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We Affirm: God, out of love for the human race, sent the Lord Jesus Christ into the world to save sinners. He paid the full penalty for human sin when He died on the cross. Any person who believes in Jesus Christ for everlasting life receives that gift which, as the words *everlasting life* suggest, can never be lost (John 1:29; 3:16-18; 19:30; 1 Tim 1:16).

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Grace Evangelical Society held its 2024 annual national conference on May 20-23, 2024, at Camp Copass in Denton, TX. The theme was *The Epistles of Peter*.

This edition of the journal includes papers written for six of the plenary sessions. The audios of all the sessions are available on GES's website, www.faithalone.org. They are found under the "Resources" tab under "Audio Messages." In addition, videos of many of them can be found on the GES YouTube channel.

PREACHING WITHOUT WORDS (1 PETER 3:1-6)

KENNETH W. YATES

Editor

I. INTRODUCTION

In 1 Pet 3:1-6, Peter writes:

Wives, likewise, *be* submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives,² when they observe your chaste conduct *accompanied* by fear.³ Do not let your adornment be *merely* outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on *fine* apparel—⁴ rather *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible *beauty* of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.⁵ For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands,⁶ as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.

I understand that in the first century, a woman's clothing and how she wore her hair demonstrated her status in society more clearly than today. Schreiner says that the background of these verses might also include the idea of some women dressing immodestly.¹ Peter is clearly saying that women in the church should tone down their preoccupation with such things. But he is teaching other truths as well. He is not concerned with only the wardrobe and hairstyles of Christian women.

Whatever else Peter says in these verses, he is telling these ladies to focus on their important inner qualities and not the things of this world. Peter tells them to focus on the inner man.

¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 154.

I want to examine this passage in more detail to determine what Peter is discussing. First, I will address a widespread interpretation of these verses. Then, I will challenge that interpretation.

II. THE SPIRITUAL CONDITION OF THE HUSBANDS

Most writers believe Peter addresses Christian women married to unbelieving husbands.² This was common during the first century as Christianity spread across the Roman Empire. In many cases, a formerly pagan married woman had believed in Christ for eternal life, but her husband had not.³ A significant point of the passage is that such women should not nag their unbelieving spouses about their spiritual condition. They should not “preach” to these men. They should not encourage these men to attend Christian meetings. These women are seen as wanting to see their husbands’ spiritual salvation (eternal life).

Instead of preaching to their unbelieving husbands, these wives should model Christian living before them. A gentle spirit is more persuasive than any words they could say. They can lead their spouses to faith by their good conduct. Part of that conduct would involve the way they dress, as well as their chaste behavior.

As the writers referred to above, most Evangelicals read these verses and conclude that these husbands are unbelievers. We are all familiar with adages and idiomatic phrases that express this view. They would include: “A person’s actions speak louder than words,” or “I can’t hear what you’re saying because your actions are speaking too loudly.” Peter tells these women that if they want to see their husbands believe in Jesus for eternal life, their godly actions will be better than any verbal sermon.⁴

This view of 1 Pet 3:1-6 might even be expressed in Norman Rockwell’s *Sunday Morning* painting, which depicts a woman on her way to church with her three children. She is dressed modestly in her Sunday clothes as she heads toward the door of their home. Her husband is not

² Ibid.; Roger M. Raymer, “1 Peter,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, eds. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 848; John Peter Lange et al., *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: 1 Peter* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 52; Gary Derickson, “The First Epistle of Peter,” in *The Grace New Testament Commentary*, ed. Robert N. Wilkin (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2010), 1157.

³ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 591. See 1 Cor 7:12.

⁴ Derickson, “Peter,” 1157.

attending church and sits in a chair in his pajamas, smoking a cigarette and reading the sports page. She does not say a word to him.⁵

Is that a modern-day representation of the issue Peter is addressing? Those who argue this way put forth various arguments.

III. STRENGTHS OF THE MAJORITY VIEW

There are several arguments for the view that Peter is dealing with a situation in which a Christian woman is married to an unbelieving man. Peter tells her that preaching with actions instead of words has a greater chance of seeing him come to faith. While other arguments promote this view, I will deal with three that are considered the strongest.

The first is an obvious one. As mentioned above, it is the majority view of Evangelical scholars, many of whom are sound Bible teachers. That should make the view worthy of some consideration. It is sometimes daunting to go against the consensus.

Another strong argument for this position is Peter's phrase in v 1. The goal of the woman's activity is that her husband "may be won" by her conduct. This is a common phrase used in evangelizing unbelievers.⁶ We have all heard people say someone was "won to Christ" during a Bible study or church service. The phrase is synonymous with coming to faith or becoming a believer.

This passage may be used to justify the use of this phrase in evangelism. It has become part of the vernacular among Evangelicals. This argument has something in common with the first. We might be afraid to ask: Can a thousand Bible-believing evangelists be wrong in the jargon they use?

However, in my opinion, the strongest argument in favor of the traditional understanding of this passage is the phrase in v 1 that describes these husbands as those who "do not obey the word." The phrase occurs in only one other place in the NT—just a few verses earlier in 1 Peter.

In 1 Pet 2:8, Peter describes unbelieving Israel. The nation as a whole rejected Jesus as the Christ. They were disobedient, in contrast

⁵ See <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/sunday-morning-norman-rockwell.html>? Accessed Dec 18, 2024. If Rockwell has 1 Pet 3:1-6 in mind, it is clear that he is adding humor to his interpretation. The woman in the painting does not say a word to her husband, but one gets the distinct impression that she had plenty to say to him an hour earlier.

⁶ Edmund P. Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter: The Way of the Cross*, "The Bible Speaks Today" (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 117. Clowney uses the phrase this way when he refers to "winning others to the saving gospel."

to those who believed (2:7).⁷ Those who did not believe are those who were disobedient. Peter says that these non-believing Jews were “being disobedient to the word” (v 8). “Being disobedient” is a participle of the same verb used in 3:1 of husbands who “do not obey the word.”

Anybody defending the traditional understanding of 1 Pet 3:1-6 would point to this phrase. If the phrase refers to unbelieving Jews in 2:8, then it is logical to conclude that it relates to unbelieving husbands in 3:6. Both occur in the same book, by the same author, and in the same general context.

IV. RESPONDING TO THE ARGUMENTS

The first two arguments discussed above appeal to popularity, so in that sense, we can consider them together. Are we on shaky ground to go against strong Evangelical opinion? Can the majority be wrong?

If you have been exposed to Free Grace teaching, I hope you can answer these questions quickly and easily. Of course, the majority is often right. But sometimes, even conservative Evangelical scholarship gets things wrong. Even popular opinions must submit to the authority of the Scriptures. Our traditions have a way of becoming doctrine, whether our traditions are correct or not.

There are plenty of examples in the NT on which the Evangelical consensus has been wrong. These mistakes have resulted in oft-quoted phrases applied in ways that contradict the Scriptures. These would include “faith without works is dead” and “even the demons believe and tremble” (Jas 2:19-20). Evangelical scholars almost universally use these to teach that good works are necessary to enter the kingdom of God.⁸ This directly contradicts the Biblical teaching that works play no part in receiving eternal life. It is all by grace and is a gift (John 4:10; Rom 3:28; Eph 2:8-9).

The same problem exists with “Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom 10:13). Like “winning someone to Christ,” it

⁷ David Walls and Max Anders, *I & II Peter, I, II & III John, Jude*, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 30. Walls and Anders say that those who are disobedient to the word are those who “refuse to believe.”

⁸ J. Ronald Blue, “James,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, eds. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 826; Kurt A. Richardson, *James*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 133.

has become jargon used in evangelizing unbelievers.⁹ But this also adds works to the message of life. The truth is that Rom 10:13 addresses believers, not unbelievers.¹⁰ In this case, the majority is wrong. This at least opens up the possibility that 1 Pet 3:1-6 addresses believing husbands and not unbelieving ones.

But what about the phrase “winning somebody to Christ,” as used in evangelism? Is that the way we should understand the verb in 1 Pet 3:1? Is Peter instructing women on the best strategy so their unbelieving husbands will come to faith?

The verb Peter uses for *won* occurs sixteen times in the NT. In my estimation, it *never* appears when presenting the gospel of eternal life. It never refers to an unbeliever coming to faith. I say, “in my estimation,” because some may argue that in 1 Cor 9:19-22, the verb does refer to winning the unbeliever to eternal life.¹¹ But even if we grant that it is used in an evangelistic context in 1 Corinthians 9, it is not referring to unbelievers in approximately seventy percent of its uses.

Even in 1 Corinthians 9, there is a strong argument that the verb *won* is used about believers. This would support the view that it is also used that way in 1 Pet 3:1 and that the husbands are believers.

In 1 Cor 9:19, Paul says that even though he is free from all men, he has made himself a servant to all. The goal in becoming such a servant is that he might “win the more.” He explains that to the Jew, he had become a Jew. To those without the Law of Moses (Gentiles), he had become like them. To the weak, he became weak, for the same reason. He did this to win each group.

It is often assumed that Paul talks about evangelizing unbelievers in these verses. When he was around Jews, he acted like a Jew. When around Gentiles, he did not hold to neutral Jewish scruples about things like food. He acted this way to more easily gain an audience to whom he could preach the gospel of eternal life.¹²

But in 1 Corinthians 9, Paul talks about how he served believers, not unbelievers. He gave up certain rights to serve the church

⁹ Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 210. Mounce quotes Calvin for support.

¹⁰ René A. López, “The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans,” in *The Grace New Testament Commentary*, ed. Robert N. Wilkin (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2010), 678.

¹¹ David K. Lowery, “1 Corinthians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, eds. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 524. Five of the sixteen uses of the verb in the NT occur in these verses.

¹² Dwight L. Hunt, “The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians,” in *The Grace New Testament Commentary*, ed. Robert N. Wilkin (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2010), 740.

at Corinth more effectively. He did not get married. He did not ask the church to support him financially (vv 4-7). The *weak* refers not to unbelievers but to believers whose consciences are weak regarding certain activities. These activities include eating meat sacrificed to idols (1 Cor 8:9-10).¹³

Paul did such things so that he might “save” some (9:22). The word *save* does not refer to eternal life but to salvation from a wasted Christian life. Paul wanted the believers at Corinth to become servants, just as he was, to save them from loss at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Bob Wilkin has argued convincingly that the word *saved* in 1 Corinthians always has this meaning.¹⁴

If this is correct, the verb *win* never refers to winning an unbeliever to faith in Christ in the rest of the NT, so it probably does not mean that in 1 Peter 3:1. The husbands of these women may very well be believers who need to be won over so that they will be rewarded when they appear before Christ.

As mentioned above, the strongest argument for the traditional understanding of 1 Peter 3:1-6 is the phrase “do not obey the word.” Before addressing why that phrase does not refer to an unbeliever, I will make general observations about 1 Peter.

V. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

It should be noted that 1 Peter is not a book on evangelism. This does not mean 1 Pet 3:1-6 does not deal with evangelism, but it should cause us to ask whether something else is in play. In 1 Peter, Peter writes to people who are already believers (1:3). The book’s purpose is found in the introduction. In 1:9, he tells them they can experience their souls’ salvation. This salvation does not refer to deliverance from the lake of fire but to an experience of abundant life now and glorious rewards in the world to come.¹⁵

The believing recipients of 1 Peter were going through difficulties because of their faith. In 1 Pet 1:6-9, Peter tells them that God uses these trials to produce in them the kind of character that will

¹³ Lowery, “1 Corinthians,” 525. Lowery takes the position that vv 20-21 refer to unbelievers and that the “weak” refers to believers. Weak believers need to be “won.”

¹⁴ Wilkin refers to this salvation as being “healthy” at the Judgment Seat. All believers will be in the kingdom of God. Those who are “healthy” will receive rewards in that kingdom.

¹⁵ Zane C. Hodges, *First Peter: The Salvation of the Soul* (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2017), 23.

be rewarded at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Their faith is “more precious than gold.” Peter wants them to focus on the world to come and not the outward things of this world, such as the difficulties they are experiencing.

The mention of *faith* in 1:7 speaks to inner realities. The same is true of their *minds* in 1:13 and *souls* in 1:22. Peter also speaks, in v 22, of the *Spirit* working in them and their hearts.

Outward things such as gold will perish. They belong to this world. Readers who do not look to these things but to rewards in the world to come will save their souls and reign with Christ in His kingdom, which will last forever.

The mention of these outward things, in contrast to inner qualities, is found in 1 Pet 3:1-6. In both cases, the inner qualities are said to be more precious than gold. The believers, including the women in 1 Pet 3:1-6, should be concerned about what is most important.

Could the problem with the husbands in 1 Peter 3 be not that they were unbelievers but believers who did not understand what Peter was writing about in this book? If so, these men were not living for the world to come. They did not understand the importance of living a godly life amid trials. Their focus was on their difficulties.

