposit their savings with their closest friend, trusting that this friend would carefully protect and then return all the money. Literally, the word means "to give to someone for safekeeping, to turn over to someone to care for." The same word is used in Luke 23:46 when Jesus, suffering the agony and separation of the cross, cried out, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."

Peter's emphasis is clear. Christians will suffer. Nevertheless, they can rejoice in the knowledge that their Creator, the One who made them and loves them, is faithful. Peter reminds us that whatever our wounds, we may all give ourselves over to Him who will tenderly safeguard and sustain us. Praise God!

REACT

1. What are some common misconceptions our society may have about Christians?

2. How can those who suffer be assured that God is indeed faithful?

by Paul Dybdahl

Paul Dybdahl is a junior theology major at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

Thursday, September 17

Suffering With a Smile

HOW-TO

Key Text: James 1:2-4

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1:2-4, NIV).

Suffering is a market that we all seem to have cornered at one time or another. A parent’s death. A failed relationship. Loneliness. A “B” on a math test is even considered suffering for some.

Living in Asia last year taught me a few things. Suddenly I was teacher, missionary, foreigner—and I realized that Taco Bell and good chocolate were as far away as Mom and Dad. Facing “trials of many kinds” became daily fare. But, by extrapolating James’s advice into my own situation, I slowly learned to approach a solution to suffering.

Obviously the prescription for happiness-filled suffering isn’t out yet, but let me share a few of the things I learned.

1. *Concentrate your energy on others.* The more I seek to understand and remedy the suffering of my neighbor, the more my suffering seems minimized. How rewarding it is to discover that

the more time I spend caring about others, the less time I have to worry about my difficulties.

2. *Learn to view suffering in positive, constructive terms.* Human beings exhibit a tremendous ability to tolerate the things in which they find meaning. When we face difficult situations, our attitude can make the difference between surviving and being overwhelmed.

3. *Never underestimate the power of God’s planning.* After six months of teaching at one school in Korea, I had to transfer to another school. The temptation to refuse was almost overwhelming. My hindsight, however, has convinced me that while I was lamenting what seemed like meaningless suffering, God was planning the positive impact such a move would have on my future.

4. *Realize that suffering can be an impetus for spiritual growth.* We can even begin to appreciate the testing of our faith. James assures us that trials of many kinds will help us develop patience.

REACT

What kind of suffering have you experienced? As you look back to those “down” times, can you identify ways in which you were able to grow?

by Kelli Dunks

Kelli Dunks is a junior English major at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

Taking the Good and the Bad?

OPINION

Key Text: Job 2:10

Suffering is not easy. When it happens to me personally, it is nigh impossible to understand. I think I may know why people in general have to suffer, but I don't see why *I* have to suffer.

When suffering happens to bad people, it's called "God's righteous judgment." When it happens to good people, it is known as "the *why* of undeserved suffering." Various Christian rationales try to explain suffering—"Satan doesn't harry those he already controls"; "The more we suffer on earth, the sweeter heaven will be"; "Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth"; and "God is purifying you in His refiner's fire."

What does suffering prove? What is its meaning in this life, if any? Is suffering for no apparent reason, or is it, instead, for a good cause—actually of some worth? According to the story of Job, suffering seems to be used to show Satan that Christians follow God for who He is, not for what He does for us, thus demonstrating the kind of loyalty you'd expect from an ideal friend. But is it fair for God to use evils as His tool for good? Does that justify suffering? Is it fair that God wants us to be sinless, but uses sin to accomplish this goal? Can't our characters be perfected without suffering?

There may be some clues in

the book of Job. From it we get the idea that undeserved suffering is not wasted, useless. In every trial I go through, trusting God, I strike as decisive a blow to Satan's cause as did Job. It seems to me that because we're not in heaven yet, Satan still would like to prove that humans would rather sin and die than accept God and live. That's why Peter advises us in this week's text to suffer only for Christ. This prevents the accuser from saying, "Ha! they're just suffering the natural consequences of their actions. Give them some *undeserved* suffering that they don't understand!"

What happens when tragedy strikes from nowhere? When it dogs a person from the day he was born? Has God's foot slipped? Has His hand trembled? No, He is still just as much in control during the bad times as during the good. *That* should be a comfort, unless we believe in the God in whom Satan would have us believe.

Do we need to learn to trust God in the good and the bad to prove to both Him and Satan that we *wouldn't* be happier in hell? I have a hunch that the God who died for *everyone* won't be the One who wastes *anyone's* life.

