

# 1 AND 2 PETER - A TEACHER'S GUIDE

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## THE CENTRAL QUESTION:

### What does this book/story say to us about God?

This question may be broken down further as follows:

- a. Why did God do it/allow it?
- b. Why did He record it for our study?

**“To be permitted to have a view of God is the highest privilege accorded to man. This privilege should be prized above all earthly distinction or honor.”** ST, June 16, 1898

1. What picture of God would you have if you had only the letters of Peter? When and from where do you think these letters were written? What was Peter's main reason for writing these letters? Do they add anything significant and new to our understanding of God or the plan of salvation? Did Peter have any help in writing these letters? (1 Peter 5:12) Where is the “Babylon” that he referred to in 1 Peter 5:13? Who else was with him there? According to an ancient tradition, Peter was finally crucified upside down in Rome about A.D. 67. (See *The Acts of the Apostles* 538; *Early Church Fathers* 1.1.4.11.0.3; *ECF* 1.7.1.5.0.2; etc.)

## 1 Peter

In this letter Peter has much to say about suffering. He shows how it can be a way of serving the Lord, of sharing the faith, and of being tested. The letter was written to Christians scattered all over the northern part of Asia Minor. In this part of the Roman empire many Christians had already suffered unfair treatment from people who did not believe in Jesus. And they could expect to suffer even more.

Peter was quick to offer encouragement. His letter reminds the readers that some of the Lord's followers may have to go through times of hard testing. But this should make them glad, Peter declares, because it will strengthen their faith and bring them honor on the day when Jesus Christ returns (1 Peter 1:6,7).

Peter reminds them that Christ suffered here on earth, and when His followers suffer for doing right they are sharing His sufferings (1 Peter 2:18-25; 4:12-17). In fact, Christians should expect to suffer for their faith (1 Peter 3:8-4:19).

But because of who God is and because of what God has done by raising Jesus Christ from death, Christians can have hope in the future. Just as Christ suffered before he received honor from God, so will Christians be tested by suffering before they receive honor when the Lord returns.—  
*Contemporary English Version.*

## Author:

From Irenaeus in the late second century until modern times, Christian tradition regarded Peter, the apostle, as author of this document. Since he was martyred at Rome during the persecution of Nero between A.D. 64

and 67, it was supposed that the letter was written from Rome shortly before his death. This is supported by its reference to “Babylon” (1 Peter 5:13), a code name for Rome in the early church.

Some modern scholars, however, on the basis of a number of features that they consider incompatible with Petrine authenticity, regard the letter as the work of a later Christian writer. Such features include **1**) the cultivated Greek in which it is written, difficult to attribute to a Galilean fisherman, together with **2**) its use of the Greek Septuagint translation when citing the Old Testament; **3**) the similarity in both thought and expression to the Pauline literature; and **4**) the allusions to widespread persecution of Christians, which did not occur until at least the reign of Domitian (A.D. 81-96). In this view the letter would date from the end of the first century or even the beginning of the second, when there is evidence for persecution of Christians in Asia Minor (the letter of Pliny the Younger to Trajan, A.D. 111-12).

Other scholars believe, however, that these objections can be met by appeal to use of a secretary, Silvanus, mentioned in 1 Peter 5:12. Such secretaries often gave literary expression to the author’s thoughts in their own style and language. The persecutions may refer to local harassment rather than to systematic repression by the state. Hence there is nothing in the document incompatible with Petrine authorship in the 60s.—*New American Bible*, introduction to the *First Letter of Peter*.

The external attestation of 1 Peter as a genuine epistle of Peter is widespread, early, and clear; there is no evidence that it was ever attributed to anyone else. Apart from the possible witness of 2 Peter 3:1, Irenaeus (c. A.D. 185; *Against Heresies* 4.9.2), Tertullian (c. A.D. 160-225), Clement of Alexandria (c. A.D. 150-215), and Origen (c. A.D. 185-253) all attributed the epistle to Peter. By the time of Eusebius (c. A.D. 265-339) there was no question of its authenticity (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.3.1)....

While addressed primarily to persecuted Christians, the principles Peter teaches apply to all suffering, regardless of the cause, provided it is not occasioned by one’s own sin. On the basis of this epistle, Peter has with justice been called “the apostle of hope” (1 Peter 1:3, 13, 21; 3:15). **The central exhortation of the entire epistle can be summed up in the phrase “trust and obey”** (1 Peter 4:19).—*The Reformation Study Bible*, introduction to *The First Epistle of Peter*. [Bold type is added.]

Also addressed is the important goal of believers’ pointing others to God by their godly life-styles. They thus proclaim the praises of God ([1 Peter] 2:9), influence pagans to glorify God ([1 Peter] 2:12), silence foolish people by doing good works ([1 Peter] 2:15), win spouses to Christ by their examples ([1 Peter] 3:1), shame their ungodly critics ([1 Peter] 3:15,16), and puzzle former companions ([1 Peter] 4:4). Christians are to be a redeeming force in the world, though they suffer.—*The Spirit-Filled Life*

*Study Bible*, introduction to *The First Epistle of Peter*. [Content in brackets is added.]

*Babylon* is a code name for Rome. (Compare Revelation 14-18.) However, some scholars think that this letter was written from the actual Babylon where a fairly large Jewish community was still living. That is unlikely. Considerable other evidence suggests that Peter was in Rome during his final days, and that is almost certainly the location from which this book was written.

## **2 Peter**

James MacKnight notes that although five of the General Epistles (James, 2 Peter 2, 3 John, and Jude) were slow in being received into the New Testament canon by the early Church, it does not mean that they were viewed as forgeries; it rather showed that slow circulation of these epistles had not allowed them to be as quickly judged and proven authentic. This is because the New Testament church was extremely careful before accepting any book as canonical, and did in fact identify certain writings as forgeries. Westcott says, “As a general rule, quotations have a value positively, but not negatively: they may shew that a writing was received as authoritative, but it cannot fairly be argued from this fact alone that another which is not quoted was unknown or rejected as apocryphal.”

Although the first epistle of Peter received quick recognition as inspired Scripture, his second epistle was not so easily canonized into the sacred Scriptures. The other brief letters of 2 John, 3 John and Jude were not quickly recognized either, but none have been more disputed than 2 Peter. One fact that caused this uncertainty is the brevity of these letters. This brevity gave them less attention during public readings, since they were not immediately recognized as circulatory letters, which accounts for their slow circulation and omission from some of the earliest translations of the Christian Scriptures and canons. Because of their slower circulation, they were [not] much cited to by the earliest church fathers, making it more difficult to establish their genuineness. However, apostolic authorship won their favor by the time the canon was officially closed by the middle of the fourth century. Nathaniel Williams makes the simple conclusion that either the epistle of 2 Peter was written by the apostle Peter or it was forged. One must then conclude that if it were a forged document, then it would not have been included in the canon of the New Testament books by the early Church, which considered apostolic authority of a book as the guideline for canonicity.—Everett, G. H. (2011). *The Epistle of 2 Peter* (pp. 4-5). Gary Everett. [Brackets and content in brackets are supplied—error in original.]

## **2 Peter**

In both content and style this letter is very different from 1 Peter, which immediately precedes it in the canon. The opening verse attributes it to “Symeon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ.” Moreover, the author in 2 Peter 3:1 calls his work a “second letter,” referring probably to 1 Peter

as his first, and in 2 Peter 1:18 counts himself among those present at the transfiguration of Jesus.

Nevertheless, acceptance of 2 Peter into the New Testament canon met with great resistance in the early church. The oldest certain reference to it comes from Origen in the early third century. While he himself accepted both Petrine letters as canonical, he testifies that others rejected 2 Peter. As late as the fifth century some local churches still excluded it from the canon, but eventually it was universally adopted. The principal reason for the long delay was the persistent doubt that the letter stemmed from the apostle Peter.

Among modern scholars there is wide agreement that 2 Peter is a pseudonymous work, i.e., one written by a later author who attributed it to Peter according to a literary convention popular at the time. It gives the impression of being more remote in time from the apostolic period than 1 Peter; indeed, many think it is the latest work in the New Testament and assign it to the first or even the second quarter of the second century.

The principal reasons for this view are the following. The author refers to the apostles and “our ancestors” as belonging to a previous generation, now dead (2 Peter 3:2-4). A collection of Paul’s letters exists and appears to be well known, but disputes have arisen about the interpretation of them (2 Peter 3:14-16). The passage about false teachers (2 Peter 2:1-18) contains a number of literary contacts with Jude 1:4-16, and it is generally agreed that 2 Peter depends upon Jude, not vice versa. Finally, the principal problem exercising the author is the false teaching of “scoffers” who have concluded from the delay of the *parousia* that the Lord is not going to return. This could scarcely have been an issue during the lifetime of Simon Peter.

The Christians to whom the letter is addressed are not identified, though it may be the intent of 2 Peter 3:1 to identify them with the churches of Asia Minor to which 1 Peter was sent. Except for the epistolary greeting in 2 Peter 1:1-2, 2 Peter does not have the features of a genuine letter at all, but is rather a general exhortation cast in the form of a letter. The author must have been a Jewish Christian of the dispersion for, while his Jewish heritage is evident in various features of his thought and style, he writes in the rather stilted literary Greek of the Hellenistic period. He appeals to tradition against the twin threat of doctrinal error and moral laxity, which appear to reflect an early stage of what later developed into full-blown gnosticism. Thus he forms a link between the apostolic period and the church of subsequent ages.—*New American Bible*, introduction to *The Second Letter of Peter*.

#### **AUTHOR:**

Simon Peter is the stated author of this letter (2 Peter 1:1). This affirmation is supported in the text of the epistle by the following: (1) the use of the first

person pronoun in the context of Jesus' prediction of Peter's death (2 Peter 1:15); (2) the claim to be an eyewitness of the transfiguration (2 Peter 1:18); (3) the acknowledgment to these readers that this is his second epistle (2 Peter 3:1); and (4) his references to Paul as "our beloved brother" (2 Peter 3:15) and his honest admission that in Paul's letters are "some things hard to understand" (2 Peter 3:16).

External evidence for the authenticity of 2 Peter exists, though admittedly it is not as strong as for the first epistle of Peter. First Clement (A.D. 95) and the Didache may allude to it. In the late second and early third centuries, support for its canonicity grows, though some doubted its authenticity. Eusebius (A.D. 265-340) classified the book as *antilegomena* (Gk.) or disputed. (Other books disputed but eventually recognized as divinely inspired are Hebrews, James, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Revelation.) By the end of the fourth century, the epistle was generally accepted by the vast majority of the Christian world.

**Modern critical scholars have assailed this book more than any other in the New Testament. Many have judged it as pseudepigraphic ("false writing"), i.e., a forgery, and date it well after the time of Peter's death.** Some would even give it a second-century date. In addition to the external questions, skeptical scholars argue that the style and vocabulary of 2 Peter is so different from that of 1 Peter as to rule out a common author. In response it is noted that there is indeed a difference in style. However, the real difference is between the Petrine epistles and the rest of the New Testament. Indeed, no other book is as much like 1 Peter as 2 Peter. The differences that do exist may be explained by a change in subject matter, by time and circumstances of writing, and by the part played by an amanuensis (secretary). First Peter 5:12 may suggest that Silvanus was an amanuensis. Second Peter has no such reference. Therefore, differences in style and vocabulary could be attributed to the service of Silvanus as an amanuensis for the writing of 1 Peter; whereas Peter himself is probably responsible for the actual penning of 2 Peter. When a careful study and balanced investigation is made, there is no compelling reason for rejecting 2 Peter. The letter is authentic and comes from the apostle whose name it carries. [Bold type is added.]

#### **DATE:**

The second epistle was written shortly after the first, probably from the same location. Proper assignment is then A.D. 65-66, during the latter part of the reign of the infamous Nero, and the place from which he wrote is probably Babylon on the Euphrates (1 Peter 5:13).