There is another reason that the usual way of understanding 1 Pet 3:1-6 may not be correct. Can one preach the gospel of eternal life by faith alone in Christ without using words? If Peter tells these women how their husbands can be saved from the lake of fire and then tells them not to say anything to these men, there is a problem that Free Grace people are acutely aware of. We proclaim that a person cannot be saved from the lake of fire unless he believes in the promise of eternal life, which can never be lost, in Christ alone.

In other words, we teach that the unbeliever must believe in a proposition. That proposition is that Jesus gives eternal life that can never be lost. In John 4, the Lord tells the woman at the well that she needs to know who He is and what gift He has to give her. He tells her that the gift is eternal life, which, once obtained, can never be lost. He then tells her that He is the Christ who will give it to her.

How can a wife preach that message to her husband without using words? How can he believe in a proposition without being told what that proposition is? That makes no sense.

When I was an Army chaplain, a fellow chaplain had a poster on his office door. It had a quote that many say came from St. Francis of Assisi: “Preach the gospel at all times. Use words if necessary.”

I heard many people say that they loved that quote. I hated it. It should be noted that this chaplain was a Unitarian Universalist. His denomination believes that everyone will go to heaven when they die. He told us that we should all just do good and be kind to people. That is all the “gospel” we need. We don’t need to say words. We need to act.

I hated that quote because it is unbiblical to the core. We cannot preach the gospel of eternal life without using words. Paul says in Rom 10:14 that a person cannot believe if he has not heard the message. We are sent to proclaim a message verbally. The terms *believing* and *hearing* involve what the unbeliever needs to do when we evangelize them.¹⁶

There is another reason we should question the view that Peter is telling women to preach the good news of eternal life to unbelieving husbands without saying a word. How would one do that through the means Peter describes? Is Peter saying that these wives should wear their hair in a particular way and do good works so that their husbands can see those good works and be saved from the lake of fire?

This understanding preaches a gospel of eternal life by good works. It says an unbelieving man can be saved by observing such works. If I, as an unbeliever, can look at someone doing works and think that is the way to avoid an eternal lake of fire, I would conclude that I must live that way to be saved.

At the very least, such a view of 1 Pet 3:1-6 would promote a Lordship Salvation gospel. An unbeliever, observing his wife’s good works, would conclude that he needed to clean up his life before he could believe. Only in that way would God allow him into the kingdom. The unbelieving husband would think he had to become like his godly wife. This adds work to the free offer of eternal life as a gift. That is a denial of the Biblical gospel. It is a denial of grace (Rom 11:6).¹⁷

The strongest reason to reject the traditional view of 1 Pet 3:1-6 is Peter’s example in v 6. Peter refers to Sarah and Abraham and uses Sarah as a person the women to whom Peter is writing should emulate.

¹⁶ Zane C. Hodges, *Romans: Deliverance from Wrath* (Corinth, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2013), 307. Calling upon the Lord is something the person does *after* hearing and believing the message of life.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 324.

It would be strange if Peter wrote these words to women married to unbelievers.

Sarah's husband, as Peter mentions, was Abraham. All would agree that Abraham was a believer. If Peter discusses how a believing woman should interact with an unbelieving husband, he picked a couple that did not meet that criterion. At face value, he seems to be citing a marriage in which both spouses are believers, as was the case with Sarah and Abraham.

Finally, the verse immediately following 1 Pet 3:1-6 argues that Peter is talking about believing wives married to husbands who are also believers. In v 7, he addresses husbands with the word *likewise*. The word has the basic meaning of "in a similar way."¹⁸ Peter addresses a situation in which these men are married to believing women.¹⁹ These women are called "heirs together of the grace of life."²⁰ It would be odd if he spoke in vv 1-6 of a marriage in which a spouse is an unbeliever, then said, "in a similar way," and discussed a marriage between two believing spouses.

In addition, Peter speaks of "your prayers" in 3:7. The word *your* is in the plural. This is most naturally understood as referring to the husband and wife praying together, which would indicate both are believers.

VI. A PROPOSAL

As I have already suggested, seeing the husbands in 1 Pet 3:1-6 as believers is much better. The wives do not want to win them to Christ in the sense of seeing them eternally saved. These men already have eternal life.

Instead, these men are not obedient to the teachings of Christ. Specifically, they are disobedient to the things about which Peter writes. They are not being the spiritual leaders in their homes. They are not a

¹⁸ BDAG, s.v. *homoiōsis*, 708.

¹⁹ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 161. Schreiner believes the husbands in vv 1-6 are unbelievers. The word *likewise* in v 7, in his view, simply means that Peter is addressing a different group and loses its main emphasis.

²⁰ Raymer, "1 Peter," 849. Raymer believes that the husbands in 3:1-6 are unbelievers and recognizes the problem with v 7. He says that the wives in v 7 are also unbelievers who are offered the gift of eternal life. The unbelieving wife only shares physical life with her Christian husband. While this consistently sees marriages in which one spouse is a believer and the other is not in vv 1-7, it is difficult to see why Peter would refer to an unbeliever as an heir of the grace of life.

godly example for their children. They are not living for the world to come.

These wives want their husbands to live godly lives now so that they will be healthy at the Judgment Seat of Christ. What should these women do to get their disobedient husbands to see the importance of this?

Is this what Peter means in 1 Peter 2 and 3 when he refers to those who are disobedient?

VII. DISOBEDIENT TO THE WORD

As mentioned earlier, the phrase “disobedient to the word” in 1 Pet 2:8 is the strongest argument for the husbands in 1 Pet 3:1-6 being unbelievers. In 2:8, Peter describes unbelievers with this phrase.

The phrase can describe either an unbeliever or a believer. Either can disobey what the Word of God says. The context, not the phrase itself, must determine the spiritual condition of the one who is disobedient.

In 2:8, Peter describes unbelieving Israel and says they are disobedient to the Word. He uses a phrase from Isaiah (Isa 8:14). In 2:6, Peter quotes from Isa 28:16. Interestingly, Paul uses the exact phrase in Rom 9:33.²¹ Paul also uses the Isaiah passage to refer to unbelieving Israel.

However, in Romans, Paul is not simply saying that the nation of Israel, as a whole, is in a state of unbelief. The nation is *also* living in disobedience. Being an unbeliever and disobeying God are not the same thing. As a result of their sinful activities, Israel is presently under the wrath of God. But the phrase “wrath of God” does not refer to the lake of fire.²² A believer can live disobediently and experience God’s wrath.²³

In 1 Peter 2, Peter speaks of Christian *living*. He tells his readers to obey the Word of God and to grow in Christ (2:1-4). The readers are already children of God. Peter wants them to be obedient children. He specifically says so in 1:14. An obedient child lives in a holy manner (1:15-16). A disobedient child lives in an unholy way. A believer can be disobedient.

²¹ Some see Rom 9:33 as combining these two verses from Isaiah. Hodges, however, argues that Rom 9:33 only quotes from Isa 28:16. See, Hodges, *Romans*, 287 and Gleason Archer and Gregory Chirichigno, *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1983), 97.

²² Hodges, *Romans*, 277.

²³ *Ibid.*, 142. To avoid God’s wrath, Hodges says the believer must have the correct “lifestyle.”

In 1 Pet 3:1-6, Peter addresses Christian wives who have believing husbands who are not obedient to God's Word. Peter tells them how to deal with the situation.

VIII. FOLLOW SARAH'S EXAMPLE

There is some debate about what Peter means by using Sarah as an example. When was Sarah obedient to Abraham when he was disobedient to the Word of God?

Schreiner argues that Peter has in mind Gen 18:12, where Sarah refers to Abraham as *lord*.²⁴ But in Genesis 18, Abraham is not disobedient to the Lord. In fact, Sarah is seen negatively as she laughs at the idea that she will become pregnant and have a son in her old age. Schreiner admits that Genesis 18 does not fit the context of 1 Peter 3.

It is better to see a reference to Genesis 12 and 20.²⁵ In both chapters, Abraham tells Sarah to lie about being his wife. He is afraid he will be killed by powerful men who would want Sarah.

But God had told Abraham that he did not need to fear others. The Lord would bless those who blessed Abraham (Gen 12:3). God had also told Abraham that he would become a great nation (Gen 12:2; 15:4). He would have many descendants. Abraham feared that men would kill him before he had children. He was not obedient to the Lord when he was afraid and told Sarah to tell others she was his sister. Sarah is an example of one who submits to her husband's authority when he is disobedient. He is a disobedient believer.

This view of Sarah and Abraham fits the context of 1 Peter 3. Peter does not want his readers focused on this world. Abraham was focused on such things. He was worried that his enemies would kill him. He did not believe God's promises. The women Peter addresses in 1 Pet 3:1-6 had husbands like that.

IX. FIRST PETER 3:1-6 EXPLAINED

In 1 Pet 1:4, Peter tells the recipients of his letter that an incorruptible inheritance is available to them in the world to come. Believers who walk in obedience will receive that inheritance. The inner qualities developed by such a life are more precious than gold (1:7). These concepts also occur in 1 Pet 3:1-6, where Peter talks of the incorruptible

²⁴ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 157.

²⁵ Derickson, "First Peter," 1157.

inner spirit of a godly woman. She walks in obedience when she submits to the authority of her husband. This is also precious in the sight of God. Such a woman will receive the inheritance mentioned in 1:4.²⁶ She looks for the world to come.

If 1 Pet 1:1-7 talks about believers and how they ought to live, it is logical to assume that the same concept is at play in 1 Pet 3:1-6. Peter is not telling believers how to evangelize in either passage.

In 1 Pet 1:3-7, Peter tells his readers how they should live amid trials. They are to concentrate on inner, spiritual qualities. In 1 Pet 3:1-6, women can model these qualities before their husbands. Sometimes, their husbands will not live that way, even though these men are believers. Many believers live for the things of this world.

A wife looking for rewards in Christ's kingdom can demonstrate her outlook by how she lives. She can resist the worldly temptation to display status with the amount of gold in her hair or the price of her clothes. Such an example shows her husband where she expects to find true wealth.

Trials in this life are more easily managed when one looks for the coming kingdom. First, Peter speaks of trials that a faithful Christian will experience. For some believers, one trial comes when they are married to a spouse who does not live for the world to come, even though they are believers and will live in that kingdom. Peter gives a concrete example of the trial a believing woman might encounter.

If a believing wife desires to live for rewards in the world to come, it would be difficult to live with a believing husband who has no interest in such things. The wife can live in such a way as to demonstrate the wisdom of obedience to the Word of God. She can show that the things of this world are passing away.

There is a very practical reason that the wife should "preach" to her husband with actions rather than words. These believing husbands had Peter's teachings. They knew what he taught. What would the preaching of a wife add that they had not already heard? Peter is telling these women to demonstrate these truths in their lives. Their husbands will see how their faithful wives walk through trials, including the trial of having a husband who does not take his responsibility as a spiritual leader in the home seriously.

²⁶ The idea that believing women are "heirs" together with their believing husbands in 3:7 also connects this passage with the inheritance in 1:4. It is available to all believers, even though not all will receive it. *Ibid.*, 1158.

Peter says that in such a situation, the adage “Actions speak louder than words” is true.

X. APPLICATION

Understanding that Peter is not talking about unbelieving husbands in 1 Pet 3:1-6 is not just an academic exercise. Peter tells the wives in these verses not to use words. But if a woman is married to an unbeliever, she *should* use words. When she has the opportunity, she should tell her husband about the promise of eternal life by believing in Christ alone for it. She should tell him that Christ offers this life that can never be lost. When talking to unbelievers, we must use words. In the Gospel of John, the Lord certainly used words to tell the nation of Israel who He was and what He was offering them. He did so even though the majority rejected what He had to say.

Even though Peter talks about a particular situation, it applies to all believers. It might be easy to read 1 Pet 3:1-6 and conclude that it does not apply to you. Maybe you are not married. Perhaps you are married to an unbeliever. Maybe your spouse is a believer who is also obedient to the Word and living for the world to come.

But if you are walking in obedience and doing the things Peter instructs in 1 Peter, you will meet other believers who are not. Many believers do not live for the world to come and focus instead on what this world has to offer. You will meet them in your church.

How should you treat such a believer? If they have never been taught the truths from books like 1 Peter, you can teach them. You will have to use words!

But you can also do what Peter says in these verses. You can become an example to others. You can show through your own life the wisdom of living for the world to come. Hopefully, others will be able to see in you the development of the inner qualities of which Peter speaks. This can be a powerful motivation for other believers to follow your example. If you can live that way, your life also shows that they can. What a great way to be a servant to other believers (Mark 10:45). Show them how to live!

Though the focus of this article has been 1 Pet 3:1-6, in closing, I would turn our attention to the book of Hebrews. Undoubtedly, the believers discussed in Hebrews 11, the “Faith Hall of Fame,” spoke to others about rewards in the world to come. But the emphasis in the

chapter is on their actions. They became models for us to follow. We can look at their actions and hear the sermon they “preached” with their lives. We can also be that kind of witness for other believers (Heb 12:1).

PETER, PAUL, AND CANON: A NEW LOOK AT 2 PETER 3:15-16

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I. INTRODUCTION

How can one be sure that the twenty-seven NT books included in standard Bibles are the books that were inspired by the Holy Spirit and intended by the Holy Spirit to comprise the NT canon? Unfortunately, many answer with circular arguments, since most views depend upon the judgment of the post-apostolic church as proof. Is the standard view—that Christianity determined which books belong in the NT only after the apostles all died—true?