REACT

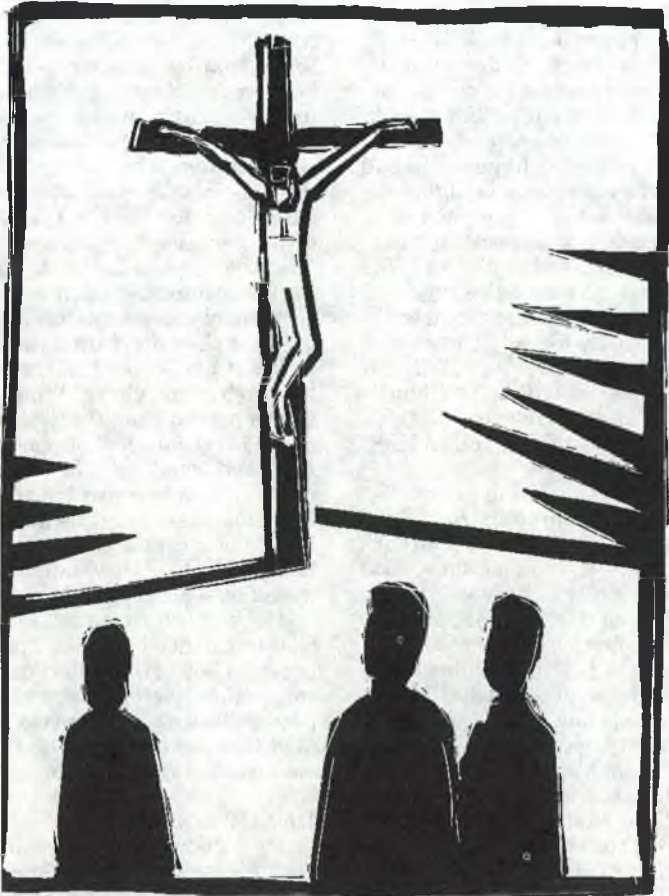
How do humans' freedom of choice, God's freedom of choice, and Satan's freedom of choice complicate an understanding of suffering?

by Donald Carson

Donald Carson is a sophomore English major at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

Lesson 13, September 20-26

From One Who's Been There



“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 Pet. 5:6, 7, NIV).

Sunday, September 20

Peter's Prayer

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: 1 Pet. 5:6, 7

When I first walked with you
along the pebbled,
worn path, the tide was in,
crashing violently
with youth and exuberance
around our naked feet.

The foam and sandy water
mixed a lumpy batter
of flesh and stone, and I loved
you with an open
face, my heart of pride filling
with my tie to you.

My wanderings since then
have not faded—
the memories of the water,
those walks, my heart.

My back, once a pine sapling
with arms eager for acceptance—
straining toward the sun, has
bent with the gnarled soft
reluctance of age
and compliance with myself,
my God, this calling.

That morning on the beach, I
wanted to be compared
with something mystical, a vision-
ary
to be aspired to. What you
called me was quite
different, too stable then.
Where is the adventure
in a rock? It took me years to
feel secure in
your calling, to be a leader
when I thought you must have

mistaken me for someone else.
Long talks with people eager to know
of you, and what I knew of
you, they helped—that and
the feeling, the knowing you
had not really left, that
your last gift had really been a
blessing.

I speak often of the humility I
saw in you, the joy
and quiet gift of daily living.
Some days, frustrating
days, I feel it touches few,
these recollections.

No, that isn't true. I have seen
what being loved
by you is like; I have felt your
love rush cleansing
through me, an unexpected
wave of my unworthiness crash-
ing in.

I have known the day of forget-
ting you, of letting the
care take hold of me, their tir-
ing and earth-
focusing ways leading me from
you. And I know also
that the days of walking peb-
bled paths with you bring
much more peace. As I age,
even, I know the
difficulty of surrendering; my
will is tight and coiled
like a spring, but through the
calm,
bright sounds of morning I can
feel you call to me, the
nudging of old friends long mar-
ried in mind and soul.

by Sherilee Chapman

Sherilee Chapman is a senior communications major at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

Monday, September 21

Counsel From One Who's Been There

LOGOS

1 Pet. 5:1

He's Been There (read 1 Pet. 5:1-14)

Even if Peter wanted to forget Christ's sufferings, he couldn't. Resounding in his consciousness now, having replaced the hideous, incriminating laughter of a rooster, are the gentle, gracious words and deeds of his Friend. Ever present are reminders of the self-giving life, atoning death, and glorious resurrection of the One who restored an ear to a high priest's servant and life to an impulsive fisherman who never was very good with a sword.