#### **RECIPIENTS:**

The reference in 2 Peter 3:1 to the present epistle as the second letter indicates that the recipients were the same saints in Asia Minor who were addressed in 1 Peter.

## THEME:

A variety of subjects is discussed in 2 Peter, but all reaffirm the truthfulness of the apostolic witness and the need to be forewarned of the imminent danger to that testimony by false teachers. The book concludes with an eschatological note designed to fortify the faith of believers. —*Believer's Study Bible*, introduction to *The Second General Epistle of Peter*.

## Other commentaries:

Many who deny the Petrine authorship of 1 Peter are willing to affirm the Petrine authorship of 2 Peter. Whereas 1 Peter has a polished literary style, 2 Peter is rough and graphic. In Acts 4:13 the religious leaders observe that Peter and John “were unlearned and ignorant men.” These leaders were not, however, judging Peter or John’s intelligence or writing ability, but merely acknowledged that they lacked the formal education of the rabbinical schools. In Peter’s day, it was not unusual for a common man like Peter to be trilingual, knowing Aramaic (his native language), Greek (the language of culture), and Latin (the language of government). Linguistically, Peter could have written 2 Peter as well as 1 Peter, and the polished style of that epistle could reflect the fact that Silvanus was Peter’s secretary during its writing (1 Pet[er]. 5:12). While the two epistles differ in vocabulary and literary style, such discrepancies are also easily explained by their varied subject matter and purposes. No writer would use the same literary style and vocabulary for both a formal treatise and an informal letter. Ample resemblances between the two epistles and Peter’s sermons recorded by Luke in Acts indicate a common source for all three. Also the author of this epistle identifies himself as “Simon Peter” ([1 Peter] 1:1), using the Aramaic form *Sumeon* rather than the more familiar Greek *Simon*, which occurs in only one other place, Acts 15:14: *Sumeon* is the name the apostle James calls Peter. This argues against any theory of authorship other than that of Simon Peter because a forger would doubtless have spelled the name as in 1 Peter.—*The King James Version Study Bible*, introduction to *The Second Epistle of Peter*.

With its emphasis on holy living and its efforts to refute false teachings, Second Peter stresses sanctification. Ultimately Peter traces the motivation for leading a holy life back to the imminent return of Christ and the punishment and rewards Jesus would bring. The letter groups these teachings into **five different themes**. **(1)** Initially Peter asserts his own authority and the authority of the apostles’ teaching. Their instruction would help the readers of Second Peter to distinguish truth from error. **(2)** Evidently the recipients of this letter were having trouble establishing the connection between following Christ and leading a holy life. Peter reiterated to them that discipleship to Christ means putting away all kinds of immorality. **(3)** Furthermore Peter warned them not to imitate the

arrogance of the false teachers, who were slandering spiritual beings. **(4)** To encourage them to persevere and to remain faithful to the truths of the faith, Peter depicted the day of the Lord, which would result in a new heaven and new earth. **(5)** Towards the end of his letter, Peter encouraged his readers to be patient. God had good reasons for delaying Christ's return and the fulfillment of His prophetic program. The day of the Lord had been delayed, but it was still imminent. For this reason, they should vigilantly watch their belief and practice so that they would not be deceived by falsehood.—*Nelson's Study Bible*, introduction to *The Second Epistle of Peter*. [Bold type is added.]

**2 Peter.** Since early Christian times there has been considerable difference of opinion as to the authorship of 2 Peter. Origen, the earliest writer to mention it specifically, expresses doubt as to its authenticity (Eusebius *Hist. Eccl.* vi. 25). Eusebius (*ibid.* iii. 3) wrote that the epistle had not been received as canonical, but that since many considered it useful it was being studied along with other Scriptures. There seem to be no direct quotations from 2 Peter in earliest Christian writings.

Perhaps no other book of the NT has been as emphatically declared post-apostolic—and thus spurious—by modern scholars as 2 Peter. They point out that its language and style differ markedly from those of 1 Peter. They note that it gives a special status to the extant epistles of Paul, referring to them as “scripture” (2 Pe[ter] 3:15, 16), placing them thus on the same level of inspiration and authority as the OT [Old Testament], and observe that it is incredible that these epistles of Paul should have been collected and have attained to a state equal to that of OT scriptures during Peter's lifetime, especially since Peter and Paul died about the same time. However, the epistle claims to be the writing of Simon Peter, disciple and apostle of Jesus Christ (ch [2 Peter] 1:1), and to be his “second epistle (ch [2 Peter] 3:1) The author also claims to have been with Christ upon the mount of Transfiguration (ch [2 Peter] 1:17, 18), an occasion on which only Peter, James, and John were present (M[at]t[thew] 17:1). The difference in the style from 1 Peter may be the result of Peter's not having had the help of the same amanuensis he had in writing his 1<sup>st</sup> epistle (see 1 Pe[ter] 5:12). It is most logical to suppose that Peter, an unschooled Palestinian, with Aramaic as his mother tongue, would use a secretary when he wrote in Greek, a language with which he was not entirely familiar, since even Paul, who was fully at home in Greek, commonly used amanuenses. The argument that Paul's epistles could not have been gathered and recognized as “scripture” before Peter's death is only an assumption. In view of the fact that Paul's active ministry covered a period of about 20 years, that Peter was in Rome at the time he wrote his 1<sup>st</sup> epistle (1 Pe[ter] 5:13), and that Peter and Paul suffered martyrdom about the same time, there is no reason why Paul's epistles could not have attained the status reflected in Peter's statement in 2 Pe[ter] 3:15, 16. Paul's active and

successful ministry and his explicit claim that he received his gospel by inspiration (see Gal[atians] 1:11, 12; 1 Ti[tus] 4:1) clearly provide a solid foundation for Peter's statement.

**In 1958 an announcement was made of the discovery of a 3d-cent. papyrus containing the general epistles 1 Pe[ter], 2 Pe[ter], and Jude, now in the Bodmer library in Switzerland. This manuscript is a most significant find and is a testimony to the acceptance of these epistles, at least by some, in the 3d cent. It was published in 1959 and is known as Bodmer VII, VIII (P<sup>72</sup>)....**

Second Peter is a pastoral epistle in which the writer exhorts his readers to continue their growth in grace and in spiritual knowledge, in order that God's purpose in their calling and election may be fulfilled. Following the introduction (2 Pe[ter] 1:1-11), he states his purpose in writing as being to establish the believers in present truth and to confirm the gospel message on the basis of his personal experience with Christ and the fulfillment of OT [Old Testament] prophecy in Christ (vs [2 Peter 1:]12-21). Chapter 2 consists of a series of stern warnings against false teachers and their deceptive heresies. The last section of the epistle (ch [2 Peter] 3:1-18) stresses the coming of Christ and preparation for His appearing. The great day of the Lord is certain (vs [2 Peter 3:]3-10), and in anticipation of that event all should live godly lives (vs [2 Peter 3:]11-18).—"Peter, Epistles of" in *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* (electronic version) 871. [Content in brackets and bold type are added.]

Since early times there has been considerable discussion with respect to the authorship of 2 Peter. Origen (c. A.D. 185-c.254), the earliest writer who names the epistle, expresses doubt as to its authenticity (Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* vi. 25). Jerome (c. A.D. 340-420) says that questions had been raised about the style of the epistle. Other Church Fathers either felt grave doubts about it or rejected it outright. Eusebius (*ibid.* iii. 3; Loeb ed., vol. I, pp. 191, 193) says: "Of Peter, one epistle, that which is called his first, is admitted, and the ancient presbyters used this in their own writings as unquestioned, but the so-called second epistle we have not received as canonical, but nevertheless it has appeared useful to many, and has been studied with other Scriptures." There are apparently no direct quotations from 2 Peter in the Christian writings of the first two centuries, but only scattered allusions that suggest an acquaintance with it. Doubt with respect to this epistle was most forcefully expressed in the church at Antioch, chiefly because of **the absence of 2 Peter, together with 2 John, John, Jude, and the Revelation, from the Peshitta** (see Vol. V, p. 135). This commentary holds that though these objections are impressive, they are more than offset by the evidence in behalf of the claim that the apostle Peter was the author of 2 Peter. For a summary of the evidence on which this commentary bases its conclusion in this matter see Vol. V, pp. 185,186; Vol. VII, p. 547.—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible*



*Commentary*, (electronic version) vol. 7, 593, introduction to “The Second Epistle General of Peter.” [Bold type is added.]

## 1 & 2 Peter

Peter’s concise confession—“You are the Messiah, the Christ”—focused the faith of the disciples on Jesus as God among us, in person, carrying out the eternal work of salvation. Peter seems to have been a natural leader, commanding the respect of his peers by sheer force of personality. In every listing of Jesus’ disciples, Peter’s name is invariably first.

In the early church, his influence was enormous and acknowledged by all. By virtue of his position, he was easily the most powerful figure in the Christian community. And his energetic preaching, ardent prayer, bold healing, and wise direction confirmed the trust placed in him.

The way Peter handled himself in that position of power is even more impressive than the power itself. He stayed out of the center, didn’t “wield” power, maintained a scrupulous subordination to Jesus. Given his charismatic personality and well-deserved position at the head, he could easily have taken over, using the prominence of his association with Jesus to promote himself. That he didn’t do it, given the frequency with which spiritual leaders do exactly that, is impressive. Peter is a breath of fresh air.

The two letters Peter wrote exhibit the qualities of Jesus that the Holy Spirit shaped in him: a readiness to embrace suffering rather than prestige, a wisdom developed from experience and not imposed from a book, a humility that lacked nothing in vigor or imagination. From what we know of the early stories of Peter, he had in him all the makings of a bully. That he didn’t become a bully (and religious bullies are the worst kind) but rather the boldly confident and humbly self-effacing servant of Jesus Christ that we discern in these letters, is a compelling witness to what he himself describes as “a brand-new life, with everything to live for.”—*The Message*, introduction to 1 & 2 Peter.

### 2. What is implied by the fact that Peter called himself the servant/slave of Jesus Christ?

PETER calls himself the *servant* of Jesus Christ. The word is *doulos* which really means *slave*. Strange as it may seem, here is a title, apparently one of humiliation, which the greatest of men took as a title of greatest honour. Moses the great leader and lawgiver was the *doulos* of God (Deuteronomy 34:5; Psalm 105:26; Malachi 4:4). Joshua the great commander was the *doulos* of God (Joshua 24:29). David the greatest of the kings was the *doulos* of God (2 Samuel 3:18; Psalm 78:70). In the New Testament Paul is the *doulos* of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:1), a title which James (James 1:1), and Jude (Jude 1) both proudly claim. In the Old Testament the prophets are the *douloi* of God (Amos 3:7; Isaiah 20:3). And in the New Testament the Christian man frequently is Christ’s

*doulos* (Acts 2:18; 1 Corinthians 7:22; Ephesians 6:6; Colossians 4:12; 2 Timothy 2:24). There is deep meaning here.

(i) To call the Christian the *doulos* of God means that he is inalienably possessed by God. In the ancient world a master possessed his slaves in the same sense as he possessed his tools. A servant can change his master; but a slave cannot. The Christian inalienably belongs to God.

(ii) To call the Christian the *doulos* of God means that he is unqualifiedly at the disposal of God. In the ancient world the master could do what he liked with his slave; he had even the power of life and death over him. The Christian has no rights of his own, for all his rights are surrendered to God.

(iii) To call the Christian the *doulos* of God means that he owes an unquestioning obedience to God. A master's command was a slave's only law in ancient times. In any situation the Christian has but one question to ask: "Lord, what will *you* have me do?" The command of God is his only law.

(iv) To call the Christian the *doulos* of God means that he must be constantly in the service of God. In the ancient world the slave had literally no time of his own, no holidays, no leisure. All his time belonged to his master. The Christian cannot, either deliberately or unconsciously, compartmentalize life into the time and activities which belong to God, and the time and activities in which he does what he likes. The Christian is necessarily the man every moment of whose time is spent in the service of God.—Barclay, W. (Ed.). (1976). *The Letters of James and Peter* (pp. 292–293). Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press.