Every couple of years, I taught New Testament Introduction at two seminaries. Though convinced of the validity of the twenty-seven-book NT canon, I would not have wanted to debate a knowledgeable advocate of an alternate view. Why? My standard proofs all left something to be desired.

However, in 2004, I heard Zane Hodges briefly sketch out the implications of 2 Pet 3:15-16. That passage moves the issue of canonicity to the earliest years of church history—during the apostles’ lifetimes. The post-apostolic church did not discover the canon. Rather, it rediscovered the canon, which had already been known during the first century. Christianity needs to understand 2 Pet 3:15-16 and its implications.

II. THE MEANING OF *CANON*

The Greek word *kanōn* means “a rule or standard.” Both Gal 6:16 and Phil 3:16 illustrate this sense:

And as many as walk according to this rule (*kanōn*),
peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel
of God (Gal 6:16).¹

¹ Unless otherwise noted, Scripture translations are by the author.

Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule (*kanōn*), let us be of the same mind (Phil 3:16).

Kanōn became a technical term for Bible books: thirty-nine in the OT; twenty-seven in the NT. Charles Ryrie rightly sees canonicity as arising at the moment of writing, not later (when councils made pronouncements):

It is essential to remember that the Bible is self-authenticating since its books were breathed out by God (2 Tim 3:16). In other words, the books were canonical the moment they were written. It was not necessary to wait until various councils could examine the books to determine if they were acceptable or not. Their canonicity was inherent within them, since they came from God. People and councils only recognized and acknowledged what is true because of the intrinsic inspiration of the books as they were written. No Bible book became canonical by action of some church council.²

Unfortunately, Ryrie's discussion of "Decisions of men" and "Debates over canonicity" focus exclusively on the theoretical and historical.³ That is, rather than addressing the question: "How can one be certain today of the twenty-seven book NT canon?" he merely rehashes what systematic theologians already discussed.

As a test, imagine someone from churches that reject 2 Peter, 2–3 John, Jude, and Revelation (such as the pre-Philoxenus Syrian Church).⁴ He could agree with Ryrie's "Decisions of men" and "Debates over canonicity" sections while rejecting these five books from Scripture. Ryrie's discussions are good as far as they go, but are unlikely to help the one questioning the canon's extent. Second Peter 3:15-16 offers the basis for a solution.

² Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1986), 105.

³ The idea of testing the canonicity of books lies outside the scope of Ryrie's book, *Basic Theology*. However, discussions of canonicity tend to be historical and abstract. They do not assist anyone seeking to double-check the Athanasian (twenty-seven book) canon. However, the evidence to verify it exists.

⁴ In AD 508, Philoxenus, bishop of Mabbūg (Manbij, Syria), commissioned a new Syriac New Testament. Metzger, *Canon*, 219, notes its "inclusion (seemingly for the first time in Syriac) of the four smaller Catholic Epistles as well as the Book of Revelation."

III. OUTLINE OF THIS PAPER

I will use the following outline:

1. The apostolic authorship of 2 Peter
2. Analyzing 2 Peter 3:15-16
3. Developing a model of canonicity from 2 Peter 3:15-16

IV. THE APOSTOLIC AUTHORSHIP OF 2 PETER

Liberals deny that a collection of Paul's letters could have existed during Peter's lifetime. They assert that such a corpus arose in the second century. This leads them to reject 2 Peter's being Petrine. Joseph Mayor is typical:

This [2 Peter 3:15-16] surely must be regarded as an anachronism on the assumption that it was written by St. Peter, who is generally believed to have been crucified before the death of Nero in June 68 A.D.

- [1] It is certainly most unlikely that St. Paul's epistles would by that time have been collected into a whole,
- [2] and still more unlikely that they should already have been placed in the same category with the old Jewish Scriptures...

Taking all these things into account, I think 125 A.D. is about the earliest possible date for 2 Peter.⁵

Mayor formulated a two-step process. Gathering Paul's epistles into a collection was his first step. Regarding that corpus as Scripture was the second stage. This led him to view 2 Peter as identity theft. If he were right, 2 Peter would belong to the pseudepigrapha (spurious writings) and should be excluded from the canon.

⁵ Joseph B. Mayor, *The Epistle of St. Jude and the Second Epistle of St. Peter. Greek text with Introduction, Notes and Comments* (London, ENG: Macmillan, 1907), cxxvi-cxxvii. The entire citation appears in one paragraph in the original, but the rearrangement highlights how 3:15-16 leads him to date it at least sixty years after Peter's death.

F. Crawford Burkitt presupposes the same two phases when he links Marcion with the second (not the first) phase. The bottom line, once again, is that he denies that 2 Peter is apostolic:

Marcion's share in [1] the collection of the Pauline Epistles must remain doubtful. But there can be little doubt that he was the first [2] to canonize the New Testament...Marcion is the first to come before us with a collection of Christian writings which are treated as Scripture, that is, as works out of the words of which doctrine can be proved.⁶

Raymond Brown dovetails with Mayor and Burkitt:

...a number of "afters" point to a date [for 2 Peter] no earlier than *ca.* 100, e.g.:...

[4] *after* there was a collection of the Pauline letters (II Pet 3:15–6) which probably did not take place much before 100.

[5] *after* those were letters that were seemingly being reckoned as Scripture (3:16: "as they do the other writings [Scriptures]")—a development attested for Christian writings in the early 2d century...

Yet within the dating spectrum of AD 100–200, nothing cited in this paragraph requires a date [for 2 Peter] after the first half of the 2d century. Thus, a date of 130, give or take a decade, would best fit the evidence.⁷

Liberals deny the existence of a collection of Paul's letters during Peter's lifetime, so they reject 2 Peter's authenticity. Burkitt doubted that Paul even kept a personal copy of any epistle he wrote:

But there is no great probability that S[t]. Paul himself made a collected edition of his letters, or even that he kept copies of those that he sent. He may have

⁶ F. Crawford Burkitt, *The Gospel History and Its Transmission* (Edinburgh, SCT: Clark, 1906), 319–21.

⁷ Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, The Anchor Bible Reference Library, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1997), 767. Emphasis in original.

done so, but there is no evidence. It is indeed wholly uncertain how or when these letters were first brought together into a *Corpus*.⁸

Although Burkitt regarded the date of the collection as “wholly uncertain,” he claimed that it was gathered after Peter died. He would deny that Peter could refer to “all of Paul’s letters.” Liberals deny that such a collection existed in Peter’s day.

V. ANALYZING 2 PETER 3:15-16

Several issues in 2 Peter (emphasizing 3:15-16) rebut liberal views of it. This section considers the following:

1. How might both Peter and Paul have written previously to 2 Peter’s audience?
2. Does *graphē* mean “Scripture” in 3:16?
3. Did Peter have difficulty understanding Paul?
4. Does evidence for an early Pauline corpus exist?

A. How Might Both Peter and Paul Have Written Previously to 2 Peter’s Audience?

Two preliminaries require attention: Peter’s antecedent writing to these readers and Paul’s antecedent writing to them. One must then consider whether 2 Pet 3:1 equates the addressees of 2 Peter with those of 1 Peter.

What is Peter’s antecedent writing? Second Peter 3:1 calls this the second letter from Peter to this group. It is quite possible (even likely) that 1 Peter also addresses the same recipients. If so, 2 Peter’s destination was Asia Minor (cf. 1 Pet 1:1). The other option is that Peter’s prior letter to the addressees of 2 Peter is no longer extant.⁹

⁸ Burkitt, *History*, 317. *Corpus* refers to “multiple works of an author.”

⁹ In that case, it would have been a private letter, as were the letters to Corinth mentioned in 1 Cor 5:9 and 2 Cor 7:8. Private apostolic letters may well have been inerrant, but they were not canonical. That is, the apostles did not distribute them to the universal church.

What is Paul's antecedent writing? Second Peter 3:15 says, "Our brother Paul...wrote to you." Conservative writers have explored this from two standpoints,¹⁰ but I propose a third:

1. That the addressees of 2 Peter were the original recipients of one of Paul's thirteen (or fourteen?)¹¹ NT epistles.
2. It could be a letter from Paul to this group that has not been preserved, or
3. Paul recycled a copy of one of his epistles (that had originally been sent elsewhere).

Paul may have¹² recycled 1 Thessalonians. That is exactly what Zane Hodges proposes:

Up to this point Peter has done little more than to hint at this *deliverance* in 2:9. But as he and the readers well know, Paul discussed this *deliverance* in some detail. The epistle Peter especially has in mind is 1 Thessalonians (in Greece).¹³

As background to the citation, Hodges suggests that 2 Peter addresses the recipients of 1 Peter:¹⁴ dispersed pilgrims in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (modern Turkey, east of the Bosphorus) according to 1 Pet 1:1.

How does one reconcile Peter's saying that "Paul wrote [1 Thessalonians] to **you** [inhabitants of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia]"? Actually, the answer is simple: Years earlier, Paul had sent 1 Thessalonians to Thessalonica of Macedonia. Now, in Peter, it

¹⁰ The opinion of Brevard S. Childs, *The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1985), 473, must be rejected, "Paul's letters are received as having been addressed to them (3.15, 'our beloved brother Paul wrote to you'). The canonical function has shifted the weight from the original historical addressees to the present community of faith, by whom they have been transmitted." Childs denies that Paul wrote directly to the addressees of 2 Peter. Second Peter 3:15 must not be interpreted as denying that Thessalonica was the original destination of 1 Thessalonians.

¹¹ If Hebrews were Pauline, he would have fourteen epistles. Hebrews 2:3-4 is fatal to the theory that Paul wrote it. Paul would never say that he received such things from men (Gal 1:12). Also, Paul always signed his epistles with a distinctive signature (2 Thess 3:17; cf. Gal 6:11). Hebrews would be the sole exception to that pattern. Reconciling Pauline authorship of Hebrews with 2 Thess 3:17 is not possible.

¹² This reconciles all the data, but it is unwise to be dogmatic that it is *the only possible* solution.

¹³ Zane C. Hodges, "2 Peter," in *The Grace New Testament Commentary*, ed. Robert N. Wilkin (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2019), 585. Emphasis mine.

¹⁴ Hodges, "2 Peter," 577.

says that Paul also sent a copy of 1 Thessalonians to these people in Asia Minor.¹⁵ The recycled-letter view takes seriously Peter's words that "Paul wrote to you," while recognizing that Thessalonica is not in Turkey.

B. Does *Graphē* Mean "Scripture" in 3:16?

Frederic Henry Chase offers insightful observations on 2 Pet 3:16, showing that *Scripture* is the necessary referent of *graphē* here. After a good start, his final sentence [underlined] errs by denying the existence of a collection of Paul's epistles during Peter's lifetime. He views 2 Peter as a forgery. If Peter had offered wiggle-room, Chase would have welcomed it. Instead, Chase balks at Peter's powerful case:

They [several "general non-technical" examples of *graphē* [writing, Scripture] adduced by earlier scholars] present no parallel to the *absolute* use of the word in the *plural*. The phrase *hai graphai* [*the writings* or *the Scriptures*] used absolutely points to a definite and recognized collection of 'writings,' i.e. the Scriptures. If any further assurance of this is needed, it is given (a) by the context—the word *streblousin* [they twist] shows that the writings were authoritative, and that their support had at all costs to be secured, and (b) by the added word *loipas*—*tas loipas graphas* [the other Scriptures] compare Sir[ach]. *Prol[ogue]. ho nomos kai hai¹⁶ prophēteiai kai ta loipa tōn bibliōn* [the law and the prophets and the rest of the Scriptures]; Iren[aeus]. ii. 28.7, '*Dominus manifeste dixit et reliqua demonstrant Scripturæ* [The Lord clearly said and the Scriptures show the truth].' From the *kai* [and—in 2 Pet 3:16] and the *tas loipas*—*hōs kai tas loipas graphas* [and the other Scriptures]—we are obliged to infer that the Epistles of St. Paul are regarded as Scripture. Again, the fact that St. Paul's Epistles are regarded as Scripture, together with the phrase *en pasais epistolais* [in all epistles], leads to the further conclusion that

¹⁵ By analogy, people sometimes ask me questions about various topics. If the question would require a lengthy answer, I often send an electronic link to old articles of mine.

¹⁶ For some reason, Chase rewrote the phrase with nominatives, instead of genitives. In doing so, he used a feminine article with 'prophets.'

the writer of 2 P[eter] possessed not merely isolated letters of St. Paul, but a collection of his Epistles, to which, as authoritative documents of the faith, appeal was made. It is impossible to suppose that [1] a collection of St. Paul's Epistles had been made and [2] that they were treated as Scripture during the lifetime of St. Peter.¹⁷

Despite a horrendous concluding sentence, Chase perceptively demonstrates that Peter is discussing Scripture.