Nobody knows the grace of God more personally and intimately than Peter. Nobody ever needed it more. And the truth is, nobody ever needed it less. That's why he bids his fellow Christians to experience grace and peace in abundance. And that's why he counsels his co-laborers in Christ to be ministers of that grace. It's his theme. It's his forte. Ask Peter. He's been there!

In what ways have you experienced the grace of God?

Be a Servant Leader (read 1 Pet. 5:2-4)

Peter had a lot of time to think about Jesus' words since that morning on the beach. Jesus had said it three times, just so he

wouldn't miss the point: "Feed my lambs. . . . Take care of my sheep. . . . Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17, NIV). And now Peter conveys the same commission to the leaders of the churches.

For Peter, spiritual leadership is not mere restraint of certain impulses—it is complete transformation. Only those who have seen all of heaven's treasures emptied on their behalf can put shekels and denarii into perspective. And only ones who sense deeply their utter dependence on the Saviour can exercise authority without grasping for power.

Willing servants? Selfless overseers? Oxymorons or evidences of grace?

What are the strongest motivators in your life?

Be Humble (read 1 Pet. 5:6)

Funny thing about failure. There's no guarantee that humility will be its natural byproduct. In fact, when Peter finally learned what humility is all about, it was not through his or another's blunders. It was through the example of One who was perfect in every way, yet who never used His goodness as an opportunity to boast.

It is with Christ's example in mind that the aging apostle entreats the elders of the churches to be "examples to the flock" (verse 3, NIV) and to "clothe . . . [themselves] with humility" (verse

by John C. Cress

John C. Cress is chaplain of Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

5). God, he assures these leaders, "gives grace to the humble" (verse 5) and lifts up those who have consciously chosen not to exalt themselves.

Be at Peace (read 1 Pet. 5:7)

Guilt, either associated with actual failure or of the free-floating variety, rivets one's energies and attention on the past. Anxiety, on the other hand, is a fearful apprehension of the future. Peter understands both. And he knows that one whose time is consumed with the past and the future has nothing left with which to serve the Lord and care for others in the present.

Peter's words of greetings in this letter, based on the good news to which he has been an eye-witness, are so very appropriate: "Grace and peace be yours in abundance" (1:2, NIV). Now, as he nears the conclusion, he reiterates the same message.

What things in your life keep you past- or future-focused through guilt or anxiety? In what ways might these be keeping you from living fully in the present?

How can a person keep the past from controlling the future and the future from restricting the present?

Be Faithful (read 1 Pet. 5:8-13)

Who better to encourage leaders to be self-controlled and alert (see verse 8) than one who has come so far in these dimensions of life? Peter doesn't have to replay for them the litany of his own failures and defeats. His stories are part of the public record.

When Peter describes Satan as an enemy who prowls around like a hungry lion looking for his next

victim, somehow it has the ring of truth. When he encourages steadfastness in the face of suffering and temptation, his hearers know that the author of this letter has experienced his share of both. The fact that he's still writing to them is witness enough of God's grace to preserve and empower those who trust in Him.

What are some of the things you're "famous" for among your friends? How can these things be used to encourage them to faithfulness?

Live in Peace (read 1 Pet. 5:14)

Very conscious that Christianity is a minority faith in the Roman Empire, Peter desires the extension of the kingdom of God. He wants the church to grow and prosper, and his parting words are to this end.

He simply recommends that members kiss each other often and live peaceably together. Simplistic? Never! Nobody knows better than Peter, who spent so much of his earlier life striving, competing, and jockeying for position, how sweet it is to dwell in peace with sisters and brothers in Christ. And probably nobody knows any better than Peter, who has witnessed the conversions of thousands in a single afternoon, that the best way for Christians to multiply in number is for them to express the winsomeness of personality and character that only the gospel can produce in individuals.

Are there those in your group or fellowship who especially may need your attention and concern? How can you let them know you care?

Tuesday, September 22

Eager to Serve

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 1 Pet. 5:1-3

Why Peter? What made him worthy to be chosen by Jesus to carry on the ministry? Peter denied Him three times, but his Saviour never stopped loving him. He learned a lesson from that steadfast love, and he carried it over into his work. "Remembering his own weakness and failure, Peter was to deal with his flock as tenderly as Christ had dealt with him. The question that Christ had put to Peter was significant. He mentioned only one condition of discipleship and service. 'Lovest thou me?' He said. This is the essential qualification."¹

There were other helpful essentials (knowledge, patience, zeal, obedience, and eloquence), but "without the love of Jesus in the heart, the work of the Christian minister is a failure."² Peter loved his Saviour and therefore was able to do His work.