3. Who were the prophets who foretold about Christ's suffering and great glory afterward and wondered what it meant?

**1 Peter 1:11-12** (GNB): <sup>11</sup>They tried to find out when the time would be and how it would come. This was the time to which Christ's Spirit in them was pointing, in predicting the sufferings that Christ would have to endure and the glory that would follow. <sup>12</sup>God revealed to these prophets that their work was not for their own benefit, but for yours, as they spoke about those things which you have now heard from the messengers who announced the Good News by the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. These are things which even the angels would like to understand.

Dr. Barclay comments: HERE again we have a rich passage. The wonder of the salvation which was to come to men in Christ was such that the prophets searched and enquired about it; and even the angels were eager to catch a glimpse of it. Few passages have more to tell us about how the prophets wrote and about how they were inspired.

(i) We are told two things about the prophets. **First**, they searched and enquired about the salvation which was to come. **Second**, the Spirit of Christ told them about Christ. Here we have the great truth that inspiration

depends on two things—the searching mind of man and the revealing Spirit of God. **It used sometimes to be said that the men who wrote Scripture were pens in the hands of God or flutes into which his Spirit breathed or lyres across which his Spirit moved. That is to say, they were held to be nothing more than almost unconscious instruments in God’s hands. But this passage tells us that God’s truth comes only to the man who searches for it.** In inspiration there is an element which is human and an element which is divine; it is the product at one and the same time of the search of man’s mind and the revelation of God’s Spirit.

Further, this passage tells us that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, was always operative in this world. Wherever men have glimpsed beauty, wherever they have laid hold on truth, wherever they have had longings for God, the Spirit of Christ was there. Never has there been any time in any nation when the Spirit of Christ was not moving men to seek God and guiding them to find him. Sometimes they have been blind and deaf, sometimes they have misinterpreted that guidance, sometimes they have grasped but fragments of it, but always that revealing Spirit has been there to guide the searching mind.

(ii) This passage tells us that the prophets spoke of the sufferings and the glory of Christ. Such passages as **Psalm 22** and **Isaiah 52:13-53:12** found their consummation and fulfillment in the sufferings of Christ. Such passages as **Psalm 2, Psalm 16:8-11, Psalm 110**, found their fulfillment in the glory and the triumph of Christ. We need not think that the prophets foresaw the actual man Jesus. What they did foresee was that one would come some day in whom their dreams and visions would all be fulfilled.

(iii) This passage tells us for whom the prophets spoke. It was the message of the glorious deliverance of God that they brought to men. That was a deliverance which they themselves never experienced. Sometimes God gives a man a vision, but says to the man himself, “Not yet!” He took Moses to Pisgah and showed him the Promised Land and said to him, “I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there” (Deuteronomy 34:1-4). [Compare Daniel’s sealing up the book.] Someone tells of watching one night at dusk a blind lamplighter lighting the lamps. He tapped his way from lamp-post to lamp-post bringing to others a light which he himself would never see. As the prophets knew, it is a great gift to receive the vision, even if the consummation of the vision is for others still to come.—Barclay, W. (Ed.). (1976). *The Letters of James and Peter* (pp. 179–181). Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press. [Bold type and content in brackets are added.]

4. Do we have any other writings from Peter? What is implied by 1 Peter 5:13 and 2 Peter 1:12-15?

The only reasonable way that Peter could have made it possible for people to study and remember the events of the life of Jesus after his (Peter’s) death was by writing an

account of the events of Jesus's life. There is considerable evidence that Peter, working with Mark, was the one responsible for the writing of the Gospel of Mark. Mark was with Peter in Rome near the end of Peter's life. (1 Peter 5:13)

5. How would you compare the Peter of the Gospels with the Peter who wrote these letters?

As described in the Gospels, Peter seemed to be a self-confident, blustery, man with a need to speak whenever an opportunity came! He thought he could walk on the water. (Matthew 14:25-32) He thought he would be ready to stand with Jesus no matter what. (Matthew 26:33; Mark 14:29; Luke 22:33; John 13:37) But, when even the maid observed that he had a Galilean accent, he cursed and swore to deny it. (Mark 14:66-72)

When these letters were written, Peter recognized that persecution was upon the Christian church; he was ready to die (really ready!); he was not afraid. Peter had surrendered his life to the Lord of the Universe, and he was not afraid of the emperor of Rome.

6. Many have believed that Peter (whose name means "rock") was the one designated to be the first leader of the new Christian church and that Jesus Himself gave him that position. (Matthew 16:18-19) Who did Peter himself seem to understand the church was to be "built upon"? (See 1 Peter 2:4-8; compare Ephesians 2:19-22.)

**1 Peter 2:4-8 (GNB):** <sup>4</sup> Come to the Lord, the living stone rejected by people as worthless but chosen by God as valuable. <sup>5</sup> Come as living stones, and let yourselves be used in building the spiritual temple, where you will serve as holy priests to offer spiritual and acceptable sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup> For the scripture says,

"I chose a valuable stone,  
which I am placing as the cornerstone in Zion;  
and whoever believes in him will never be disappointed."

<sup>7</sup> This stone is of great value for you that believe; but for those who do not believe:

"The stone which the builders rejected as worthless  
turned out to be the most important of all."

<sup>8</sup> And another scripture says:

"This is the stone that will make people stumble,  
the rock that will make them fall."

They stumbled because they did not believe in the word; such was God's will for them.

Consider Ellen White's comment.

In quoting the prophecy of the rejected stone, Christ referred to an actual occurrence in the history of Israel. The incident was connected with the building of the first temple. While it had a special application at the time of

Christ's first advent, and should have appealed with special force to the Jews, it has also a lesson for us. When the temple of Solomon [598] was erected, the immense stones for the walls and the foundation were entirely prepared at the quarry; after they were brought to the place of building, not an instrument was to be used upon them; the workmen had only to place them in position. For use in the foundation, one stone of unusual size and peculiar shape had been brought; but the workmen could find no place for it, and would not accept it. It was an annoyance to them as it lay unused in their way. Long it remained a rejected stone. But when the builders came to the laying of the corner, they searched for a long time to find a stone of sufficient size and strength, and of the proper shape, to take that particular place, and bear the great weight which would rest upon it. Should they make an unwise choice for this important place, the safety of the entire building would be endangered. They must find a stone capable of resisting the influence of the sun, of frost, and of tempest. Several stones had at different times been chosen, but under the pressure of immense weights they had crumbled to pieces. Others could not bear the test of the sudden atmospheric changes. But at last attention was called to the stone so long rejected. It had been exposed to the air, to sun and storm, without revealing the slightest crack. The builders examined 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.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 597.5.

Peter clearly indicated that the church is built on Christ as the Chief Cornerstone. But, we need to recognize that there is a larger sense in which we can say that the church is built on all the prophets and apostles. (See Ephesians 2:19-22.) In fact, all of us are to become a part of that “temple.”

When talking to Roman Catholics who believe that Matthew 16:18-19 is proof that Peter was the first pope and that he received the keys of the kingdom from Jesus and that the keys have been handed down from pope to pope since then, it is best to look at Matthew 18:18; Ephesians 2:19-22; and 1 Peter 2:4-8 along with Matthew 16:18-19. We agree that the church was built on Peter, as suggested in Ephesians; but, Jesus Christ is the Chief Cornerstone, and all the Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles form a part of the “foundation”—the entire Bible. Furthermore, each of us is to be a stone in that building built on the “foundation”—God's church.

7. Are you happy to be one of God's “peculiar” people? (1 Peter 2:9, *KJV*) What does that really mean? (Compare other versions.)

This is using the word *peculiar* in its older meaning of “belonging especially to.” Christians are God's very own possession, and He treats them as such. This is a very special and privileged position to be in!

Look at some other translations:

... λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν.... *Nestle-Aland 27<sup>th</sup> Ed. Greek.*

... a people acquired.... *Young's Literal Translation*.

... a peculiar people.... *KJV*.

... [God's] own purchased, special people.... *Amplified*. [Brackets and content in brackets are in the original.]

... a people for his own possession.... *ESV*.

... God's own people.... *GNB*.

... God's instruments to do his work and speak out for him.... *The Message*.

... the spiritual Israel chosen by God.... *Clear Word*.

We should have no reluctance to be thought of as God's very own people! Every church group seems to want that designation!

8. You get no "credit" if you suffer for doing wrong. But, if you are punished for doing right, then you are rewarded for following in the steps of Jesus.

**1 Peter 2:16-17** (*TLB*): <sup>16</sup>Do what is right; then if men speak against you, calling you evil names, they will become ashamed of themselves for falsely accusing you when you have only done what is good. <sup>17</sup>Remember, if God wants you to suffer, it is better to suffer for doing good than for doing wrong!

**1 Peter 2:20-21** (*GNB*): <sup>20</sup>For what credit is there if you endure the beatings you deserve for having done wrong? But if you endure suffering even when you have done right, God will bless you for it. <sup>21</sup>It was to this that God called you, for Christ himself suffered for you and left you an example, so that you would follow in his steps.

Consider the comments of William Barclay:

Suppose a man has the Christian attitude to men and to work and is treated with injustice, insult and injury—what then? Peter's great answer is that **this is exactly what happened to Jesus**. He was none other than the Suffering Servant. Verses [1 Peter 2:]21-25 are full of reminiscences and quotations of Isaiah 53, the supreme picture of the Suffering Servant of God, which came to life in Jesus. **He was without sin and yet he was insulted and he suffered; but he accepted the insults and the suffering with serene love and bore them for the sins of mankind.**—Barclay, W. (Ed.). (1976). *The Letters of James and Peter* (p. 214). Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press. [Bold type is added.]

9. Wives must submit to their husbands; husbands must treat their wives as equal partners. (Compare Ephesians 5:25; Colossians 3:19; 1 Thessalonians 4:4.)

**1 Peter 3:1-6** (*GNB*): <sup>1</sup>In the same way you wives must submit to your husbands, so that if any of them do not believe God's word, your conduct will win them over to believe. It will not be necessary for you to say a word, <sup>2</sup>because they will see how pure and reverent your conduct is. <sup>3</sup>You should not use outward aids to make yourselves beautiful, such as the way you

do your hair, or the jewellery you put on, or the dresses you wear. <sup>4</sup>Instead, your beauty should consist of your true inner self, the ageless beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of the greatest value in God's sight. <sup>5</sup>For the devout women of the past who placed their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful by submitting to their husbands. <sup>6</sup>Sarah was like that; she obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are now her daughters if you do good and are not afraid of anything.

Consider these comments of William Barclay regarding 1 Peter 3:1-6.

PETER turns to the domestic problems which Christianity inevitably produced. It was inevitable that one marriage partner might be won for Christ, while the other remained untouched by the appeal of the gospel; and such a situation inevitably had difficulties.

It may seem strange that Peter's advice to wives is six times as long as that to husbands. This is because the wife's position was far more difficult than that of the husband. If a husband became a Christian, he would automatically bring his wife with him into the Church and there would be no problem. But if a wife became a Christian while her husband did not, she was taking a step which was unprecedented and which produced the acutest problems.

In every sphere of ancient civilization, women had no rights at all. Under Jewish law a woman was a thing; she was owned by her husband in exactly the same way as he owned his sheep and his goats; on no account could she leave him, although he could dismiss her at any moment. For a wife to change her religion while her husband did not was unthinkable.

In Greek civilization the duty of the woman was "to remain indoors and to be obedient to her husband." It was the sign of a good woman that she must see as little, hear as little and ask as little as possible. She had no kind of independent existence and no kind of mind of her own, and her husband could divorce her almost at caprice, so long as he returned her dowry.