One can strengthen Chase's case by considering 2 Peter 2. That chapter excoriates false teachers, mentioning examples from the OT Scriptures in which God judged evildoers but delivered the righteous. The link between chapters 2–3 is that both discuss individuals who twist what God said in authoritative Scripture.

2 Pet 2:5: Noah (Genesis 7)

2 Pet 2:6: Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19)

2 Pet 2:7: Lot (Genesis 19)

2 Pet 2:15: Balaam (Numbers 22)

Interpreters who water down *graphē* here¹⁸ by referring to them as mere *writings* ignore evidence by Chase and his book's emphasis upon proofs from authoritative Scripture.

C. Did Peter Have Difficulty Understanding Paul?

Even Donald Guthrie seems to think that Peter confesses that “some things are hard [for Peter] to understand” in Paul's letters:

...this self-candour of Peter's is a factor in favour of authenticity. It is surely not very surprising that Peter, or any of the other original apostles for that matter, found Paul difficult. Has anyone ever found him easy?¹⁹

Although Guthrie's statement seeks to support Petrine authorship, he imagines that Peter himself found Paul difficult. Context denies

¹⁷ Frederic Henry Chase, *s.v.* “Second Epistle of Peter,” in James Hastings, *A Dictionary of the Bible* (New York, NY: Scribner's, 1911), 3:810.

¹⁸ Yes, the word can (in other contexts) refer to non-Scriptural writings, but not here.

¹⁹ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 4th ed. (Leicester, ENG: Apollos; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 827.

this. The phrase *hard to understand* means *easy to misunderstand*. That is, Peter says that “some things are hard [for untaught and unstable false teachers] to understand.” These are the ones who misunderstand Paul’s eschatology and confuse others. Confusion results from twisting Paul’s meaning. Context does not suggest that Peter struggled to understand Paul.²⁰

D. Does Evidence for an Early Pauline Corpus Exist?

To answer this question, I will discuss two issues:

1. The apostles did not view their epistles as private letters, and
2. The functioning of Paul’s team.

1. *The Apostles did not view their epistles as private letters*

Colossians. Paul mentions the nearby towns of Hierapolis (Col 4:13) and Laodicea (2:1; 4:13, 15, 16ab) several times in Colossians. Hierapolis to Colossae by way of Laodicea is an 18½ mile walk,²¹ so one would travel between them only occasionally. But Paul wanted someone to make the trip in vv 15-16:

Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that *is* in his house. Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the *epistle* [written by me that will be taken]²² from Laodicea.

Paul wrote a letter to Colossae and another to Laodicea but urged both congregations to share their letters.²³

²⁰ Peter had already been preaching an eschatology for thirty years that aligns with what Paul taught. Cf. John H. Niemelä, “Acts 1:8 Reconsidered: A Stub Track, a Siding, or a Main Track?” *JOTGES* 24 (Autumn 2011): 49-63.

²¹ W. M. Ramsay, *s.v.*—in “Roads and Travel” (in “NT,” in *A Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. James Hastings [New York, NY: Scribner’s Sons, 1907]), Extra Volume, 386—asserts that fifteen [5280-foot] miles was an absolute maximum per day for ordinary travel on foot under the best of circumstances.

²² I added bracketed words to reflect my understanding that this is a letter from Paul.

²³ Apparently, the letter to Laodicea had pertinence to neighboring Colossae, but (unlike his canonical letters) was not reproduced for wider distribution by Paul’s team.

Philemon. Paul names Philemon, but also addresses his wife, his son (apparently) and their house church. Also, vv 3, 22ab, and 25 have plural forms of *you*, so Philemon was not the sole recipient:

Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy *our* brother, To Philemon our beloved *friend* and fellow laborer, to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house [at Colossae] (Philemon 1-2).

Ostensibly, this was a personal letter to Philemon, but Paul greets others, including their house church (at Colossae). The Colossians (including Philemon) were to share their letter with Laodicea and vice versa. Paul did not view these as private letters; they were to be shared within the Lycus Valley.

Galatians. Paul addressed Galatians to the churches of Galatia. Paul likely sent several copies, so each congregation could have one:

Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), and all the brethren who are with me, to the churches of Galatia (Gal 1:1–2).

Once again, Paul did not intend his letter to benefit one church only.

Romans. The fifteen uses of *aspazomai* (“greet”) in Rom 16:3-15 address at least fifteen distinct congregations in Rome.²⁴ All those congregations needed Paul’s epistle. Apparently, Phoebe delivered multiple copies of Romans.

The Seven Churches. Of course, Revelation is not Pauline, but it appears that the apostles viewed many of their letters as open ones. In this case, seven churches were the recipients of Revelation: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

In addition, seven verses (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22) repeat the following:

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

²⁴ See John H. Niemelä, “Evidence for a First Century ‘Tenement Church,’” *JOTGES* 24 (Spring 2011): 99-116; John H. Niemelä, “Introduction,” in Zane C. Hodges, *Romans: Deliverance from Wrath*, ed. Robert N. Wilkin (Corinth, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2013), 13-18.

New Testament letters were not private documents but were meant for sharing.

What about Ephesians? A few Alexandrian manuscripts (P46, a*, B*) lack the words “in Ephesus” in Eph 1:1. This, and the lack of a personal greeting, lead some to call it a round-robin letter, not addressing one locale. David Black counters that not only Ephesians, but also 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and 1–2 Thessalonians lack greetings. He also notes that the two Pauline books with the most extensive greetings (Romans and Colossians) address locales that he had not visited.²⁵ The Majority Text solidly supports including “in Ephesus,” while the UBS text gives their bracketed text a {C} rating. Single brackets in the UBS text mean that three committee members favored the reading and two opposed it.²⁶

Ephesians (and other NT books) were distributed from the earliest times in their original form (designating the recipients of the autograph). That is, subsequent copies (excepting a few defective Alexandrian manuscripts) contained “in Ephesus.” Similarly, many sermons distributed electronically today identify the church in which they were preached. The fact that the YouTube (etc.) video names the church where the message was recorded does not preclude distribution to people outside that congregation.

2. *The functioning of Paul’s team*

People often think of Paul’s organization as quite small, but comparing Acts with Paul’s epistles paints a different story. Of course, Paul himself traveled, but his letters’ prologues and epilogues mention team members known to a given church. Sometimes Acts records team members accompanying Paul to various cities; sometimes their solo trips receive mention in Acts or an epistle. However, Paul also names people known to a church for which the NT mentions no visit from Paul’s team. After a close analysis of Philippians in 2007, I concluded that the NT mentions only a fraction of team-member trips. (Nothing like a modern postal system existed in Paul’s day. Couriers were vital

²⁵ David A. Black, “The Peculiarities of Ephesians and the Ephesian Address,” *Grace Theological Journal* 2 (Spring 1981): 59-73.

²⁶ See John H. Niemelä, “So You May Come (or Continue?) to Believe (John 20:31),” *JOTGES* 29 (Spring 2016): 78-79, and 79, nn. 13-15, for evidence that the notation in the UBS apparatus signifies that three of five members of the UBS committee favored “in Ephesus” as original.

for communication). Philippians refers to a number of trips by couriers between Rome and Philippi:

1. Philippians 1:30 is when word reached Philippi about Paul's imprisonment.
2. The church sent Epaphroditus to Paul in Rome (Phil 4:18).
3. Epaphroditus became deathly ill while in Rome (Phil 2:26).
4. Word of Epaphroditus' being ill reached Philippi (Phil 2:26).
5. Word reached Epaphroditus in Rome of the Philippians' concern (Phil 2:26).
6. Epaphroditus carried the letter to the Philippians to Philippi (Phil 2:25, 28).
7. A month later, Paul was released from house arrest (Acts 28:30-31).
8. Paul soon sent Timothy to Philippi, as he had planned (Phil 2:19-23).
9. Paul planned to travel to Philippi soon afterwards (Phil 2:24).

A one-way trip from Rome to Philippi took about eight weeks. These nine trips occurred during the two years of Paul's first Roman imprisonment. However, besides Paul's concern for Philippi, he ministered through his team to churches all over the northeastern Mediterranean, despite imprisonment.

The following pattern emerges regarding the network of churches that Paul oversaw:

1. Paul would send someone (e.g., Timothy) to a church with a letter for it.
2. Timothy would give his emissary the letter.
3. Timothy would minister there as Paul instructed.
4. Meanwhile, the church would write a letter to Paul.
5. Timothy would carry it to Paul.

- 6. Timothy would debrief Paul on the circumstances at that church.
- 7. Paul would write another letter to that church.
- 8. The process would repeat from point 1, perhaps using a different emissary.
- 9. At some point, Paul would send Timothy to another church.

Paul’s team members came and went. He wrote letters based on reports from his team members who visited churches, on reports from churches (cf. 1 Cor 1:11), or on questions asked by churches via letters (cf. 1 Cor 7:1, 25; 8:1, 4; 12:1; 16:1, 12; 1 Thess 4:9, 13; 5:1; 2 Thess 2:1).

To illustrate Paul’s team members’ travels, the following is a list of those whose known travels brought them to at least two cities and at most six cities. Several people (like Barnabas and Luke) accompanied Paul extensively, but the ones listed here are ones whose travels may not come to mind. Those who accompanied Paul for lengthy periods in Acts would require much space here.

Team Member	Locations*
Apollos	Corinth, Ephesus
Aquila and Priscilla	Antioch, Caesarea, Cenchrea, Corinth, Ephesus, Rome
Crescens	Galatia, Rome
Demas	Colosse, Rome
Epaenetus	Achaia, Rome
Epaphras*	Colosse, Rome
Epaphroditus	Philippi, Rome
Erastus	Corinth, Macedonia
Gaius	Derbe, Ephesus, Troas
Lucius*	Antioch, Rome
Mark*	Colosse, Cyprus, Ephesus, Rome
Mnason	Caesarea, Jerusalem
Onesimus	Colosse, Rome
Onesiphorus*	Ephesus, Rome
Phoebe	Cenchrea, Rome
Silvanus	Corinth, Thessalonica

Titus	Corinth, Crete, Dalmatia, Jerusalem, Rome
Trophimus	Ephesus, Miletus
Tychicus	Colosse, Ephesus, Rome

*Paul often extends greetings from team members. Presumably, he named only those team members known to the recipients. Thus, it is likely that those members had traveled as Paul's emissaries to that city. Asterisks signify implied travel.

3. Section summary

The foregoing section is entitled: "Evidence for an Early Pauline Corpus." It has two subsections:

1. The apostles did not view their epistles as private letters.
2. The functioning of Paul's team.

This section has demonstrated that NT letters (including Colossians, Galatians, and Romans) were not private letters. It also shows that Paul's team traveled widely. These facts underlie the next section's hypothesis—a simple and conservative explanation of 2 Pet 3:15-16.

VI. HYPOTHESIS: THE APOSTLES DISTRIBUTED THEIR OWN LETTERS²⁷

At first glance, the title may not suggest a new approach. That is, everyone acknowledges that Paul sent Romans to Rome, Philippians to Philippi, etc. Yes, all recognize that Paul was in charge of sending the autograph (the original of a given letter) to the original addressees. The hypothesis looks beyond the autograph to the sending of early copies to other locales.

The proposal is that each author oversaw the distribution of copies of letters to additional churches.²⁸ Each author determined which

²⁷ Zane Hodges taught a module on Majority Text Theory at Chafer Theological Seminary in 2004. He briefly set forth the basic tenets of the hypothesis that this article presents. Most of the thoughts are the result of reflection and study since that brief portion of a lecture twenty years ago.

²⁸ I do not mean that Paul ran the mail room and the photocopier (using modern terms).

books would be distributed beyond the original addressees (and which would not).²⁹

Readers may wonder, “What is the benefit of this hypothesis?” Remember that liberals deny the plausibility of:

1. A collection of Paul’s letters existing during Peter’s lifetime, and
2. The idea that such a collection would be regarded during Peter’s lifetime as Scripture, on par with the OT.

How might this be illustrated? The clearest statement of the traditional model from a conservative standpoint is from Lewis Sperry Chafer. Presumably, he believed that the recipients of Paul’s letters knew that these letters were Scripture. However, under Chafer’s model, most churches might only possess one or two Pauline letters for several decades. Thus, a corpus of Paul’s letters would be a late development. (Apparently, he never wrestled with the chronological problem that 2 Pet 3:15-16 would pose for his view).³⁰ Chafer said:

...for many years the writings which were current and effective in one locality did not reach all localities. It is probable that no church came to possess a complete copy of all that enters into the New Testament canon until early in the second century. All copies of portions of Scripture were handwritten and few, indeed, could possess these treasures³¹ [emphasis mine].

Paul’s first letter was written in AD 49. Peter apparently died no later than June of AD 68.³² Based on Chafer’s model, the whole process (following) would need to have occurred in less than nineteen years.

1. Paul wrote the following and sent them to their addressees:
Galatians (49)

²⁹ The letter to the Corinthians that preceded 1 Corinthians (mentioned in 1 Cor 5:9) and the one that came between 1 and 2 Corinthians (mentioned in 2 Cor 2:7) were not authorized to go beyond Corinth. Those, unlike Scripture, were private letters. Biblical writers knew when they were (and were not) writing Scripture. This article argues that other letters from Paul to Philippi preceded the Philippian epistle. These were private letters. The Apostle John in 3 John 9 mentions a private letter that he wrote. It was never intended to be part of the NT.