Christ's bidding did not come easily, however. Ellen White describes Peter as "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."³ But after his conversion, when he was called to be a "faithful under-shepherd," Peter changed dramatically. Although he still possessed some of his past charac-

teristics, he used them in a way more beneficial to his task, whereas before they worked only to his detriment.

Every aspect of Peter's life was changed; Christ's command to "follow me" now guided every step of his ministry. His task as an undershepherd was to "feed the lambs," and his own experience with suffering, weakness, and failure gave him a commitment to his work. As he carried on the ministry, he was reminded of the tenderness Christ had for him. He was an example to the flock, influencing many individuals to dedicate their lives to spreading the gospel. He saw the need to witness not only to unbelievers but to believers, too, helping them strengthen their faith.

"How many today are like Peter! They are interested in the affairs of others, and anxious to know their duty, while they are in danger of neglecting their own. It is our work to look to Christ and follow Him. We shall see mistakes in the lives of others and defects in their character. Humanity is encompassed with infirmity. But in Christ we shall find perfection. Beholding Him, we shall become transformed."⁴ Like Peter, we can be converted into faithful undershepherds and feed the lambs, dedicating our lives to Christ's work.

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 815.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*, p. 812.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 816.

by Jennifer L. Saltmarsh

Jennifer L. Saltmarsh is a senior business education major at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

Man Overboard!

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Pet. 5:5-8

Can you believe it? Peter, the perennial "Man Overboard" admonishing "humility" and suggesting that by gentle leadership the elders of the church be "examples to the flock" (NIV) in their good behavior? He even prescribes self-control and a retreat from anxiety by total trust in God. All this from the man who thought he could enhance his image by going overboard walking on the water in front of his shipmates but then panicking as the waves swept over him. What has happened to this man? Perhaps he has just gotten old. But I think not—for this transition comes early on as a lightning bolt.

It seems he was always the extremist in every situation. He resists having Jesus wash his feet. Then he wants not just his feet washed but also his hands and head. One moment he is the voice of the Holy Spirit revealing Christ as the Son of God, and the next he becomes the oracle of Satan obstructing the plan of redemption.

Finally, he swings so violently that in the Garden of Gethsemane he takes on a legion of soldiers single-handedly. Then, a few hours later, he is laughed out of his faith by a young woman he meets in the middle of the night around a small fire. All of which brings him near the same self-destructive fate as Judas. But somehow he hangs on and experiences a dramatic conver-

sion. Later he stands in the same courtyard where the ignominious denial occurred and gives a humble yet powerful testimony to the resurrection and to salvation in Christ.

His drive is not impeded—his cutting edge not dulled—but there is no more of the self-seeking, violent swings of behavior and temperament so often displayed in his preconversion state. Indeed, the gospel has done its work in dramatic fashion. The vigor that he brought to self-interest is now given in service to the Lord and the church.

The once proud and vain Peter calls for humility among the leaders of the church, both young and old. Christian behaviors gained through the grace of conversion are not merely the unavoidable process of becoming too old and too weak to be bad. In fact, age without conversion only sets us further in our wicked ways, creating the consummate grouch, cheat, or miser.

Peter appeals to the elders and young men, urging them to develop a caring form of leadership, patterned after "the Chief Shepherd." It is a remarkable perception for a violence-prone fisherman—"the man overboard"—regardless of how old he was.

REACT

Describe in your own words what you think is meant by the expression "a caring form of leadership."

by Gary B. Patterson

Gary B. Patterson is the administrative assistant to the president of the North American Division, Silver Spring, Maryland.

Thursday, September 24

Working for What?

HOW-TO

Key Text: 1 Pet. 5:2

College is a time of decisions. One of the most significant and frequently asked questions in a student's life is "How will I earn a living?" But instead, shouldn't that question be "How will my career help others?" About one-third of your adult life is spent working; thus, it is important to make your job count for Christ. The worst reason to choose a career is for money, because those who do this spend their life yearning for retirement. Do something you enjoy, and while doing it "let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16, NIV).

1. *Find God's will.* "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous" is a TV show intended to make you salivate at others' possessions. But who will remember the rich when they lose their wealth? Imagine if "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous" were to show Elijah's mansion in heaven, the freeways paved in gold, and the gates made of pearls. The great thing about God's plan is that each of us could qualify to appear on "Lifestyles."