Under Roman law a woman had no rights. In law she remained for ever a child. When she was under her father she was under the *patria potestas*, the father's power, which gave the father the right even of life and death over her; and when she married she passed equally into the power of her husband. She was entirely subject to her husband and completely at his mercy. Cato the Censor, the typical ancient Roman, wrote: "If you were to catch your wife in an act of infidelity, you can kill her with impunity without a trial." Roman matrons were prohibited from drinking wine, and Egnatius beat his wife to death when he found her doing so. Sulpicius Gallus dismissed his wife because she had once appeared in the streets without a veil. Antistius Vetus divorced his wife because he saw her secretly speaking to a freed woman in public. Publius Sempronius Sophus divorced his wife because once she went to the public games. The whole attitude

of ancient civilization was that no woman could dare take any decision for herself.

What, then, must have been the problems of the wife who became a Christian while her husband remained faithful to the ancestral gods? It is almost impossible for us to realize what life must have been for the wife who was brave enough to become a Christian.

What, then, is Peter's advice in such a case? We must first note what he does not advise.

He does not advise the wife to leave her husband. In this he takes exactly the same attitude as Paul takes (1 Corinthians 7:13-16). Both Paul and Peter are quite sure that the Christian wife must remain with the heathen husband so long as he does not send her away. Peter does not tell the wife to preach or to argue. He does not tell her to insist that there is no difference between slave and freeman, Gentile and Jew, male and female, but that all are the same in the presence of the Christ whom she has come to know. {See Galatians 3:28.}

He tells her something very simple—nothing else than to be a good wife. It is by the silent preaching of the loveliness of her life that she must break down the barriers of prejudice and hostility, and win her husband for her new Master.

She must be submissive. It is not a spineless submission that is meant but, as someone has finely put it, a "voluntary selflessness." It is the submission which is based on the death of pride and the desire to serve. It is the submission not of fear but of perfect love.

She must be pure. There must be in her life a lovely chastity and fidelity founded on love.

She must be reverent. She must live in the conviction that the whole world is the Temple of God and that all life is lived in the presence of Christ....

BENGEL speaks of "the labour bestowed on dress which consumes much time." Such labour is no modern thing. We have already seen that in the ancient world women had no part in public life whatsoever; they had nothing to pass their time; for that reason it was sometimes argued that they must be allowed an interest in dress and adornment. Cato the Censor insisted on simplicity; Lucius Valerius answered: "Why should men grudge women their ornaments and their dress? Women cannot hold public offices, or priesthoods, or gain triumphs; they have no public occupations. What, then, can they do but devote their time to adornment and to dress?" Undue interest in self-adornment was then, as it still is, a sign that the person who indulged in it had no greater things to occupy her mind.

The ancient moralists condemned undue luxury as much as the Christian teachers did. Quintilian, the Roman master of oratory, wrote: "A tasteful and magnificent dress, as the Greek poet tells us, lends added dignity to



the wearer: but effeminate and luxurious apparel fails to adorn the body, and only reveals the sordidness of the mind.” Epictetus, the philosopher, thinking of the narrow life to which women were condemned in the ancient world, said, “Immediately after they are fourteen, women are called ‘ladies’ by men. And so, when they see that they have nothing else than to be bedfellows of men, they begin to beautify themselves and put all their hopes on that. It is, therefore, worthwhile for us to take pains to make them understand that they are honoured for nothing else but only for appearing modest and self-respecting.” Epictetus and Peter agree.

There is at least one passage in the Old Testament which lists the various items of female adornment and threatens the day of judgment in which they will be destroyed. The passage is Isaiah 3:18-24. It speaks of the “finery of the anklets, the headbands and the crescents; the pendants, the bracelets, and the scarfs; the headdresses, the armlets, the sashes, the perfume boxes and the amulets; the signet rings and nose rings; the festal robes, the mantles, the cloaks and the handbags; the garments of gauze, the linen garments, the turbans and the veils.”

In the world of the Greeks and the Romans it is interesting to collect the references to personal adornments. There were as many ways of dressing the hair as there were bees in Hybla. [Hybla, Sicily was famous for its honey.] Hair was waved and dyed, sometimes black, more often auburn. Wigs were worn, especially blonde wigs, which are found even in the Christian catacombs; and hair to manufacture them was imported from Germany, and even from as far away as India. Hairbands, pins and combs were made of ivory, and boxwood, and tortoiseshell; and sometimes of gold, studded with gems.

Purple was the favourite colour for clothes. One pound weight of the best Tyrian purple wool, strained twice through, cost 1,000 *denarii*, £43.50. A tyrian cloak of the best purple cost well over £100. In one year silks, pearls, scents and jewellery were imported from India to the value of £1,000,000. Similar imports of luxury came from Arabia.

Diamonds, emeralds, topazes, opals and the sardonyx were favourite stones. Struma Nonius had a ring valued at £21,250. Pearls were loved most of all. Julius Caesar bought for Servilia a pearl which cost him £65,250. Earrings were made of pearls and Seneca spoke of women with two or three fortunes in their ears. Slippers were encrusted with them; Nero even had a room whose walls were covered with them. Pliny saw Lollia Paulina, wife of Caligula, wearing a dress so covered with pearls and emeralds that it had cost £450,000.

Christianity came into a world of luxury and decadence combined.

In face of all this Peter pleads for the graces which adorn the heart, which are precious in the sight of God. These were the jewels which adorned the holy women of old. Isaiah had called Sara the mother of God’s faithful

people (Isaiah 51:2); and if Christian wives are adorned with the same graces of modesty, humility and chastity, they too will be her daughters and will be within the family of the faithful people of God.

A Christian wife of those times lived in a society where she would be tempted to senseless extravagance and where she might well go in fear of the caprices of her heathen husband; but she must live in selfless service, in goodness and in serene trust. That would be the best sermon she could preach to win her husband for Christ. There are few passages where the value of a lovely Christian life is so vividly stressed.—Barclay, W. (Ed.). (1976). *The Letters of James and Peter* (pp. 218–224). Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press. [Brackets and content in brackets are in original.] {Curly brackets and content in curly brackets are added.}

**1 Peter 3:7 (TLB):** You husbands must be careful of your wives, being thoughtful of their needs and honoring them as the weaker sex. Remember that you and your wife are partners in receiving God's blessings, and if you don't treat her as you should, your prayers will not get ready answers.

(NASB): You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

Consider these comments of William Barclay:

SHORT as this passage is, it has in it much of the very essence of the Christian ethic. That ethic is what may be called a reciprocal ethic. It never places all the responsibility on one side. If it speaks of the duties of slaves, it speaks also of the obligations of masters. If it speaks of the duty of children, it speaks also of the obligations of parents (cp. Ephesians 6:1-9; Colossians 3:20-4:1). Peter has just laid down the duty of wives; now he lays down the duty of husbands. A marriage must be based on reciprocal obligation. A marriage in which all the privileges are on one side and all the obligations on the other is bound to be imperfect with every chance of failure. This was a new conception in the ancient world. We have already noted the woman's total lack of rights then and quoted Cato's statement of the rights of the husband. But we did not finish that quotation and we do so now: "If you were to catch your wife in an act of infidelity, you can kill her with impunity without a trial; but, if she were to catch you, she would not venture to touch you with her finger and, indeed, she has no right." In the Roman moral code all the obligation was on the wife and all the privilege with the husband. The Christian ethic never grants a privilege without a corresponding obligation.

What are the obligations of the husband?

(i) *He must be understanding.* He must be considerate and sensitive to the feelings of his wife. Somerset Maugham's mother was a very beautiful woman with the world at her feet but his father was unhandsome. Someone once asked her: "Why do you remain faithful to that ugly little man you married?" Her answer was: "Because he never hurts me." Understanding and considerateness had forged an unbreakable bond. The cruelty which is hardest to bear is often not deliberate but the product of sheer thoughtlessness.

(ii) *He must be chivalrous.* He must remember that women are the weaker sex and treat them with courtesy. In the ancient world chivalry to women was well-nigh unknown. It was, and still is, no uncommon sight in the East to see the man riding on a donkey while the woman trudged by his side. It was Christianity which introduced chivalry into the relationship between men and women.

(iii) *He must remember that the woman has equal spiritual rights.* She is a fellow-heir of the grace of life. Women did not share in the worship of the Greeks and the Romans. Even in the Jewish synagogue they had no share in the service, and in the orthodox synagogue still have none. When they were admitted to the synagogue at all, they were segregated from the men and hidden behind a screen. Here in Christianity emerged the revolutionary principle that women had equal spiritual rights and with that the relationship between the sexes was changed.

(iv) *Unless a man fulfils these obligations, there is a barrier between his prayers and God.* As Bigg puts it: "The sighs of the injured wife come between the husband's prayers and God's hearing." Here is a great truth. Our relationships with God can never be right, if our relationships with our fellow-men are wrong. It is when we are at one with each other that we are at one with him.—Barclay, W. (Ed.). (1976). *The Letters of James and Peter* (pp. 218–224). Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press.

10. As you remember the story of Peter, did he always answer with "gentleness and respect" as he recommended in 1 Peter 3:14-16?

Remember that Peter was the one who cut off the ear of the servant of the High Priest. (Matthew 26:51; Mark 14:47; Luke 22:50; **John 18:10**) Never say that Peter was not ready to be counted!

"Gentleness and respect" did not come easily for Peter. As we read his story through the Gospels, he was bold and brash and determined to be first as well as most vocal! But, by the time of the writing of this letter-book (about A.D. 64-67), Peter had matured. He recognized that he was about to die and that times of suffering and persecution were coming. In order to minimize these problems, Peter suggested this wonderful "Christian" approach to dealing with others.

**1 Peter 3:15b-16 (GNB):** Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you, <sup>16</sup>but do it with gentleness and

respect. Keep your conscience clear, so that when you are insulted, those who speak evil of your good conduct as followers of Christ will be ashamed of what they say.

Consider these comments of William Barclay:

IN a hostile and suspicious world it was inevitable that the Christian would be called upon to defend the faith he held and the hope by which he lived. Here Peter has certain things to say about this Christian defence.

(i) It must be *reasonable*. It is a *logos* that the Christian must give, and a *logos* is a reasonable and intelligent statement of his position. A cultivated Greek believed that it was the mark of an intelligent man that he was able to give and to receive a *logos* concerning his actions and belief. As Bigg puts it, he was expected “intelligently and temperately to discuss matters of conduct.” To do so we must know what we believe; we must have thought it out; we must be able to state it intelligently and intelligibly. **Our faith must be a first-hand discovery and not a second-hand story. It is one of the tragedies of the modern situation that there are so many Church members who, if they were asked what they believe, could not tell, and who, if they were asked why they believe it, would be equally helpless. The Christian must go through the mental and spiritual toil of thinking out his faith, so that he can tell what he believes and why.**

(ii) His defence must be given *with gentleness*. There are many people who state their beliefs with a kind of arrogant belligerence. Their attitude is that anyone who does not agree with them is either a fool or a knave and they seek to ram their beliefs down other people’s throats. The case for Christianity must be presented with winsomeness and with love, and with that wise tolerance which realizes that it is not given to any man to possess the whole truth. “There are as many ways to the stars as there are men to climb them.” Men may be wooed into the Christian faith when they cannot be bullied into it.

(iii) His defence must be given *with reverence*. That is to say, any argument in which the Christian is involved must be carried on in a tone which God can hear with joy. **No debates have been so acrimonious as theological debates; no differences have caused such bitterness as religious differences.** In any presentation of the Christian case and in any argument for the Christian faith, the accent should be the accent of love.

(iv) The only compelling argument is the argument of the Christian life. Let a man so act that his conscience is clear. Let him meet criticism with a life which is beyond reproach. Such conduct will silence slander and disarm criticism. “A saint,” as someone has said, “is someone whose life makes it easier to believe in God.”—Barclay, W. (Ed.). (1976). *The Letters of James and Peter* (pp. 230–231). Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press. [Italic type is in the original; bold type is added.]

11. Are you “ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you”? (1 Peter 3:15, *GNB*) What would it take to be confident enough to say that? Would it be possible for even a young Christian to do this? What would be the best place and the best way for new Christians to get practice doing this?