³⁰ Chafer held Scripture in high regard. He would not have knowingly played into the hand of liberals.

³¹ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas, TX: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), 1:91.

³² Nero died in June AD 68. Peter likely also died while Nero was emperor.

1–2 Thessalonians (51)

1–2 Corinthians (56)

Romans (56-57)

Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon (61-62)

1 Timothy (62)

Titus (66)

2 Timothy (67)

2. The addressees held their books tightly for a time, not sharing them.
3. Decades elapsed before any church would have more than one of Paul's books.

By contrast, under this article's hypothesis, it is reasonable to suppose that most churches had Galatians, 1–2 Thessalonians, 1–2 Corinthians, and Romans before Paul's first Roman imprisonment began (AD 60) and, by AD 63, would have had Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, and 1 Timothy as well. Peter could logically speak of all of Paul's epistles.³³ The hypothesis provides a reasonable and powerful antithesis to the liberal characterization of 2 Pet 3:15-16 as an anachronism. The Pauline letters existed as a corpus during Peter's lifetime. This truth is the central thesis of this article.

VII. ADDITIONAL BENEFITS OF THE HYPOTHESIS

The traditional model has additional difficulties, which the hypothesis resolves.

A. Explaining One-Chapter Letters Being in the Canon

Unless the one-chapter letters (Philemon, 2–3 John, and Jude) were widely distributed, imagining their being identified as Scripture decades after writing is difficult. By contrast, if their authors sent them to others (not just to the original addressees), they would be recognized as Scripture.

³³ Guthrie, *Introduction*, 824, notes, "The 'all' in 3:16 need mean no more than all those known to Peter at the time of writing." However, *all* clearly implies a substantial number. When Peter wrote, he could have known of eleven, twelve, or even thirteen.

B. Explaining Why Personal Letters Are in the Canon

The traditional model does not give a rationale for the inclusion of 1–2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, or 2–3 John in the NT. However, if their authors distributed them widely from the very start, that is another story.

C. Resolving Local Variations in the Canon

The literature focuses attention on local variations in the canon. For example, the Syrian church initially rejected certain NT books—2 Peter, 2–3 John, Jude, and Revelation—from its canon. Not until AD 508, when Philoxenus commissioned a Syriac NT, did it accept these books.

The resolution is simple. After Pentecost, the focus of ministry (other than in Israel proper) was in the northeastern Mediterranean. Under the proposed hypothesis, the multiplication of local assemblies in that area would be accompanied by multiplication of Greek manuscript copies (initially produced under apostolic direction).

Over time, interest in translating the NT into other languages (e.g., Latin, Syriac, Coptic, Gothic, Armenian, Georgian, Ethiopic, Old Slavonic)³⁴ would arise. Certainly, one would not imagine the apostles supervising the translation, production, or distribution of translated manuscripts. The translation of (for example) Syrian likely occurred (1) in Syria and (2) after the apostles died, so apostolic supervision would be lacking. The translator chose not to include 2 Peter, 2–3 John, Jude, and Revelation, a local decision that differed from the practice of Greek-speaking churches. Such a move would properly be viewed as an abandonment of the twenty-seven-book canon. Scholarship has not rightly appraised the alternate canons of some non-Greek speaking locales. Some churches in non-Greek speaking areas abandoned the twenty-seven book canon and substituted their own. Greek-speaking regions are where the NT documents' apostolic activity took place,³⁵ so their voice has priority in issues of canonicity.

³⁴ These are some of the early versions of the NT for which manuscripts exist.

³⁵ Of course, Paul went to Rome and presumably to Spain, but most of the activity of apostles within the NT is to Greek-speaking regions. The fact that the NT autographs were Greek reinforces this. Priority must be given to the Greek-speaking church in considering canonicity.

VIII. CONCLUSION

2 Peter 3:15-16 is a pivotal passage. Liberals write it off as an anachronism because they cannot imagine a collection of Pauline writings being regarded as Scripture during Peter's lifetime.

Both liberals and conservatives often imagine apostles as sending their writings only to the original addressees. If so, the NT epistles would have started out as private letters. Rather, the apostles viewed open letters as Scripture. This is evident in Colossians, Galatians, Romans, and Revelation. Furthermore, the functioning of Paul's ministry team evidences many subordinates going to-and-fro in ministry as Paul writes and receives letters from churches. This interaction provided a vehicle for distributing copies of letters to locales other than the original addressees. Such a model is a simple and reasonable response to liberal charges that 2 Pet 3:15-16 is anachronistic. Instead, Peter would have been familiar with most (or even *all*) of the NT books written prior to his death. That passage in Second Peter enables us to be confident that every book in our twenty-seven-book NT is the Word of God.

AN OVERVIEW OF 1 PETER: THE SALVATION OF THE SOUL

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INTRODUCTION

In this article, I will give an overview of the book of 1 Peter. In 2017, Grace Evangelical Society (GES) published a commentary on 1 Peter by Zane Hodges. The subtitle of the commentary is “The Salvation of the Soul.”¹ GES has said that this is the theme of 1 Peter, which reflects what Hodges wrote. After reading through the book of 1 Peter, with the aim of developing an overview of it, I heartily agree with both GES and Hodges.

Whenever you encounter the term *salvation* or *saved* in the Bible you should always ask two questions: 1) What is the *salvation* in view? 2) From what does a person need to be saved? Many people reflexively assume that *salvation* in the Bible means salvation from hell or the lake of fire. This is especially true when the word is used in the phrase, “the salvation of the soul.”

Some of us have been conditioned to think that way because of our backgrounds. We grew up hearing about evangelistic crusades where, for example, fifteen souls were saved. It was just the way we tended to talk. As a result, it might seem strange to some people if we suggest that the phrase the “salvation of the soul” in 1 Peter does not mean salvation from hell, but something entirely different.

Even though it might sound strange, my view is that in 1 Peter, “the salvation of the soul” means saving your life from damage now and from loss of reward in the future.²

In 1 Pet 1:9, for example, the word *soul* should be translated by the word *life*. The Greek can be translated either way, and that is what we find in the NT. Sometimes, the word is translated both ways when it occurs multiple times in the same context.

¹ Zane C. Hodges, *First Peter: The Salvation of the Soul* (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2017).

² *Ibid.*, 23.

Peter learned about the “salvation of the soul” directly from Jesus. The Lord told him and the other disciples that they should desire the salvation of their souls. This teaching is found in Matt 16:25-27. Jesus said:

²⁵ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. ²⁶ For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.

At the beginning of this instruction (16:24), the Lord is speaking to His disciples. Therefore, the salvation of which He speaks is not eternal salvation from the lake of fire.³ Since Peter and the other disciples were already saved from the lake of fire,⁴ the Lord is speaking of discipleship salvation and discipleship truth. Being a believer and being a disciple are not the same thing.

Notice that at the end of this passage, Christ talks about coming and rewarding each one according to his works. Since eternal salvation is free, apart from works, the Lord cannot be talking about that kind of salvation. He is talking about reward in His kingdom. All believers will be in that kingdom. Not all will be rewarded equally when they enter it.⁵ The believer’s works will determine his reward.

Jesus asked His disciples two questions that we need to take to heart. The first is: “What profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?” The answer is obvious: It profits him nothing.

The Lord is talking about believers. What would it profit a born-again believer if he gained the whole world but lost his soul?

But how can a born-again believer lose his soul? A believer can never lose eternal salvation.⁶ The “soul” that the believer can lose is his temporal life. He can suffer damage to that life and lose reward. He can waste his life and lose the reward that life could have produced by good

³ Hal M. Haller Jr., “The Gospel according to Matthew,” in *The Grace New Testament Commentary*, ed. Robert N. Wilkin (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2010), 76.

⁴ Judas was not a believer, but the other eleven were. There were also other believers listening to the Lord. This teaching was directed toward them.

⁵ Alberto S. Valdés, “The Gospel according to Luke,” in *The Grace New Testament Commentary*, ed. Robert N. Wilkin (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2010), 324.

⁶ Robert N. Wilkin, “The Gospel according to John,” in *The Grace New Testament Commentary*, ed. Robert N. Wilkin (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2010), 380.

works. If the believer should gain everything this world had to offer, but waste his life, his life would be lost. It would not count for those things that are eternal.⁷

Then Jesus asked a second question: “What will a man give in exchange for his soul?” That is a thought-provoking question. Each disciple was to ask himself what he could give or do to save his soul and gain the reward he would desire on that future day. I am convinced that Peter took that question to heart. He wrote a letter about it. First Peter is his answer to that question.

Under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Peter wrote this book to explain what a believer can do to save his life. A believer can make this present life count in a way that will be rewarded at the Judgment Seat of Christ and for eternity.

I have gone through 1 Peter and identified sixteen ways Peter lists to explain how we can experience the salvation of our souls. There may be more, but these are the sixteen that I think provide an overview of the book. This list of sixteen is extensive and shows that God cares about everything in our lives. Every facet of our lives counts for eternity. There are many things we can give in exchange for our soul that will be rewarded at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

We could speak in detail on each of the sixteen points. But since this is an overview, I will give only the highlights.

I. GENUINE FAITH AMID TRIALS (1 PETER 1:3-12)

In the section of 1 Pet 1:3-12, Peter writes:

⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,⁷ that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, ⁸ whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, ⁹ receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of *your* souls (vv 6-9).

⁷ Zane C. Hodges, *A Free Grace Primer* (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2011), 410.

These verses occur at the beginning of 1 Peter. At the end of v 6, Peter lets us know right up front that in his letter he will talk about the salvation of the soul. If they have genuine faith amid trials, believers can be saved from damage now and from future loss of reward at Christ's Judgment Seat.

Notice some of the highlights of what he says. Your faith is being tested by fire. This refers to the trials God allows in your life. Peter says it is a test to see how much you are going to trust God in the midst of those trials.

Peter refers to "the revelation of Jesus Christ." This is another way of saying "the return of Christ." If your faith passes the test, when He returns, you will receive praise, honor, and glory from Him at His Judgment Seat. This praise will be expressed in the words, "Well done."⁸ Honor will be expressed through the privilege of being close to Jesus; the essence of eternal reward is being closer to Him. There are different degrees of that reward, which means there will be different degrees of closeness to the Lord. The greatest honor anybody could ever receive is to be close to Jesus in His kingdom. There will be more shared experiences with Jesus and greater opportunity to serve Him. That is the honor that will be given to the believer who has genuine faith amid various trials.

Such believers will also receive glory. Jesus will be in His glory in the kingdom, and the closer a person is to Jesus, the more he will reflect the glory of Jesus and the more glory he will bring to Him for eternity.

Peter calls this the "salvation of your soul." Notice how he words it. You receive it at the *end* of your faith. The reward for your faith during trials will be the salvation of your soul. This means you will have saved your life from damage in this world and from future loss of reward in the kingdom.

This is fundamental to the rest of 1 Peter. The subsequent fifteen points require faith in God during trials.

II. HAVE A BALANCED VIEW OF GOD (1 PETER 1:13-21)

To experience the salvation of the soul, you must have a balanced view of God. In 1:13-21, Peter says you should "rest your hope

⁸ Gary Derickson, "The First Epistle of Peter," in *The Grace New Testament Commentary*, ed. Robert N. Wilkin (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2010), 1147.

fully upon that grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” In addition, “If you call on God the Father who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourself throughout the time of your stay here in fear.”

I think that two words here express the concept of “a balanced view of God.” The first is *hope* and the second is *fear*. The believer is to have hope in, and a fear of, God. His hope is to rest fully on the grace that is brought at the revelation, or return, of Jesus Christ and what we will experience on that day.

In the NT, *hope* is not wishful thinking. It is a certain expectation. Here, that certainty is that Christ is coming, and we are going to be with Him forever. The focus of our lives should not be on this life but on what counts for eternity.

At the same time, we need to have a healthy fear of the One who is going to judge us at the Judgment Seat of Christ. He will judge us without partiality, according to our work.⁹ I believe that when Peter says we need to conduct ourselves during our stay on earth in fear, he means we should be afraid of what could happen at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

If I do not save my soul now, I have a fear of hearing Him say, “You wicked, lazy slave.” He is going to say that to some believers. That is what Jesus told us in Matt 25:26.¹⁰ Feeling that way shows a healthy fear. It is a fear of not wanting to hear such words from Jesus at the Judgment Seat of Christ. It is a fear of seeing that we wasted our lives and lost the reward that could have been ours.

If we have this balanced view of God—a certain hope, accompanied by a fear of not wanting the negative to happen—we are going to be saving our souls in a way that will count for eternity. That is a spiritually healthy attitude.

III. LOVING ONE ANOTHER **(1 PETER 1:22–2:10)**

First Peter 1:22–2:10 speaks of the need for believers to love one another. Peter writes, “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one

⁹ Hodges, *First Peter*, 30.