When you put it in perspective, money is nothing. Happiness is everything, and as much as Diagnostics claims to be the handbook

of the human mind, only the Bible can legitimately qualify in that category. God's Word can help you make the right career choices for the right reasons.

2. *Do God's will.* Choose a career that will help you to serve God. As you work, let Christ's character be seen through you. Your opportunities to witness will be numerous; don't squander them. You are in a position where people search for religious guidance; give it.

"Ministry means more than sermonizing; it means earnest, personal labor."* If you're a plumber, lawyer, gardener, banker, artist, or engineer, you may be the only Christian your colleagues ever meet. To them you are the church. Hard work wins respect, genuine kindness wins friendship, and a respected friend wins people for Christ.

Like an athletic team, the church needs people fulfilling different roles. God does not call everyone to play the same position. Go into spiritual training now, so when you go to work you can serve God's team.

REACT

If money weren't a factor, what career would you choose? Why?

* *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 526.

by Todd Pascoe

Todd Pascoe is a senior history major at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

Focus: God

OPINION

Key Text: 1 Pet. 5:11

"Bush Bombs Baghdad," the front page of our school newspaper, the *Collegian*, read. As the days and weeks wore on, students began to realize the implications of those three small words. Soon a huge controversy began. Nearly everyone on campus began questioning and arguing whether or not the United States should be at war in the Persian Gulf.

The idea of war was an idea completely foreign to many students. Many of us were just coming into this world at a time when Vietnam was fresh in our parents' minds, but to us that war was little more than a sad story.

The sad story became a gross reality as many students began to experience, for the first time, the horror of war. Shaken faith and disbelief reached many of us as we stared at the battered prisoners of war. Students began to wonder how God could let such terrible injustices take place. I'm sure many Christians through the ages have asked this same question, if not about war, maybe about a deformed child or a tragic accident.

We have all experienced hardships. "You know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings" (1 Pet. 5:9, NIV). Because of these trials many have

questioned God and His sovereignty. We all must trust in God, "standing firm in the faith" (verse 9). We must not bow down to doubts and uncertainty, but must look to God and His Word for answers and strength. We must use questions as an avenue to get close to our Saviour.

As Christians we proclaim God's sovereignty, His omnipotence, and His infinite wisdom. We must not let go of these claims as we look to the future; we must proclaim with Peter, "To . . . [God] be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen" (1 Pet. 5:11, NKJV).

In realizing the sovereignty of God, a Christian finds a peace that is rare in our busy and sometimes brutal world. We realize that God is always here for us with His unconditional love and guidance: "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" (1 Pet. 5:7, NIV). Holding firm to this promise will allow our effectiveness as servants of God to grow, for as we give our cares up to God, we remove the focus from ourselves to Him. Once our focus is upon God, our opportunities to serve Him become limitless.

REACT

1. Where in your life do you need to "cast your care upon Him"?

2. Why is humility so important in a Christian's life?

by Stacy Pierce

Stacy Pierce is a junior English major at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

Next Quarter's Lessons Song of Songs

If you have not yet received a copy of COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY for fourth quarter 1992, here is a summary of the first two lessons:

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Lesson 2:

Scripture: John 15:12

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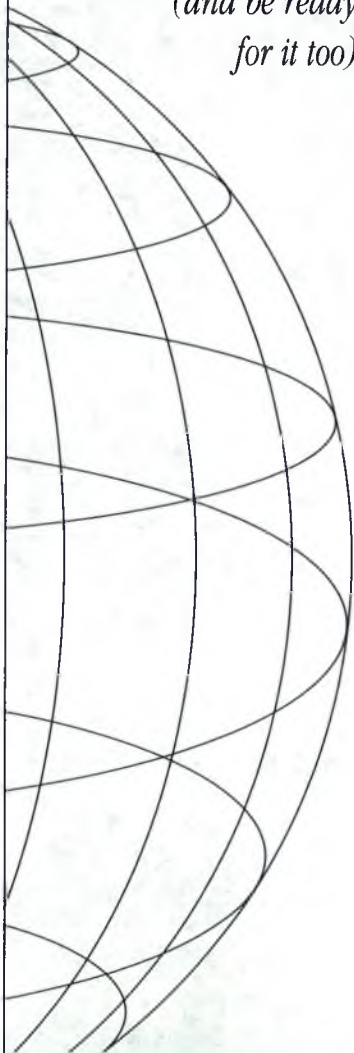
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