Matthew 5:16 suggests that if we were truly living the Christian life that the Bible calls for, people would be constantly asking how we do it; then, we would be called on to tell about our Heavenly Father. Peter recognized that real Christians should be ready with well-thought-out answers to the most important Christian ideas and doctrines (teachings). We should be able to answer such questions as: Why did Jesus have to die? What are God the Father and God the Son doing now? What is God waiting for? What is the central theme of Scripture?

These answers need to be fortified with clear evidence. God never asks us to believe without giving adequate evidence to support His claims; it is evidence that appeals to human reason.

God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His Word, are all established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration. Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth, will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith.—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* 105 (1892); *9MR* 202; compare *Education* 169.

“God gives sufficient evidence for the candid mind to believe.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 4, 232 (1876); *5T* 675; *2MCP* 672; *9MR* 204; compare *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials* 410; *11MR* 288; *RH* Feb. 13, 1900.

There are many who fail to distinguish between the rashness of presumption and the intelligent confidence of faith....

God has given man precious promises upon conditions of faith and obedience; but they are not to sustain him in any rash act. If men needlessly place themselves in peril, and go where God does not require them to go, and self-confidently expose themselves to danger, disregarding the dictates of reason, God will not work a miracle to relieve them. He will not send His angels to preserve any from being burned if they choose to place themselves in the fire.—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, April 1, 1875, par. 1,4; *2Red* 87.1,88.1; *Con* 84.3,85.3.

God gives sufficient evidence to every soul. He does not promise to remove every doubt, but He gives a reason for faith. And sufficient evidence was given to the Jews.—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, January 24, 1899, par. 7; compare *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol 5, 1097; *MS* 127, 1899.

Satan has ability to suggest doubts and devise objections to the pointed testimony that God sends, and many think it a virtue and mark of intelligence in them to be unbelieving, and questioning, and quibbling. Those who desire to doubt will have plenty of room. God does not propose to remove all occasion for unbelief. He gives evidence, which must be carefully investigated with a humble mind and teachable spirit. All should decide from the weight of evidence.—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, September 16, 1873, par. 10; compare 3T 255.1; 5T 675.3; 2MCP 672.3.

Here is a test which all may apply if they will. None need be left in uncertainty and doubt. There is always sufficient evidence upon which to base an intelligent faith. But God will never remove from any man all occasion for doubts. Those who love to dwell in the atmosphere of doubt and questioning unbelief can have the unenviable privilege. He who turns from the weight of evidence because there are a few things that he cannot make plain to his finite understanding, will be left to the cold, chilling atmosphere of unbelief and skepticism, and will make shipwreck of faith.—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, December 30, 1886, par. 6; 4T 232.1-233.0.

Way back in the Old Testament as recorded in Isaiah 1:18, God said:

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. (KJV)

12. Peter talked about Paul writing some things that were difficult to understand. (2 Peter 3:15-16) Did Peter write anything that is difficult to understand? How do you explain **1 Peter 3:18-19? Who were those “spirits”?** (1 Peter 3:20) There is an interesting story in the pseudepigraphical book of Enoch (1 Enoch 10) that says something similar to what Peter said here; it says Enoch preached to the “spirits in prison.” Do you think those two stories are related in any way? What could Peter possibly have been referring to?

This passage is one of the most difficult to interpret in the Bible, there being more than 90 variations of interpretation attempted by Christian scholars since the second century. Generally, however, these may be reduced to four plausible understandings: (1) Jesus descended into Hades (the realm of the dead) between His crucifixion and resurrection to proclaim judgment upon those condemned in the O.T. [Old Testament] period. (2) Jesus descended into *Tartarus* (the place of confinement for fallen angels) to proclaim judgment to the fallen angels. (3) Jesus descended into a realm of Hades known as *Paradise*, in which O.T. saints were held until the atonement could be actually (historically) accomplished. The preaching would be the message of the finished atonement at Golgotha. (4) The Spirit of Christ (cf. 1 Pet[er]. 1:11) preached through Noah concerning impending judgment to the disobedient spirits of men in the antediluvian (pre-Flood) civilization. The latter two views are the more popular among evangelicals and are also the more feasible. The third view

offers explanation of Eph[esians]. 4:8, 9 to the effect that Christ descended to the lower parts of the earth and led captivity captive (a reference to the loosing of O.T. saints). The fourth view better explains the specific mention of the antediluvians and their disobedience. It is in accord with Peter's assessment of Noah as "a preacher of righteousness" (cf. 2 Pet[er]. 2:5). In this fourth view, also, fewer difficulties are involved in harmonizing the statements of Jesus from the cross, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43) and "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit" (Luke 23:46).—*The Believer's Bible*, comment on 1 Peter 3:18-20.

There are various interpretations of the meaning of these verses, primarily because of the ambiguity of the phrase **spirits in prison**. The Greek term translated **spirits** can refer to human spirits, angels, or demons. There are three main interpretations: (1) Some interpret these verses as describing Jesus as going to the place where fallen angels are incarcerated and declaring His final victory over evil in His work on the Cross. These commentators suggest that Peter is referring to **the days of Noah** because these fallen angels were typified by the gross immorality of those "spirits" who married human women at that time (see Gen[esis]. 6:1-4; 2 Pet[er]. 2:4; Jude 1:6). Depending on the commentator, this proclamation is assigned to the time between Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, or to a time after Christ's ascension to heaven. (2) Others hold that **spirits** refers to human spirits. Thus Christ preached to human beings who had died in Noah's day and were in the realm of the dead (hell or Hades). Although some have insisted that Christ's preaching included an offer of salvation to these people, this is at best unlikely and at worst misleading, for Scripture never concedes a "second chance" for sinners after death. The content of Christ's preaching was most likely a proclamation of His victory over sin. (3) Finally, another major interpretation understands this passage as describing Christ preaching through Noah to the unbelievers of his day. Since they rejected Noah's message of salvation, they were presently **in prison**—that is, hell.—*Nelson's Study Bible*, comment on 1 Peter 3:19-20. [Content in brackets and bold type are added.]

The following three explanations of this difficult passage are all in harmony with the general teaching of Scripture on the condition of man in death.

1. "By which" refers back to "the Spirit," and v. [1 Peter 3:]19 means that Christ preached to the antediluvians by the Holy Spirit through the ministry of Noah.
2. "By which" refers back to the preferred reading, "spirit," which is a reference to Christ in His pre-existent state, a state that, like His post-resurrection, glorified nature may be described as in "spirit." Compare the expression, "God is spirit," RSV (see on John 4:24). Christ's preaching was to the antediluvians, "while the ark was a preparing," and hence during His pre-existent state. Compare on Heb[rews]. 9:14.

3. “By which” refers back to v. [1 Peter 3:]18 as a whole, and v. [1 Peter 3:]19 means that by virtue of His *yet future* vicarious death and resurrection, in “spirit,” Christ “went and preached” to the antediluvians through the ministry of Noah. It was by virtue of the fact that Christ was to be “put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit” (v. [1 Peter 3:]8) that He formerly preached salvation through Noah and “saved by water” those who accepted it. Similarly, it is “by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” that “baptism doth also now save us” (v. [1 Peter 3:]21).

The first of these three explanations is possible if the reading “the Spirit” is accepted (see on v. [1 Peter 3:]18). The second and third accord more closely with the Greek construction (of vs. [1 Peter 3:]18, 19), with the immediate context, and with parallel passages elsewhere in the NT [New Testament].—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, (electronic version) vol. 7, comments on 1 Peter 3:18-19. [Content in brackets is added.]

13. **1 Peter 4:1-2** (TLB): <sup>1</sup>Since Christ suffered and underwent pain, you must have the same attitude he did; you must be ready to suffer, too. For remember, when your body suffers, sin loses its power, <sup>2</sup>and you won't be spending the rest of your life chasing after evil desires but will be anxious to do the will of God.

**4:1-2** (GNB): <sup>1</sup>Since Christ suffered physically, you too must strengthen yourselves with the same way of thinking that he had; because whoever suffers physically is no longer involved with sin. <sup>2</sup>From now on, then, you must live the rest of your earthly lives controlled by God's will and not by human desires.

Will the time come again when Christians are persecuted? Who will do the persecuting? William Barclay comments:

THE Christian is committed to abandon the ways of heathenism and to live as God would have him to do.

Peter says, “He who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.” What exactly does he mean? There are three distinct possibilities.

(i) There is a strong line in Jewish thought that suffering is itself a great purifier. In the *Apocalypse of Baruch* the writer, speaking of the experiences of the people of Israel, says, “Then, therefore, were they chastened that they might be sanctified” ([Apocalypse of Baruch] 13:10). In regard to the purification of the spirits of men *Enoch* says, “And in proportion as the burning of their body becomes severe, a corresponding change will take place in their spirits for ever and ever; for before the Lord of spirits there will be none to utter a lying word” ([Enoch] 67:9). The terrible sufferings of the time are describe in *2 Maccabees*, and the writer says, “I beseech those that read this book that they be not discouraged, terrified or shaken for these calamities, but that they judge this punishment



not to be for destruction but for chastening of our nation. For it is a token of his great goodness, when evil-doers are not suffered to go on in their ways any long time, but forthwith punished. For not as with other nations, whom the Lord patiently forbearth to punish, till the day of judgment arrive, and they be come to the fullness of their sins, so dealeth he with us, lest that, being come to the height of sin, afterwards he should take vengeance on us. And though he punish sinners with adversity, yet doth he never forsake his people" ([2 Maccabees] 6:12-16). The idea is that suffering sanctifies and that not to be punished is the greatest punishment which God can lay upon a man. "Blessed is he man who thou dost chasten, O Lord," said the Psalmist (Psalm 94:12). "Happy is the man whom God reproves," said Eliphaz (Job 5:17). "For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives" (Hebrews 12:6).

If this is the idea, it means that he who has been disciplined by suffering has been cured of sin. That is a great thought. It enables us, as Browning said, "to welcome each rebuff that turns earth's smoothness rough." It enables us to thank God for the experience which hurts but save soul. But great as this thought is, it is not strictly relevant here.

(ii) Bigg thinks that Peter is speaking in terms of the experience which his people had of suffering for the Christian faith. He puts it this way: "He who has suffered in meekness and in fear, he who has endured all that persecution can do to him rather than join in wicked ways can be trusted to do right; temptation has manifestly no power over him." The idea is that if a man has come through persecution and not denied the name of Christ, he comes out on the other side with a character so tested and a faith so strengthened, that temptation cannot touch him any more.

Again there is a great thought here, the thought that every trial and every temptation are meant to make us stronger and better. Every temptation resisted makes the next easier to resist; and every temptation conquered makes us better able to overcome the next attack. But again it is doubtful if this thought comes in very relevantly here.

(iii) The third explanation is most probably the right one. Peter has just been talking about baptism. Now the great New Testament picture of baptism is in Romans 6. In that chapter Paul says that the experience of baptism is like being buried with Christ in death and raised with him to newness of life. We think that this is what Peter is thinking of here. He has spoken of baptism; and now he says, "He who in baptism has shared the sufferings and the death of Christ, is risen to such newness of life with him that sin has no more dominion over him" (Romans 6:14). Again we must remember that this is the baptism of the man who is voluntarily coming over from paganism into Christianity. In that act of baptism he is identified

with Christ; he shares his sufferings and even his death; and he shares his risen life and power, and is, therefore victor over sin.

When that has happened, a man has said good-bye to his former way of life. The rule of pleasure, pride and passion is gone, and the rule of God has begun. This was by no means easy. A man's former associates would laugh at the new puritanism which had entered his life. But the Christian knows very well that the judgment of God will come, when the judgments of earth will be reserved and the pleasures that are eternal will compensate a thousandfold for the transitory pleasures which had to be abandoned in this life. [Hebrews 11:25]—Barclay, W. (Ed.). (1976). *The Letters of James and Peter* (pp. 246-248). Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press. [Content in brackets is added.]