¹⁰ Haller, “Matthew,” 119.

another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again...through the Word of God which lives and abides forever..." (1 Pet 1:22-23).

It is interesting that Peter uses the word *soul* and says "you have purified your souls." Here, he is referring to the experience of regeneration. He mentions being born again. The born-again person—the believer—has no sin in the inner man.¹¹

The born-again person has the opportunity of not only being purified (which he already is), but also of being saved. It may sound strange, but because your soul is purified, you have the potential and the opportunity to save your soul and make it count in a way that will be rewarded in eternity.

In this context, Peter is saying that if you love other believers with your pure heart, you have the potential of loving fervently. This is because of what God has made you to be "in the inner man." You have the potential and ability to save your life and make it count for eternity by loving one another with a pure heart. If you do, you will be saving your soul.

IV. ABSTAIN FROM FLESHLY LUSTS (1 PETER 2:11-12)

In this short section, Peter begs his readers to abstain from the fleshly lusts that wage war against their souls. We can find lists of these lusts in various NT passages. Examples would include bitterness and sensual lusts. These wage war against the souls of believers. There is a battle going on over the lives of believers.

At the end of the epistle, Peter mentions that the devil is involved in this battle. This war comes from without the believer from the devil and from within the believer through the flesh. The devil and the flesh are trying to destroy the soul—the life—of the believer.¹² They want to cause the believer to waste his life and not make it count for eternity. This will result in damage to our lives now and loss of reward in the future.

Peter instructs believers to call upon God. With His help and strength, they can overcome those fleshly lusts. They can save their

¹¹ Zane C. Hodges, *The Epistles of John* (Irving, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 1999), 141.

¹² Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 121.

souls (lives) from the damage those lusts can cause now and at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

V. SUBMIT TO GOVERNING AUTHORITIES (1 PETER 2:13-17)

Peter says we should submit ourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, and honor the king. The two words I want to point out are *submit* and *honor* in the phrase "honor the king."

To submit to the governing authorities and to honor the king means to obey the law. Don't be a lawbreaker. We should show respect for the king. In our case, this means the president of the United States. Does Peter say to honor only the good kings? No. He says to honor the king, period. I am sure that Peter had plenty of experience with bad kings.

Notice what he says immediately before the command to honor the king: Fear God. If we fear God, we will honor the king. I think this speaks volumes to us today because many become frustrated with our government and our president. We disagree with many of the things he does. We can fall into the trap of not honoring the president. Peter tells us to honor the president because of his position. God is the One who put him in office. The Bible says that God removes and establishes kings.¹³

He sometimes appoints over a nation the lowest of men. In those situations, we can easily fall into the trap of not honoring such leaders. We feel they are not doing their jobs. This results in not having genuine faith amid such trials. Because things are not going the way we think they should, we don't believe that God is in control and that He has put such a person in office to accomplish His purposes.

Such situations provide us with opportunities to exercise genuine faith in trials. We can exercise genuine faith in times like those. This will save our souls and make our lives count for eternity.

¹³ Zane C. Hodges, *Romans: Deliverance from Wrath* (Corinth, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2013), 383.

VI. SUBMIT TO YOUR BOSSES (1 PETER 2:18-25)

Believers can experience the salvation of their souls by submitting to their bosses. Peter writes,

Servants, *be* submissive to *your* masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh...For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.

I have taken the liberty of paraphrasing *masters* as *bosses*. You should submit to those for whom you work.¹⁴ You should do this in fear. I believe this fear is a reference to what Peter brought up earlier about fearing God (1:17). I want to fear God at work and be what I need to be because I fear what could happen at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

I am to submit to my boss, not just if he is good and gentle, but even if he is harsh. When you have a harsh person as a boss, it is an opportunity to do what Peter said. You can exercise faith during that trial.

When Peter asks what credit you should receive for being patient when you are beaten for your faults, he expects a negative answer. There is no credit in that situation. But, if you do good and suffer for it, taking it patiently, it is commendable before God. This means you will be rewarded by God at the Judgment seat of Christ. God is pleased now, and it will be reflected when you stand before Christ. To be in a bad work environment—to be in that trial—is an opportunity to exercise genuine faith that will be rewarded by the Lord.

VII. SUBMIT TO YOUR HUSBANDS (1 PETER 3:1-6)

Another opportunity to save your soul—your life—and make it count for eternity is by wives submitting to their husbands. Peter says:

Wives...*be* submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without

¹⁴ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 406.

a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct *accompanied* by fear...the incorruptible *beauty* of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God... as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.

Some key words here express the main idea: Wives are to “be submissive” to their husbands. Once again, *fear* is mentioned (1:17; 2:18). This is the fear of what could happen at the Judgment Seat of Christ if a believer does not do what God tells him to do. Notice, as well, the word after *fear*, which is *incorruptible*. It is used in 1:4, where it speaks of an incorruptible inheritance. This is a reward, or treasure, that is laid up for the kingdom.

Peter tells wives that if they follow what God is telling them in the letter regarding their husbands, they are going to be rewarded for it. This is because their actions are beautiful before God.

These women are told not to be afraid with any terror. This does not contradict the fear Peter talked about earlier (2:18). There is a difference between fearing God and what might happen at the Judgment Seat of Christ on the one hand and the terror mentioned here on the other. A woman might have terror at the prospect of letting her husband be the leader in the home. She should not feel that way, because by such submission she is being obedient to God.

When Peter says that the husband might be won “without a word,” he does not mean silence. He uses Sarah as an example. In Genesis 21, Sarah talked to Abraham about Hagar and Ishmael. She told him to cast Hagar and Ishmael out. Sarah was not silent and told him what she thought. The matter was displeasing to Abraham, but God stepped in and told him to listen to Sarah’s voice. This provides a balance to what Peter is talking about. He doesn’t mean that a woman shouldn’t speak up and say what’s on her mind. But she shouldn’t try to overpower her husband with her words. She should combine her words with her actions.

When she does so, she is saving her life. She is making it count for eternity and saving her life from damage now. That is the kind of life that will be rewarded in the future.

VIII. UNDERSTAND YOUR WIVES (1 PETER 3:7)

“Husbands, likewise, dwell with *them* with understanding, giving honor to your wife, as to the weaker vessel... that your prayers may not be hindered.” Live with your wife in an understanding way. Ask God for wisdom to understand her and be quick to hear and understand her. Put her interests ahead of your own.

Peter then gives a warning. If you do not do these things, your prayers are going to be hindered. None of us want our prayers to be hindered. We do not want God to be unresponsive to our prayers. This shows that even though the salvation of the soul focuses on being saved from the loss of reward in the future, it also has to do with damage now. What greater damage could there be in our lives than to know that God is unresponsive to our prayers?

IX. BLESS OTHERS (1 PETER 3:8-12)

...*be* tenderhearted, *be* courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing ... For “he who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit... For the eyes of the Lord *are* on the righteous, and His ears *are open* to their prayers...”

We tend to want to return evil for evil and insult for insult. But Peter says that when you are wronged, you are to bless. Jesus said we should pray for and bless those who are our enemies and persecute us (Matt 5:44-48). He said we will be rewarded if we do so (Matt 5:11-12).

Peter says the same thing. The word *inherit* in v 9 alludes to the reward, or blessing, that will be ours at the Judgment Seat of Christ if we do what Peter teaches.

Notice the last phrase in the passage above: “Open to their prayers...” I want God to be open to my prayers. I want to save my life from damage now and from loss of reward in the future. These are

some of the things I should pray about. I want God to be open to those prayers. To do that, I need to bless others.

X. SUFFER FOR DOING GOOD (1 PETER 3:13-17)

“And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?” The answer Peter is looking for is that there are probably not many people who will harm you if you do what is good. However, he quickly adds, “But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you are blessed.”

If you have faith in the midst of being wronged by someone, it means that you believe God is going to bless you for what you are going through. That is why Peter adds that if you are in that kind of situation, you should “not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.”

In an understatement, Peter says it is better to suffer for “doing good than for doing evil” (v 17). If we suffer because we are obeying God, He will reward us in the kingdom for that obedience. Suffering for being obedient to God is an opportunity for the believer to save his soul, or life, now and in the future.

XI. BE SAVED FROM DOING EVIL (1 PETER 3:18-4:6)

Peter now picks up the last words of the previous section—*doing evil*—and talks about being saved from doing evil. He says: “...in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism...through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

We should notice the word *souls* here. Peter also mentions being *saved* through water and says that baptism “saves” us. The baptism he is referring to is Spirit baptism.¹⁵ It is that baptism that puts us into Christ—the resurrected Christ—and gives us the power of Christ to be saved from the power of sin in our daily lives.

That is a present salvation that we can experience in this life. We can be saved from the power of sin in our daily lives because we have

¹⁵ Hodges, *First Peter*, 75.

been baptized into Christ and have His resurrection power to enable us to withstand the temptation of sin (4:2; Rom 5:10).¹⁶

Those who were placed in the ark before the Flood were a type of this salvation. Noah's family was saved from the destruction of the waters of the Flood. Those who are in Christ through the baptism of the Spirit will be saved from the power of sin in their daily lives if they walk by the power of the Spirit. When Peter speaks of eight *souls* being saved, he means eight lives. The believer who walks in the power available to him by the Spirit will be saved from damage to his life now and from loss of reward in the kingdom.

XII. SERVE ONE ANOTHER (1 PETER 4:7-11)

"As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another...that God may be glorified... forever and ever."

The Lord is glorified when His children serve others. We do that by using our spiritual gifts in the church. This type of life will be rewarded because the believer who serves others is like Him and will therefore be great in His kingdom (Mark 10:45).¹⁷

XIII. PARTAKE OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS (1 PETER 4:12-19)

"Rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy... let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good."

The believer who suffers with Christ will be glorified with Him (Rom 8:17; 2 Tim 2:12). Peter speaks of Christ's glory. The Lord will share His glory with others to the degree that they suffered with Him. This involves reigning with Him.¹⁸ For this reason, the believer who suffers for the Lord should be "glad." He is saving his "soul" in the present by "doing good."

¹⁶ Hodges, *Romans*, 143-44.

¹⁷ Barry Mershon Jr., "The Gospel according to Mark," in *The Grace New Testament Commentary*, ed. Robert N. Wilkin (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2010), 186.

¹⁸ René A. López, "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans," in *The Grace New Testament Commentary*, ed. Robert N. Wilkin (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2010), 665.

XIV. SHEPHERD THE FLOCK AS ELDERS (1 PETER 5:1-4)

“The elders who are among you...Shepherd the flock of God...being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.”

Peter discusses a reward for a particular group of believers. Elders—leaders in the church—who serve faithfully will receive a *crown*. This is an eternal reward and is associated with reigning with Christ and sharing His “glory.”¹⁹

XV. HUMBLE YOURSELVES (1 PETER 5:5-7)

“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”

The obedient believer is humble. Humility is expressed by relying upon God. Such a believer avoids damage to his life by receiving grace from God. He will also be saved at the Judgment Seat of Christ when the Lord exalts him.

XVI. RESIST THE DEVIL (1 PETER 5:8-11)

“...your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith...may the God of all grace...after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever.”

The believer will experience the salvation of his soul if he resists the devil. Peter does add some words of salutation, but this is the end of the message of 1 Peter. It is quite a way to end because it alerts us to the importance of what he has said throughout the letter.

We are in a battle. Satan and our flesh are trying to destroy our lives—to destroy our souls. The word Peter uses is *devour*. The devil walks about, and he is trying to devour you. He is trying to damage your soul. He is trying to rob your life’s experience by causing damage to your life now. He is also trying to rob you of the reward that could be yours at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

¹⁹ Derickson, “The First Epistle of Peter,” 1167.

Peter tells us to resist him, steadfast in the faith. That is where he started this book. He told the believers who are the letter's intended audience to have genuine faith in the midst of trials (1:7). A believer like that will trust God, calling out to Him for strength and victory.

Peter says that God will respond. He is there to perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle us. The Lord can strengthen us to withstand what Satan is trying to do. Through the strength God provides, your life can be saved from damage now and from loss of reward in the future.

The last sentence in this section describes what will be true of a saved soul. Such a life will bring Him greater glory because it is to Christ—to Him—that all glory and dominion belong forever and ever.

CONCLUSION

The greater the praise, honor, and glory you receive at the Judgment Seat of Christ, the greater you will reflect His glory forever.

That is what Peter means when he speaks of the salvation of your soul in 1 Peter (1:5, 9, 10).

AT THE END OF THE DAY (2 PETER 3:10-13)

JOHN CLAEYS

I. INTRODUCTION

In the movie, *As Good as It Gets*, Jack Nicholson plays Melvin, a crude, obsessive-compulsive author who thinks only of himself. But Melvin becomes enamored of Carol, a waitress played by Helen Hunt. Carol has seen Melvin at his worst but reluctantly agrees to meet him at a posh restaurant for dinner. When she arrives, Carol is obviously ill at ease with the fancy surroundings, and while the other patrons are impeccably attired, Carol wears a simple red dress.