14. **1 Peter 4:9** (TLB): <sup>9</sup>Cheerfully share your home with those who need a meal or a place to stay for the night.

(NASB 1995): Be hospitable to one another without complaint.

(GNB): Open your homes to each other without complaining.

Is this a call for Christians to open their homes to everybody? Or, only to other church members when needed? (Compare 1 Timothy 3:2; Hebrews 13:2.) Consider the following from William Barclay.

PETER'S mind is dominated in this section by the conviction that the end of all things is near. It is of the greatest interest and significance to note that he does not use that conviction to urge men to withdraw from the world and to enter on a kind of private campaign to save their own souls; he uses it to urge them to go into the world and serve their fellow-men. As Peter sees it, a man will be happy if the end finds him, not living as a hermit, but out in the world serving his fellow-men.

(i) First, Peter urges upon his people the duty of hospitality. Without hospitality the early church could not have existed. The traveling missionaries who spread the good news of the gospel had to find somewhere to stay and there was no place for them to stay except in the homes of Christians. Such inns as there were were impossibly dear, impossibly filthy and notoriously immoral. Thus we find Peter lodging with one Simon a tanner (Acts 10:6), and Paul and his company were to lodge with one Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple (Acts 21:16) [Compare Acts 16:14-15.]. Many a nameless one in the early church made Christian missionary work possible by opening the doors of his house and home.

Not only did the missionaries need hospitality; the local churches also needed it. For two hundred years there was no such thing as a church building. The church was compelled to meet in the houses of those who had bigger rooms and were prepared to lend them for the services of the congregation. Thus we read of the church which was in the house of Aquila and Priscilla (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19), and of the church

which was in the house of Philemon (Philemon 2). Without those who were prepared to open their homes, the early church could not have met for worship at all.

It is little wonder that again and again in the New Testament the duty of hospitality is pressed upon the Christians. The Christian is to be given to hospitality (Romans 12:13). A bishop is to be given to hospitality (1 Timothy 3:2); the widows of the Church must have lodged strangers (1 Timothy 5:10). The Christian must not forget to entertain strangers and must remember that some who have done so have entertained angels unawares. (Hebrews 13:2). The bishop must be a lover of hospitality (Titus 1:8). And it is ever to be remember that it was said to those on the right hand: "I was a stranger, and you welcomed me" while the condemnation of those on the left hand was: "I was a stranger, and you did not welcome me" (Matthew 25:35, 43).

In the early days the Church depended on the hospitality of its members; and to this day no greater gift can be offered than the welcome of a Christian home to the stranger in a strange place.—Barclay, W. (Ed.). (1976). *The Letters of James and Peter* (pp. 254-256). Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press. [Content in brackets is added.]

15. What do you think of Peter's attitude toward suffering for Christ? (1 Peter 4:12-16) On what basis could one be "happy" that he is being persecuted?

All of the disciples had a tremendous change in attitude in the first weeks after the resurrection. If one is afraid of death, anyone who threatens him/her with death is very scary. If on the other hand, one recognizes that his/her best Friend has conquered death and will raise him/her up to life everlasting even if s/he loses his/her life here and now, then s/he no longer needs to be afraid. Peter and John seemed to demonstrate this quite dramatically before the Sanhedrin soon after Pentecost. (See Acts 4:1-22.) If we recognize that this same Friend actually died in our place to make all this possible, it is easier to face death with boldness! (Acts 4:23-31)

Furthermore, if Christ, the only perfect "Human" to live on this earth, suffered persecution, should His followers find it surprising that they may suffer?

God declared war on Satan after the Fall of man (Gen[esis]. 3:15), and Satan has been attacking God through His people ever since. Christians are "strangers and pilgrims" in an alien world where Satan is the god and prince (John 14:30; 2 Cor[inthians]. 4:3-4). Whatever glorifies God will anger the enemy, and he will attack. For believers, persecution is not a strange thing. The *absence* of satanic opposition would be strange!—*Bible Exposition Commentary* article on 1 Peter 4:12. [Content in brackets is added.]

16. How do you feel about Peter's description of the Devil and what he is doing? (1 Peter 5:8) Is that how you feel about the Devil?

The more nearly the Christian imitates the divine Pattern, the more surely will he make himself a mark for the attacks of Satan.... No man without his own consent can be overcome by Satan. The tempter has no power to control the will or to force the soul to sin. He may distress, but he cannot contaminate. He can cause agony, but not defilement. The fact that Christ has conquered should inspire His followers with courage to fight manfully the battle against sin and Satan.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* 510.2,3.

Christians are to be sober and vigilant, steadfastly resisting their adversary the devil, who is going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Men under the influence of evil spirits will work miracles. They will make people sick by casting their spell upon them, and will then remove the spell, leading others to say that those who were sick have been miraculously healed. This Satan has done again and again.—Ellen G. White, *Letter 259*, 1903; *2SM* 53.2.

The enemy is preparing for his last campaign against the church. He has so concealed himself from view that many can hardly believe that he exists, much less can they be convinced of his amazing activity and power. They have to a great extent forgotten his past record; and when he makes another advance move, they will not recognize him as their enemy, that old serpent, but they will consider him a friend, one who is doing a good work.—Ellen G. White, *5T* 294.1.

## **2 Peter**

### 17. To whom do you think this book was addressed?

Second Peter was written to combat the beliefs and activities of certain men who were a threat to the Church. It begins by insisting that the Christian is a man who has escaped from the corruption of the world (2 Peter 1:4) and must always remember that he has been purged of his old sins (2 Peter 1:9). There is laid upon him the duty of moral goodness, which culminates in the great Christian virtue of love (2 Peter 1:5-8).

Let us set out the characteristics of the men whom *Second Peter* rebukes. They twist Scripture to make it suit their own purpose (2 Peter 1:20; 3:16). They bring the Christian faith into disrepute (2 Peter 2:2). They are covetous of gain and exploiters of their fellow-men (2 Peter 2:3; 2:14, 15). They are doomed and will share the fate of the sinning angels (2 Peter 2:4), the men before the Flood (2 Peter 2:5), the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah (2 Peter 2:6), and the false prophet Balaam (2 Peter 2:15). They are bestial creatures, ruled by their brute instincts (2 Peter 2:12), and dominated by their lusts (2 Peter 2:10; 2:18). Their eyes are full of adultery (2 Peter 2:14). They are presumptuous, self-willed and arrogant (2 Peter 2:10, 18). They spend even the daylight hours in unrestrained and luxurious revelry (2 Peter 2:13). They speak of liberty but what they call liberty is

unbridled licence and they themselves are the slaves of their own lusts (2 Peter 2:19). Not only are they deluded, they also delude others and lead them astray (2 Peter 2:14; 2:18). They are worse than those who never knew the right, because they knew what goodness is and have relapsed into evil, like a dog returning to its vomit and a sow returning to the mud after it has been washed (2 Peter 2:20-22).

It is clear that Peter is describing antinomians, men who used God's grace as a justification for sinning. In all probability they were Gnostics, who said that only spirit was good and that matter was essentially evil and that, therefore, it did not matter what we did with the body and that we could glut its appetites and it made no difference. They lived the most immoral lives and encouraged others to do so; and they justified their actions by perverting grace and interpreting Scripture to suit themselves.—William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible*, introduction to 2 Peter.

18. As referred to in 2 Peter 1:5-7, how do we develop the virtues of "Peter's ladder"?

The only safety for the Christian is to be unwearied in his efforts to live on the plan of addition. The apostle shows the advantages to be gained in thus doing. For those who add grace to grace, God will work on the plan of multiplication, so that the graces will be in and abound in the religious life and he will not "be barren nor unfruitful..." Those abounding in the Christian graces will be zealous, lively, vigorous in all practical Christianity, and will practice righteousness—just as the branch abiding in the vine will produce the same fruit that the vine bears....

He who does not climb the ladder of progress and add grace to grace "is blind, and cannot see afar off." He fails to discern that without taking these successive steps in ascending the ladder round after round, in growing in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, he is not placing himself in a position where the light of God above the ladder is reflected upon him. As he does not add grace to grace, he has forgotten the claims of God upon him, and that he was to receive the forgiveness of sins through obedience to the requirements of God....

"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure." 2 Peter 1:10. We need not have a supposed hope, but an assurance. To make our calling and election sure is to follow the Bible plan to closely examine ourselves, to make strict inquiry whether we are indeed converted, whether our minds are drawn out after God and heavenly things, our wills renewed, our whole souls changed. To make our calling and election sure requires far greater diligence than many are giving to this important matter. "For if ye do these things"—live on the plan of addition, growing in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ—ye shall mount up, step by step, the ladder Jacob saw, and "ye shall never fall."—Ellen G. White, "The Ladder to Heaven" (*MS 13*, 1884); *Our High Calling* 74.2-4; *19MR* 351.4.

William Barclay commented:

**2 Peter 1:3-7:** LET us then look at the list of virtues which have to be added one to another. It is worth noting that in the ancient world such lists were common. It was a world in which books were not nearly so cheap and so readily available as they are today. Instruction, therefore, had for the most part to be carried in the pupil's head; and easily memorized lists were one of the commonest ways of inculcating instruction. One ingenious way of teaching the child the names of the virtues was by means of a game played with counters which could be won or lost, each of which bore the name of one of the virtues. Lists of virtues were common in the early Christian writings. Paul gives us the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22,23). In the Pastoral Epistles the man of God is bidden to follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness (1 Timothy 6:11). In *The Shepherd of Hermas* (*Visions* 3.8.1-7), faith, self-control, simplicity, innocence and reverence, understanding and love are daughters one of another. In the *Epistle of Barnabas* (2) fear and endurance are the helpers of faith; patience and self-control are our allies; and when these are present a man can develop and possess wisdom, prudence, understanding and knowledge. Let us look one by one at the stages in the list which this letter gives us.

(i) It begins with *faith* (*pistis*); everything goes back to that. For Peter faith is the conviction that what Jesus Christ says is true and that we can commit ourselves to his promises and launch ourselves on his demands. It is the unquestioning certainty that the way to happiness and peace and strength on earth and in heaven is to accept him at his word.

(ii) To faith must be added what the Revised Standard Version calls *virtue* and we have called *courage*. The word is *aretē*; it is very rare in the New Testament but it is the supreme Greek word for virtue in every sense of the term. It means *excellence*. It has two special directions in which its meaning moves. (a) *Aretē* is what we might call *operative* or *efficient, excellence*. To take two examples of its usage from widely differing spheres—it can be used of land which is fertile; and it can be used of the mighty deeds of the gods. *Aretē* is that virtue which makes a man a good citizen and friend; it is that virtue which makes him an expert in the technique of living well. (b) *Aretē* often means *courage*. Plutarch says that God is a hope of *aretē*, not an excuse for cowardice. In *2 Maccabees* we read of how Eleazar died rather than be false to the laws of God and his fathers; and the story ends by saying that he left his death for an example of noble courage (*aretē*) and a memorial of virtue, not only to young men, but also to all the nation (2 Maccabees 6:31).

In this passage it is not necessary to choose between these two meanings; they are both there. Faith must issue, not in the retirement of the cloister

and the cell, but in a life effective in the service of God and man; and it must issue in the courage always to show whose it is and whom it serves.

(iii) To courage must be added *knowledge*. The word is *gnosis*. In ethical Greek language there are two words which have a similar meaning with a very significant difference. *Sophia* is wisdom, in the sense of “knowledge of things both human and divine, and of their causes.” It is knowledge of first causes and of deep and ultimate things. *Gnosis* is *practical knowledge*; it is the ability to apply to particular situations the ultimate knowledge which *sophia* gives. *Gnosis* is that knowledge which enables a man to decide rightly and to act honourably and efficiently in the day to day circumstances of life. So, then, to faith must be added courage and effectiveness; to courage and effectiveness must be added the practical wisdom to deal with life....