Seeing her, Melvin waves her over to his table. As she approaches, Melvin hits an all-time low when he says, “This restaurant! They make me buy a new outfit, and they let you in wearing a housedress.”

Carol is stunned and hurt. Tempted to walk out, she looks Melvin in the eye and says, “Pay me a compliment, Melvin. I need one—now.”

Melvin responds, “I’ve got a great compliment.” What could he say to make up for the thoughtless comment he just delivered? This deeply flawed man, his own worst enemy, looks at Carol and sincerely and quietly says, “Carol, you make me want to be a better man.”

Wow! There are few compliments better than that one.

As we come to know God more intimately through an openness to His Word, that is exactly the effect on us: We want to become better people. We want to grow in our relationship with Him and with our Savior. We want to progress spiritually, and as we do, we lay up for ourselves great, eternal reward in God’s kingdom.

False teaching, however, can have the opposite effect. That is why Peter so adamantly deals with false teaching in his second epistle.

A. The Message of 2 Peter

The epistle of 2 Peter deals with continuing in the truth in the face of false teaching. In fact, I see the message of 2 Peter as this: *Believers must continue to progress spiritually in the face of false teaching.* As Peter explains, false teaching denies important truths such as the gospel and the future Christian hope. These truths center around the return of Jesus—truths that are critical for the spiritual progress of believers.

Unfortunately, Christians can be led astray by false teaching, which is why Peter warns his Christian audience to be alert to it.

If ever there was a time for Christians to be on the alert to false teaching, it is now! Therefore, 2 Peter is definitely a relevant book for our time.

B. 2 Peter 3

The passage we are focusing on is 2 Pet 3:10-13. It follows an extended warning against false teachers with their damaging heresies and destructive lifestyles.

As chapter 3 begins, Peter connects the morality of the scoffers with their rejection of the return of Christ. He states that these false teachers live according to their lusts while denying the return of Jesus. It may be that they live that way because they do not believe Jesus will soon return. This is similar to Jesus' description of the evil servant in Luke 12:45:

“But if that servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk...”

Both the false teachers of Peter's epistle and the unfaithful servant of Luke 12:45 seem motivated to live according to their lusts because they do not believe Jesus will return soon.

In vv 5-7 of chapter 3, Peter responds to the scoffers' attack by announcing that these mockers shut their eyes to the facts of Scripture (and to the evidence of nature). By His word, God formed the waters above and below the firmament (cf. Gen. 1:7), which He used to destroy the world by a flood. And the heavens and earth, which are preserved by God's word, will face a certain judgment by fire. Peter's stress on the power of God's Word to control and to judge serves as a strong proclamation to the scoffers: His powerful word *will* be fulfilled, and it *will* judge those who resist it.

Peter then gives this reminder in v 9:

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

God's promises are sure; He will fulfill His word.

Immediately before our passage in 3:10-13, Peter has revealed why the Lord has delayed the return of Jesus: He longs for all to *come to repentance*.

GES advocates will understand that *repentance* refers to leaving a sinful lifestyle to enter into fellowship with God. It is *not* a condition for receiving eternal life. Instead, it is a call for believers and unbelievers alike to enter into fellowship with God.¹ Therefore, God has allowed much time for people to enter into harmony with Him.

II. GOD WILL BRING ABSOLUTE JUDGMENT (2 PETER 3:10)

A. Judgment Will Come Suddenly

However, there is coming a time when God will end this extended period of mercy and grace and will enact judgment upon the world, as Peter expresses in 3:10:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned down.

While those who are not open to the truth mock God's coming judgment, it is, nevertheless, true that *the Day of the Lord* will come. In fact, when Peter wrote v 10, he placed *will come* (*hēxei*) at the beginning of his Greek sentence, giving it full emphasis. While the scoffers say that the Day of the Lord will not come, Peter says it absolutely *will* come!

The *Day of the Lord* refers to God's future judgment upon the earth. OT passages that describe it as bringing devastating consequences include: Isa 2:12-21; 13:6-13; Jer 46:7-10; Ezek 13:5; Joel 1:15-18; 2:1-11, 30-32; Obad 15-17; Zeph 1:14-16; Zech 14:1-9; Mal 4:4-6.

B. Judgment Comes with the Day of the Lord

The Day of the Lord is connected with the return of Jesus. Peter indicates this by referring to the coming of Jesus in v 4 of this chapter,

¹ For an excellent discussion on repentance, see Zane Hodges, *Absolutely Free!* (Dallas, TX: Redención Viva, 1989), 143-63.

a mention leading into Peter's defense in vv 5-10. More specifically, the Day of the Lord *begins* when Jesus comes in the air for believers (the Rapture of the church). It continues through His return to the earth and goes on to the destruction of the world one thousand years after His return. I will discuss this later.

While false teachers have claimed that "all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation" (2 Pet 3:4), Peter warns that "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night." The misunderstanding of the false teachers is akin to what Jesus prophesied in Matt 24:37-39:

But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

The Day of the Lord will come upon an unsuspecting world *as a thief in the night*. Paul taught this same concept to the believers at Thessalonica:

For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes *as a thief in the night* (1 Thess 5:2).

This thinking is supported by our Lord's teaching seen in Matt 24:43:

But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour *the thief* would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into (emphasis added).

While Paul and Peter were warning of the impending Day of the Lord, Jesus was forewarning that *both* the Rapture of the church *and* the cataclysmic Day of the Lord would come as a thief.² This is evident when we make two observations.

The first is that the passage in which Jesus makes this revelation, Matt 24:37-39, is formed by an *inclusio*, a literary device that brackets a passage by using the same words or concepts at the beginning and the

² See Zane C. Hodges, *Jesus: God's Prophet* (Mesquite, TX: Kerugma, Inc., 2006), 24-32.

end, forming a unit.³ The bracketing in Matt 24:37-39 is formed with the phrase, “*so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.*” (We should note that the term *Son of Man*, stems from Dan 7:13-14, and refers to Jesus’ receiving His kingdom. Thus, the phrase, *the coming of the Son of Man*, speaks of Jesus’ returning to the earth to establish God’s kingdom.)

The second observation is that Jesus connects His return to two events: 1) Noah’s entering the ark; *and* 2) God’s global judgment, the cataclysmic Flood.

Noah and his family entering the ark has often been seen as a picture of the Rapture of the church. If we expand this passage in Matthew 24 a bit, we could more easily understand this:

*But of **that day and hour** no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. **But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be....the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect*** [emphases added] (Matt 24:36-39, 44).

The emboldened portion shows our original passage, which forms an *inclusio* (along with the underlined brackets of the *inclusio*). Notice, however, that the larger passage also forms an *inclusio*, not with repeated words, but with a repeated concept. The phrase, *but of that day and hour no one knows*, is equivalent to the phrase, *at an hour you do not expect*.

What is the event that occurs at a day or hour no one can predict? It is *the coming of the Son of Man*. This *coming* begins with the Rapture of the church. But this coming is linked not only with Noah and his family entering the ark, picturing the Rapture, but also with God’s

³ While Matt 24:36-44 also provides an *inclusio*, forming a larger unit, we will focus on this smaller unit, which will demonstrate our point.

global judgment of the world, picturing the coming Tribulation, the seventieth week of Daniel.⁴

While many dispensationalists believe there is a time gap between the Rapture of the church and the seven-year Tribulation, notice that Jesus links the two with one day—*that day*—and even a specific hour—*that...hour*. That means that both events described above—the Rapture of the church and the onset of the Tribulation—will occur on the same day and even within the same hour.

Furthermore, by going back to the description in Genesis 7 of Noah and his family entering the ark, here is what we see:

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened....On the very same day Noah and Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark [emphasis added] (Gen 7:11, 13).

Notice that the description of the beginning of the Flood cites a specific day: "In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, *on that day*..." (emphasis added)". Then note the day in which Noah and his family entered the ark: "*On the very same day* Noah and Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark (emphasis added)." *On the very same day* that the Flood came upon the world, Noah and his family entered the ark to be delivered from God's global judgment. The Flood began *the very day* they entered the ark.

I believe that at the very moment the seven-year treaty that initiates Daniel's seventieth week is confirmed, the Rapture will occur, catching many off guard like *a thief in the night*. Thus, as Jesus revealed, the

⁴ Of "the arrival of *the Day of the Lord*" in connection to "the coming of *a thief in the night*" in 2 Pet 3:10, Zane Hodges observed: "This concept can be traced back directly to our Lord's own eschatological teaching in the Olivet Discourse (Matt 24:36-44). When we compare the present verse [3:10] with v 4 ('the promise of His coming') and with v 9 ('His promise'), it is clear that the promised coming is synonymous with *the Day of the Lord*, since the latter fulfills the former. This is also evident in Matt 24:36-38 where the terminology 'that day and hour' is immediately defined as 'the coming of the Son of Man'" (*Second Peter: Shunning Error in Light of the Savior's Return* [Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2015], 108).

Rapture of the church and the initiation of the Tribulation will occur on the very same day—in fact, in the very same hour!

C. Judgment Concludes Following the Great White Throne Judgment

Peter prophesied that

...the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night,
in which the heavens will pass away with a great,
rushing noise, and the elements will melt with fervent
heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will
be burned down.

We dispensationalists typically think of *the day of the Lord* as a time frame of seven years called “the Tribulation” or “the seventieth week of Daniel.” However, Peter broadens the *day of the Lord* to include seven years plus one thousand years (the millennial kingdom). In fact, the culmination of God’s judgment upon the current universe follows the Great White Throne Judgment.

If we think of the Day of the Lord as God’s eschatological judgment upon the world, then Peter’s presentation makes sense. While it is true that God will pour out judgment upon the world during the seven-year Tribulation, His ultimate judgment upon the world will come when, following the Great White Throne Judgment, He destroys not just the earth, but the entire universe.

This timing makes sense when we understand that this concluding judgment is necessary to remove sin from the universe. This final judgment will occur following the fulfillment of the millennial kingdom. While the earth will be transformed during the millennium, sin will still exist in the millennial kingdom. Revelation 20:7-10 clearly states as much; it describes the rebellion of Gog and Magog—the final rebellion of mankind—that takes place at the end of the millennial kingdom, prior to the Great White Throne Judgment described in Rev 20:11-15.

At the Great White Throne, Jesus will judge every unbeliever from the history of mankind. While Revelation does not specifically mention sin in connection with this judgment, these unbelievers will die in

their sins (cf. John 8:24).⁵ Sin in the human condition will end with the dispositioning of these unbelievers to the lake of fire. However, there will still be the need to deal with sin's effects and consequences in the Creation, as Rom 8:20-22 points out. Therefore, following the judgment of sinful unbelievers, the Lord will dispose of all sin in all of Creation by destroying the present universe.⁶

D. Judgment Will Be Complete

Peter heightens the drama of God's final judgment by describing the way it unfolds. First, he discloses that both the earth and the heavens "will pass away"; their elements will be "burned down." Many dispensationalists believe that this judgment simply describes a *restoration* of the old earth and universe.⁷ However, in my book, *Unveiling Eternity*, I argue that *the restoration of the earth* refers to the changes on the planet that God will affect during the millennial kingdom.

However, in 2 Pet 3:10, Peter is describing how God will completely destroy the present universe and create a new one.⁸ The terms "will pass away" (Greek, *pareleusontai*) and "burned down" (*katakaēsetai*) lend evidence to this latter thought. BDAG gives the meaning of the Greek word translated "will pass away," as "come to an end, disappear."⁹ Regarding the Greek term translated "burned down," BDAG defines it as "consumed by fire."¹⁰

Peter reveals that the current, sin-corrupted universe will be destroyed with a *great, rushing noise*. Joseph B. Mayor points out that the underlying Greek word, *roizēdon*, "is especially used of the noise

⁵ Sin is not mentioned in the passage describing the Great White Throne Judgment because the destiny of unbelievers (that is, where they will spend eternity) is not due to their sin, but to their names not being found in the Book of Life.

⁶ Zane C. Hodges, *Romans: Deliverance from Wrath* (Corinth, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2013), 228.

⁷ See Randy Alcorn, *Heaven* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2004), 90-95.

⁸ John Claeys, *Unveiling Eternity: Discover Your Forever Future* (NP; 2024), 75-86; see also William R. Newell, *The Book of the Revelation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1935), 336; J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1980), 561; Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8–22: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 438-41; John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 333; and Hodges, *Second Peter*, 108-13.

⁹ Of *pareleusontai*, BDAG assigns the meaning "pass away, come to an end, disappear" (Walter Bauer; F. William Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich; and Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979], s.v. *parerchomai*, 626a).

¹⁰ Regarding *katakaēsetai*, BDAG defines it as "burn down, burn up, consume by fire" (s.v. *katakaiō*, 411a).

caused by a devouring flame.¹¹ This clearly fits the context in which “the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat.”

BDAG defines *roizēdon* in this way: “with a roar, with great suddenness.”¹² This word conveys two aspects of the destruction: intense noise and abruptness, in keeping with the “thief in the night” metaphor. This indicates that both the beginning and ending of the Day of the Lord are characterized by suddenness.