(iv) To this practical knowledge must be added *self-control*, or *self-mastery*. The word is *egkrateia*, and it means literally *the ability to take a grip of oneself*. This is a virtue of which the great Greeks spoke and wrote and thought much. In regard to a man and his passions Aristotle distinguishes four states in life. There is *sophrosune*, in which passion has been entirely subjugated to reason; we might call it *perfect temperance*. There is *akolasia*, which is the precise opposite; it is the state in which reason is entirely subjugated to passion; we might call it *unbridled lust*. In between these two states there is *akrasia*, in which reason fights but passion prevails; we might call it *incontinence*. There is *egkrateia*, in which reason fights against passion and prevails; we call it *self-control*, or *self-mastery*.

*Egkrateia* is one of the great Christian virtues; and the place it holds is an example of the realism of the Christian ethic. That ethic does not contemplate a situation in which a man is emasculated of all passion; it envisages a situation in which his passions remain, but are under perfect control and so become his servants, not his tyrants.

(v) To this self-control must be added *steadfastness*. The word is *hupomonē*. Chrysostom called *hupomonē* “The Queen of the Virtues.” In the Authorized Version it is usually translated *patience*; but *patience* is too passive a word. *Hupomone* has always a background of courage. Cicero defines *patientia*, its Latin equivalent, as: “The voluntary and daily suffering of hard and difficult things, for the sake of honour and usefulness.” Didymus of Alexandria writes on the temper of Job: “It is not that the righteous man must be without feeling, although he must patiently bear the things which afflict him; but it is true virtue when a man deeply feels the things he toils against, but nevertheless despises sorrows for the sake of God.” *Hupomonē* does not simply accept and endure; there is always a forward look in it. It is said of Jesus, by the writer to the Hebrews, that for the joy that was set before him, he *endured* the Cross, despising the shame (Hebrews 12:2). That is *hupomonē*, Christian steadfastness. It is

the courageous acceptance of everything that life can do to us and the transmuting of even the worst event into another step on the upward way.

(vi) To this steadfastness must be added *piety*. The word is *eusebeia* and is quite untranslatable. Even *piety* is inadequate, carrying as it does a suggestion sometimes of something not altogether attractive. The great characteristic of *eusebeia* is that it looks in two directions. The man who has *eusebeia* always correctly worships God and gives him his due; but he always correctly serves his fellow-men and gives them their due. The man who is *eusebēs* (the corresponding adjective) is in a right relationship both with God and his fellow-men. *Eusebeia* is piety but in its most practical aspect.

We may best see the meaning of this word by looking at the man whom the Greeks held to be its finest example. That man was Socrates whom Xenophon describes as follows: "He was so pious and devoutly religious that he would take no step apart from the will of heaven; so just and upright that he never did even a trifling injury to any living soul; so self-controlled, so temperate, that he never at any time chose the sweeter instead of the better; so sensible, so wise, and so prudent that in distinguishing the better from the worse he never erred" (Xenophon: *Memorabilia* 1.5.8-11).

In Latin the word is *pietas*; and Warde Fowler describes the Roman idea of the man who possesses that quality: "He is superior to the enticements of individual passion and of selfish ease; (*pietas* is) a sense of duty which never left a man, of duty first to the gods, then to father and to family, to son and to daughter, to his people and to his nation."

*Eusebeia* is the nearest Greek word for *religion*; and, when we begin to define it, we see the intensely practical character of the Christian religion. When a man becomes a Christian, he acknowledges a double duty, to God and to his fellow-men.

(vii) To this *piety* must be added *brotherly affection*. The word is *philadelphia*, which literally means *love of the brethren*. The point is this—there is a kind of religious devotion which separates a man from his fellow-men. The claims of his fellow-men become an intrusion on his prayers, his study of God's word and his meditation. The ordinary demands of human relationships become a nuisance. Epictetus, the great Stoic philosopher, never married. Half-jestingly he said that he was doing far more for the world by being an unfettered philosopher than if he had produced "two or three dirty-nosed children." "How can he who has to teach mankind run to get something in which to heat the water to give the baby his bath?" What Peter is saying is that there is something wrong with the religion which finds the claims of personal relationships a nuisance.

(viii) The ladder of Christian virtue must end in *Christian love*. Not even affection for the brethren is enough; the Christian must end with a love



which is as wide as that love of God which causes his sun to rise on the just and on the unjust, and sends his rain on the evil and the good. The Christian must show to all men the love which God has shown to him.—Barclay, W. (Ed.). (1976). *The Letters of James and Peter* 300-305. Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press. [Italic type is in the original.]

19. How do you think Peter intended to “provide a way for you to remember these matters at all times after my death”? (2 Peter 1:15, *GNB*) He went on to suggest that he would give a genuine “eyewitness” account of what Jesus did. (2 Peter 1:16) Do we have any record of that “account”? Who may have helped him in making that account available? (1 Peter 5:13)

There are many statements in the Gospel of Mark that suggest that Peter was the one behind the writing of that first Gospel to be written.

Papias [AD 60-130], bishop of the city of Hierapolis, about 10 mi. (16 km.) from Collossae and Laodicea in Asia Minor, is the first known writer who speaks of Mark as the author of this Gospel. In his *Interpretations*, as quoted in Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* iii. 39. 15; Loeb ed., vol. 1, p. 297), he states:

“And the Presbyter [most probably the presbyter John] used to say this, “Mark became Peter’s interpreter and wrote accurately all that he remembered, not, indeed, in order, of the things said or done by the Lord. For he had not heard the Lord, nor had he followed him, but later on, as I said, followed Peter, who used to give teaching as necessity demanded but not making, as it were, an arrangement of the Lord’s oracles, so that Mark did nothing wrong in thus writing down single points as he remembered them. For to one thing he gave attention, to leave out nothing of what he had heard and to make no false statements in them.””

This statement is in harmony with Peter’s reference to Mark as “my son” (1 Peter 5:13).—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, (electronic version) vol 5, introduction to the Gospel of Mark. [Quotation marks, brackets, and parentheses are in the Commentary, electronic version.]

20. How do you understand 2 Peter 1:20? Does this mean that we have to wait for the “organized church” to give us the interpretation of every part of the Bible?

**2 Peter 1:20-21** (*GNB*): <sup>20</sup>Above all else, however, remember that no one can explain by himself or herself a prophecy in the Scriptures. <sup>21</sup>For no prophetic message ever came just from human will, but people were under the control of the Holy Spirit as they spoke the message that came from God.

Consider these comments.

Any man could misinterpret and misapply God’s Word, denouncing people and things, and then take the position that those who refused to receive his message had rejected the message of God, and decided their destiny for eternity....—Ellen G. White, *1 Selected Messages* 44.2.

We must be like the noble Bereans.

**Acts 17:11 (GNB):** <sup>11</sup>The people there [Berea] were more open-minded than the people in Thessalonica. They listened to the message with great eagerness, and every day they studied the Scriptures to see if what Paul said was really true. [Content in brackets is added.]

We cannot be saved by someone else's understanding of Scripture. We need to become students ourselves. But, we need to discuss with our fellow believers what we have learned so as not to be led astray by our own private interpretations of matters.

But, all interpretation must be done in the light of the widest possible understand of the entire Scripture and in light of the great controversy that exists between God and Satan over the character and government of God. Picking out one verse or even a part of a verse to support one's favorite theme is almost always an error.

21. How far does 2 Peter 1:20-21 suggest that the process of inspiration reaches? How many steps are necessary for the "words" of God to accomplish an understanding response in my heart and life? Does each one of these steps need to be inspired? Does the Holy Spirit need to inspire us for us to be able to understand the true meaning of the Bible?

It can be shown from the Bible that revelation and inspiration happen in the following sequence:

1. Working through the agency of the Holy Spirit, God decides what needs to be communicated to humans.
2. The Holy Spirit, sometimes directly and sometimes through angels, communicates that information to His chosen messenger. The message may come in the form of a vision which the messenger must try to describe in his own human language, or it may come as a direct message in human language.
3. Then, the messenger must write it down in his chosen language. Many Bible writers, especially in the New Testament, wrote in Greek which was not their native language. There is a lot of evidence that some Bible writers were thinking in their own native language, Aramaic, and then trying their best to describe what they wanted to say in a language that was not their mother tongue, namely Greek.
4. What they wrote down was then read and copied many times over the years. We have no way of knowing how many times a document was copied between the original autograph (the one written by the original messenger) and the oldest copies that we have available to us today. We must trust that God was directing in that process of copying.
5. Most of us cannot read the original languages—Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek—in which the Bible was written. So, we must depend on translations of the original language into a language which we can understand. For those who read English, there are more than a thousand different translations of various portions of Scripture.
6. Finally, we must read and study what has been written, copied, and interpreted for us in our chosen language. If the thought that God originally conveyed to His

messenger is reasonably similar to the thought that we get when we read the passage, then we can say that inspiration has taken place. While we must regard all inspired material with the greatest respect, it is not ultimately ink on paper that is inspired, but rather the reader who grasps the ideas of God that is inspired when he is able to think God's thoughts after Him.

22. What are the fiery trials that test our faith? (2 Peter 2:9) Consider the following long quotation from William Barclay.

### **2 Peter 2:4-11**

If God did not spare even angels who had sinned, but condemned them to the lowest hell and committed them to the pits of darkness, where they remain kept for judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved in safety Noah, the preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when he despatched the flood on a world of impious men; if he reduced the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes, when he sentenced them to destruction and so gave an example of what would happen to those who would one day act with impiety, but rescued righteous Lot, who was distressed by the blatantly immoral conduct of lawless men, for, to such a man, righteous in his looking and in his hearing, it was torture for his righteous soul to live his daily life amidst such people and amidst such lawless if all this is so, you can be sure that the Lord knows how to rescue truly religious men from trial and how to preserve the unrighteous under punishment, until the day of judgment comes, especially those whose lives are dominated by the polluting lusts of the flesh and who despise the celestial powers. Audacious, self-willed men they are; they do not shrink from speaking evil of the angelic glories, whereas angels who are greater in strength and power do not bring an accusation of evil against them in the presence of the Lord.

HERE is a passage which for us combines undoubted power and equally undoubted obscurity. The white heat of its rhetorical intensity glows through it to this day; but it moves in allusions which would be terrifyingly effective to those who heard it for the first time, but which have become unfamiliar to us today. It cites three notorious examples of sin and its destruction; and in two of the cases it shows how, when sin was obliterated, righteousness was rescued and preserved by the mercy and the grace of God. Let us look at these examples one by one.

#### **1. THE SIN OF THE ANGELS**

Before we retell the story which lies behind this in Jewish legend, there are two separate words at which we must look.

Peter says that God condemned the sinning angels to the lowest depths of hell. Literally the Greek says that God condemned the angels to Tartarus (*tartaroun*). Tartarus was not a Hebrew conception but Greek. In Greek mythology Tartarus was the lowest hell; it was as far beneath Hades

as the heaven is high above the earth. In particular it was the place into which there had been cast the Titans who had rebelled against Zeus, the Father of gods and men.

The second word is that which speaks of the pits of darkness. Here there is a doubt. There are two Greek words, both rather uncommon, which are confused in this passage. One is *siros* or *seiros* which originally meant a great earthenware jar for the storing of grain. Then it came to mean the great underground pits in which grain was stored and which served as granaries. *Siros* has come into English via Provencal in the form of *silos*, which still describes the towers in which grain is stored. Still later the word went on to mean a pit in which a wolf or other wild animal was trapped. If we think that this is the word which Peter uses, and according to the best manuscripts it is, it will mean that the wicked angels were cast into great subterranean pits and kept there in darkness and in punishment. This well suits the idea of a Tartarus beneath the lowest depths of Hades.

But there is a very similar word *seira*, which means a chain. This is the word which the *Authorized Version* translates when it speaks of chains of darkness (verse 4). The Greek manuscripts of Second Peter vary between *seiroi*, pits, and *seirai*, chains. But the better manuscripts have *seiroi*, and pits of darkness makes better sense than chains of darkness; so we may take *seiros* as right, and assume that here the *Authorized Version* is in error.

The story of the fall of the angels is one which rooted itself deeply in Hebrew thought and which underwent much development as the years went on. The original story is in Genesis 6:1-5. There the angels are called the sons of God, as they commonly are in the Old Testament. In Job, the sons of God come to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan comes amongst them (Job 1:6; cp. 2:1; 38:7). The Psalmist speaks of the sons of gods (Psalm 89:6). These angels came to earth and seduced mortal women. The result of this lustful union was the race of giants; and through them wickedness came upon the earth. Clearly this is an old, old story belonging to the childhood of the race.

This story was much developed in the Book of Enoch, and it is from it that Peter is drawing his allusions, for in his day that was a book which everyone would know. In Enoch the angels are called The Watchers. Their leader in rebellion was *Semjaza* or *Azazel*. At his instigation they descended to Mount Hermon in the days of Jared, the father of Enoch. They took mortal wives and instructed them in magic and in arts which gave them power. They produced the race of the giants, and the giants produced the *nephillim*, the giants who inhabited the land of Canaan and of whom the people were afraid (Numbers 13:33).

These giants became cannibals and were guilty of every kind of lust and crime, and especially of insolent arrogance to God and man. The

apocryphal literature has many references to them and their pride. Wisdom 14:6) tells how the proud giants perished. Ecclesiasticus (16:7) tells how the ancient giants fell away in the strength of their foolishness. They had no wisdom and they perished in their folly (Baruch 3:26-28). Josephus says that they were arrogant and contemptuous of all that was good and trusted in their own strength (Antiquities 1.3.1). Job says that God charged his angels with folly (Job 4:18).

This old story makes a strange and fleeting appearance in the letters of Paul. In 1 Corinthians 11:10 Paul says that women must have their hair covered in the Church because of the angels. Behind that strange saying lies the old belief that it was the loveliness of the long hair of the women of the olden times which moved the angels to desire; and Paul wishes to see that the angels are not tempted again.

In the end even men complained of the sorrow and misery brought into the world by these giants through the sin of the angels. The result was that God sent out his archangels. *Raphael* bound *Azazel* hand and foot and shut him up in darkness; *Gabriel* slew the giants; and the Watchers, the sinning angels, were shut up in the abysses of darkness under the mountains for seventy generations and then confined for ever in everlasting fire. Here is the story which is in Peter's mind; and which his readers well knew. The angels had sinned and God had sent his destruction, and they were shut up for ever in the pits of darkness and the depths of hell. That is what happens to rebellious sin.

The story does not stop there; and it reappears in another of its forms in this passage of Second Peter. In verse 10 Peter speaks of those who live lives dominated by the pollution lusts of the flesh and who despise the celestial powers. The word is *kuriotes*, which is the name of one of the ranks of angels. They speak evil of the angelic glories. The word is *doxai*, which also is a word for one of the ranks of angels. They slander the angels and bring them into disrepute.

Here is where the second turn of the story comes in. Obviously this story of the angels is very primitive and, as time went on, it became rather an awkward and embarrassing story because of its ascription of lust to angels. So in later Jewish and Christian thought two lines of thought developed. First, it was denied that the story involved angels at all. The sons of God were said to be good men who were the descendants of Seth, and the daughters of men were said to be evil women who were the daughters of Cain and corrupted the good men. There is no scriptural evidence for this distinction and this way of escape. Second, the whole story was allegorised. It was claimed, for instance by Philo, that it was never meant to be taken literally and described the fall of the human soul under the attack of the seductions of lustful pleasures. Augustine declared that no man could take this story literally and talk of the angels like that. Cyril of

Alexandria said that it could not be taken literally, for did not Jesus say that in the after-life men would be like angels and there would be no marrying or giving in marriage (Matthew 22:30)? Chrysostom said that, if the story was taken literally, it was nothing short of blasphemy. And Cyril went on to say that the story was nothing other than an incentive to sin, if it was taken as literally true.

It is clear that men began to see that this was indeed a dangerous story. Here we get our clue as to what Peter means when he speaks of men who despise the celestial powers and bring the angelic glories into disrepute by speaking slanderously of them. The men whom Peter was opposing were turning their religion into an excuse for blatant immorality. Cyril of Alexandria makes it clear that in his day the story could be used as an incentive to sin. Most probably what was happening was that the wicked men of Peter's time were citing the example of the angels as a justification for their own sin. They were saying, "If angels came from heaven and took mortal women, why should not we?" They were making the conduct of the angels an excuse for their own sin.

We have to go still further with this passage. In verse 11 it finishes very obscurely. It says that angels who are greater in strength and in power do not bring a slanderous charge against them in the presence of God. Once again Peter is speaking allusively, in a way that would be clear enough to the people of his day but which is obscure to us. His reference may be to either of two stories.

(a) He may be referring to the story to which Jude refers in Jude 9; that the archangel Michael was entrusted with the burying of the body of Moses. Satan claimed the body on the grounds that all matter belonged to him and that once Moses had murdered an Egyptian. Michael did not bring a railing charge against Satan; all he said was: "The Lord rebuke you." The point is that even an angel so great as Michael would not bring an evil charge against an angel so dark as Satan. He left the matter to God. If Michael refrained from slandering an evil angel, how can men bring slanderous charges against the angels of God?

(b) He may be referring to a further development of the Enoch story. Enoch tells that when the conduct of the giants on earth became intolerable, men made their complaint to the archangels Michael, Uriel, Gabriel and Raphael. The archangels took this complaint to God; but they did not rail against the evil angels who were responsible for it all; they simply took the story to God, for him to deal with (Enoch 9).

As far as we can see today, the situation behind Peter's allusions is that the wicked men who were the slaves of lust claimed that the angels were their examples and their justification and so slandered them; Peter reminds them that not even archangels dared slander other angels and demands how men can dare to do so.

This is a strange and difficult passage; but the meaning is clear. Even angels, when they sinned, were punished. How much more shall men be punished? Angels could not rebel against God and escape the consequences. How shall men escape? And men need not seek to put the blame on others, not even on angels; nothing but their own rebelliousness is responsible for their sin.—Barclay, W. (Ed.). (1976). *The Letters of James and Peter* (pp. 319-325). Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press.

23. Think of all the varied ways and unexpected people God has used to communicate with us. Do you think of all of those people as “holy men of God”? What about David after his sin with Bathsheba? What about Solomon with his thousand wives and concubines, having sacrificed his own children to pagan idols when he later wrote Ecclesiastes? Moses was a murderer before he wrote a single word of Scripture! We even have the words of a donkey in the “inspired” record! (See Numbers 22:28-30.) What about a fiery finger writing on a wall? (Daniel 5:5) Are the Devil’s words recorded in Scripture “inspired”? (For example, Genesis 3:4-5.) What about lies? (1 Kings 13:18) Were Jonah and Hosea saints? Many parts of the Old Testament were written by unnamed people. Were those men also holy men of God?

God has no limitations on His methods of communication with humans except our human limitations of language and understanding. He spoke with a thunderous voice from Mount Sinai (Exodus 19-24) and, later, in the smallest voice to the prophet Elijah on that same mountain. (1 Kings 19:12) Obviously, He has used some very unusual channels at times to communicate His messages. He has used visions, parables, other human messengers, and even animals to speak to us as humans. God will use whatever method He sees will be most effective in communicating His message. (Hebrews 1:1)

24. What do we learn from 2 Peter 3 about the reasons for the delay in the second coming of Christ? Can you think of any modern scientific theories that are suggested by 2 Peter 3:4-6? What reason did Peter give for God’s waiting? If God is waiting for us, will there ever come a time when we will be ready? For what specifically do you think God is waiting? Do we have any control over whether Christ’s coming is hastened or delayed? (See 2 Peter 3:9-12 and *Evangelism* 694-696.)

See Handout: *What is the Reason for the Delay?* It is posted on [www.theox.org](http://www.theox.org) in the section entitled “Teacher’s Guides” and the subsection “General Topics.”

25. As time passes, Seventh-day Adventists have tended to grow more quiet about the soon coming of Christ because we have been preaching it for so long that it has become almost an embarrassment to us. Does God’s continued delay make us look good? Does it make Him look good? Who is the good news supposed to be about? Us? Or, God? Do you think you understand what exactly Christ is waiting for at the present time? Could you write it down? Or, explain it to someone in five minutes?

God does not want any of us to perish. He waits to give everyone as much opportunity as possible. But, He cannot wait forever. Fortunately for us, He has asked us to share in the spreading of the good news about His character and His government. He understands that at the end of time, the Devil will do everything possible to prevent

people from knowing the truth. So, God must wait until a group of people—we do not know how many He needs—understand Him so well and are so convinced about Him that they cannot be moved—they are “sealed.” (See Revelation 7:1-3; Ephesians 1:31; 4:31; *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, 1161.6.) These people will have to stand up against everything that the Devil throws against them. God will withdraw almost completely from this earth and let the Devil do his worst. The Devil has always maintained that if we were given the opportunity, we would choose his way (the selfish way) instead of God’s way (the loving way). But, when God’s remnant end-time people stand up to the Devil and choose God’s way instead of the Devil’s way, God will be able to turn to the onlooking universe and say: “I told you that some day a group would learn the truth about Me and be so convinced about it that they would even be willing to die for it. Here they are. Do we need to wait for anything else?” And the universe will agree that God has more than proved His case.

26. There appear to have been some rather remarkable changes that took place in the lives of some of the New Testament writers—Saul become Paul, the impetuous fisherman Peter become the writer of these epistles, John “the son of thunder” became John “the beloved.” What actually caused the changes in their lives? What forces brought about those changes? What about us today?

Some of these men like Paul needed dramatic events to change their thinking. (Acts 9:3-9; 22:7-16; 26:12-18) Others were changed by the day-by-day quiet association with Jesus Himself. (Mark 3:17; John 21:7) It is by beholding that we become changed.

It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature that by beholding we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence. Man will never rise higher than his standard of purity or goodness or truth. If self is his loftiest ideal, he will never attain to anything more exalted. Rather, he will constantly sink lower and lower. The grace of God alone has power to exalt man. Left to himself, his course must inevitably be downward.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* 555.1.

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Last Modified: January 16, 2017

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### Notes on 1 & 2 Peter - TLB

<b>A Comparison and Contrast of First and Second Peter</b>	
<b>1 Peter</b>	<b>2 Peter</b>
Theme: Hope in the midst of suffering	Theme: The danger of false teachings and practices



Christology: The sufferings of Christ for our salvation and example at His incarnation	Christology: The glory of Christ and the consummation of history at His return
The day of salvation when Christ suffered, died, and rose from the dead	The day of the Lord when Christ returns in judgment
Redemptive title: Christ	Title of dominion: Lord
Be encouraged in your present trials.	Be warned of eschatological judgment.
We need hope to face our trials.	We need full knowledge to face error.
Numerous similarities to Paul's writings (especially Ephesians and Colossians)	Almost identical to sections of Jude (Compare 2 Peter 2 with Jude 4-18.)

Modified from Believer's Study Bible

***The Acts of Peter*** - from the *New Testament Apocrypha*

Peter's martyrdom follows. Agrippa, the prefect, is angered when his concubines decline his advances after hearing Peter preach on chastity. Xanthippe, wife of Albinus, is converted and withdraws from her husband's bed. The two men conspire to kill Peter. Peter is warned and persuaded to leave the city. At the city gate he encounters Christ entering Rome "to be crucified again." Peter recognizes his own destiny in these words and returns to be arrested. Peter asks to be crucified upside-down and explains the soteriological significance of that position in a lengthy speech from the cross. After his death, Peter appears to Marcellus to rebuke him for attending to the apostolic corpse. Meanwhile, Nero, angered at having missed the chance to torture Peter, begins to persecute the other believers. Nero is stopped by a vision, and peace comes to the faithful in Rome.—*Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 5, 267, summary of *The Acts of Peter* from the *New Testament Apocrypha*.