In his commentary on 2 Peter, Zane Hodges discussed theories of eminent physicists such as Stephen Hawking and Brian Greene who surmised that, as a result of the rapid expansion of primordial material from the Big Bang, there could “come a time when the expansion slows to a halt and then reverses itself, leading to a cosmic implosion.”¹³ Hodges believed that “the word *roizēdon* would then be a perfect word to express the sound of the rapid ‘intake’ of this powerful divine energy.”¹⁴ Physicist Brian Greene describes his understanding of this phenomenal “implosion” in this way:

Like the contents of a pressure cooker, as the shrinking universe compresses the galaxies together, the temperature dramatically increases, stars disintegrate and a hot plasma of matter’s elementary constituents is formed. As the fabric continues to shrink, the temperature rises unabated, as does the density of the primordial plasma.¹⁵

Of course, God does not need a shrinking universe to accomplish this. Just as He spoke the universe into existence by His powerful word, He will speak into destruction the current universe, burning it down with incredible sound and fury! Included in that annihilation will be all its elements, including those affected by sin. At the same time, the Lord will speak into being a new universe.

¹¹ Joseph B. Mayor, *The Epistles of Jude and II Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979), 157.

¹² BDAG, s.v. *roizēdon*, 737a. Mayor observes that *roizēdon* is an onomatopoeia, “expressing the whizzing sound produced by rapid motion through the air, as the flight of a bird or of an arrow, and is then used for the rushing movement itself or the accompanying crash or roar” (*The Epistles of Jude and II Peter* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979], 157).

¹³ Brian Greene, *The Elegant Universe* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 234.

¹⁴ Hodges, *Second Peter*, 112.

¹⁵ Greene, *The Elegant Universe*, 82.

III. THEREFORE, LIVE IN LIGHT OF THE NEW WORLD (2 PETER 3:11-13)

Since the present universe is transitory, the wise and perceptive Christian should not focus on the present “elements”—which include all that *this* world has to offer—but on the coming new and eternal universe.

A. Live with Holy Conduct and Godliness

Based on the revelation of the complete destruction of the present world, Peter provides us with this essential exhortation in vv 11-13:

Therefore, since all these things will be destroyed, what manner should you be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening [being zealous of] the coming of the day of God, because of [for the sake of which] the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Yet, we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness makes its home.

Because “all these things will be destroyed,” our life’s investment should be focused on the future. As Jesus instructed in Matt 6:19-20:

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Peter urges us to lay up for our future through “holy conduct and godliness.” In other words, our earthly conduct should match the environment of our eternal home.

B. Look for, and Be Zealous of, the Day of God

Holy and godly conduct is easier to maintain when we are “looking for and being zealous of the coming of the day of God.”

While translations, such as the NKJV, read: “looking for and *hastening* the coming day of God [emphasis added]”, *hastening* does not

seem to fit the idea or the context.¹⁶ It is difficult to see how we can “*hasten* the coming day of God” by our conduct.

BDAG offers a helpful alternative to that translation, providing a secondary definition of the Greek word *spseudo*: “be zealous, exert oneself, be industrious.”¹⁷ Hodges translated the word as “eagerly awaiting.”¹⁸ Therefore, we should not only be looking for the coming of the day of God but should be *eagerly awaiting* it; we should even be “zealous” for it. As we approach the day of God in that way, it will naturally shape our conduct to match where our heart is. As Jesus revealed, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt 6:21).

Earlier, Peter referred to the “Day of the Lord,” which refers to God’s pouring out His judgment upon a sinful world. The day of God, however, cannot be synonymous with that, for Scripture does not encourage us to be zealous for God’s judgment upon the world, nor would placing our affections on that period necessarily formulate holy conduct and godliness. Instead, I agree with Hodges that the day of God refers to the time when God becomes all in all.¹⁹

There is another strong clue indicating that this meaning is correct. In the Greek text of this passage, v 12 begins with the participle *prosdokōntas*, which, in its verb form, means “wait for, look for, expect in hope.”²⁰ The verb form of this word (*prosdokoō*) appears in the very next verse (v 13), in which we are exhorted to *look for* “new heavens and a new earth.” Therefore, we are to look for (in expectation of) the day of God (v 12); Peter then reiterates this by urging us to look for new heavens and a new earth. Thus, the day of God is synonymous with the new heavens and a new earth.²¹

¹⁶ Zane Hodges agrees with this assessment: “The word *hastening* is not the best translation. In this context the Greek means *eagerly awaiting* (cf. Acts 20:16).” (Zane C. Hodges, “The Second Epistle of Peter,” in *The Grace New Testament Commentary*, ed. Robert Wilkin [Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2010], 1187).

¹⁷ BDAG, s.v. *spseudō*, 762c. J. N. D. Kelly sees that “earnestly desiring,” or something equivalent could feasibly be the meaning in this context, though he prefers “hastening” (*A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981], 367). Kenneth O. Gangel comments that it is toward “a new heaven and a new earth [which] is what believers are looking forward to (cf. vv. 12, 14), not to the earth’s destruction” (“2 Peter,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament Edition*, eds. John F. Walvoord and Roy Zuck [Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983], 877).

¹⁸ Hodges, “The Second Epistle of Peter,” 1187.

¹⁹ Hodges, *Second Peter*, 118-19.

²⁰ BDAG s.v. *prosdakoō*, 712c.

²¹ In other words, we have synonymous parallelism in vv 12 and 13, demonstrated by the same word (*prosdokoō*).

As the apostle Paul pointed out, after Jesus returns to the earth, “He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet” (1 Cor 15:25). Following His millennial reign, “then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power” (1 Cor 15:24). That is the day of God.²²

It is *for the sake of* the day of God that “the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat.”²³ The Greek text uses a preposition (*dia*) that can be translated *on account of, because of, or for the sake of*.²⁴ It is because of (“for the sake of”) the coming day of God—which brings in new heavens and a new earth where righteousness dwells—that the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat. The old must be destroyed so that the new, eternal age can be born.

IV. CONCLUSION

Therefore,

...we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness makes its home (2 Pet 3:13).

For the first time since the fall of Adam and Eve, the (new) universe will contain no vestige of sin. At that time,

God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away (Rev 21:4).

This quality of righteousness should be our focus; we should make our time in this present world an investment in our real home, the new heavens and new earth. We should make that investment by taking on the very characteristics of righteousness that will imbue our true, and eternal, home.

²² Hodges, *Second Peter*, 118-19.

²³ Kelly chooses the translation “because of” here (*A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude*), 352.

²⁴ BDAG s.v. *dia*, 181a.

PREPARING TO HAVE A LAVISH KINGDOM ENTRANCE (PART 1)¹

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I. INTRODUCTION

As Christians, we look forward to being with Jesus, entering the kingdom of God, and spending eternity on the new earth. These are promised to all believers, but *how* we experience them will depend upon how we respond to God's commands.

In his second letter, Peter talks about what is required for a believer to experience a rich or lavish entrance into the eternal kingdom. Second Peter 1:11 says, "For in this way the *entrance* into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be *abundantly supplied* to you (emphasis added)."² Although this description is brief, it sounds glorious!

As believers, we know our eternal salvation is secure. Yet God desires to do so much more in and through us. Peter wants us to know that we are *called* and *chosen*. But what do these terms mean, and why does it matter?

In terms of having a rich entrance into the kingdom, Peter describes what is required and clarifies that believers are called to grow and chosen to serve, resulting in a useful and productive life, now and forever.

II. GOD WANTS BELIEVERS TO EXPERIENCE HIS GRACE AND PEACE (2 PETER 1:1-2)

A. Second Peter Is Written to Believers Who Already Have Eternal Life (1:1)

To fully appreciate the message of 2 Peter, it is essential that we know to whom the letter was addressed. Peter makes it clear that he

¹ Lord willing, the conclusion of this article will appear in the Fall 2025 *JOTGES*.

² The *New American Standard Bible*, 2020 edition, will be used in this article, unless otherwise noted.

is writing to believers: To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ” (1:1b). “Of the same kind” is translated from a single Greek word, *isotimos*, which means “pertaining to that which is of equal significance or value.”³ The NIV reads “as precious as,” and the ESV translates it as “of equal standing.” The phrase “as ours” refers to Peter and the apostles.

In v 5, Peter also speaks of “your faith.” This is the faith that the letter’s recipients have and confirms that they are believers. Furthermore, in v 10, he calls them “brethren” (some versions translate “brothers and sisters,” indicating that they are fellow members of the family of God. Therefore, Peter is writing to fellow believers who have eternal life.

B. Peter Desires Grace and Peace to Be Their Experience (1:2a)

Peter begins v 2 with a blessing, “Grace and peace be multiplied to you.” The Greek word *multiplied* is in the optative mood, meaning that it is used “to express an *obtainable wish* or a *prayer*.”⁴ Peter desires that these believers, who were “scattered throughout...Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1 Pet 1:1; 2 Pet 3:1), increasingly experience God’s favor and kindness in their lives. This includes calmness, both internally (Phil 4:6-7) and relationally (Col 3:15). God desires these for His children.

C. We Experience Grace and Peace by Knowing Jesus Intimately (1:2b)

The “grace and peace” mentioned in 2 Peter have a specific source—“in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” The Greek phrase “*in the knowledge of God*” is mirrored in Paul’s letter to the believers in Ephesus: “in the knowledge of Him” (Eph 1:17). Regarding this phrase, Hoehner commented in 2002:

In the present context [Eph. 1:17], the believer is to come to know Him intimately, and as a result, the believer will become acquainted with God’s actions described in the following verses [1:18-19]. Hence,

³ Johannes Louw & Eugene Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament - Based on Semantic Domains*, 58.34 s.v. *isotimos*. (Print edition: United Bible Society, 1989). Accessed in Accordance Bible Software.

⁴ Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 481. Italics in the original.

not facts about God are most important, but *knowing him personally and intimately*.⁵

Peter's prayer and wish⁶ for these believers is that they experientially know⁷ God and Jesus more intimately, with the result that His favor and peace are multiplied in their life experience.

III. GOD HAS PROVIDED EVERYTHING BELIEVERS NEED TO LIVE A GODLY LIFE (2 PETER 1:3)

A. God Has Given Us Everything We Need for Christian Living (1:3a)

Peter helps us understand God's provision for living a godly life by stating a pivotal truth: "For His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness." God's power has granted (given) to us (Peter and his readers) everything pertaining to life and godliness. The word *everything* indicates that nothing is lacking.

The order in which this is written is important. It says, "God's power has granted to us *everything* we need," not "God has granted to us *His power* for everything we need." Although some will argue that *everything* includes divine power, the passage does not specify what is included. Verse 4 provides additional information. God has given us His full provision to live for Him.

Zane Hodges commented, "As born-again believers, we have *all that we could possibly need* to live a godly life."⁸

The Greek *doreomai*, meaning "to grant," is found three times in the NT⁹ and conveys the idea of giving with "greater formality."¹⁰ The

⁵ Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 259.

⁶ "The *praescriptio* of the letter concludes with a greeting in the form of a *wish-prayer*" [emphasis added]. Gene Green, *Jude & 2 Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), 175.

⁷ "Peter has no difficulty using *gnosis* in a good sense [2 Pet 1:5–6; 3:18] and applying *epignosis experientially*, i.e., with ref. to the believer's knowledge of God/Christ [1:2–3, 8; 2:20]." *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), s.v. *gnosis*, 586.

⁸ Zane Hodges, *Second Peter: Shunning Error in Light of the Savior's Return* (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2015), 18. Italics added.

⁹ It is found in the next verse (2 Pet 1:4) and in Mark 15:45, "And ascertaining this from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph." The more common word *to give (didomi)* is found 415 times in the NT, but is not used in 2 Pet 1:3–4. It is found one time in 2 Pet 3:15.

¹⁰ Louw & Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 57.83, s.v. *doreomai*, "To give an object or benefit to someone, with the probable implication of greater formality than in the case of *didomi*."

words *has granted* can be understood as “has formally presented”; this points to the importance of what God has given. The Greek is in the perfect tense, describing “an event that, completed in the past, has results existing in the present time (i.e., in relation to the speaker’s time).”¹¹ Peter says that God has formally presented believers *everything* needed, and what He gave remains in place today. Therefore, believers have everything they need from God to live a godly life.

The implication is significant: We do not need to search for and chase after some secret, key, or power to find a quick and easy way to live for Jesus. It does not exist.

B. The *Everything* God Has Given Is Available Through Intimately Knowing Jesus (1:3b)

The second part of v 3 is important: “For His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, *through the true knowledge of Him...* (emphasis added).” The means or avenue through which believers benefit from *everything* God has given us is “through the true knowledge of Him.”

Knowledge is a significant word for Peter. Some form of *know* is found seventeen times in 2 Peter,¹² including five times in 2 Peter 1:1-11. Two (1:5-6) are the Greek word *gnosis*, which generally refers to the knowledge and understanding of information. This word is usually translated as *knowledge*. In the other three occurrences (1:2, 3, 8), the Greek preposition *epi* is added as a prefix to *gnosis*, resulting in *epignosis*. The preposition *epi* intensifies and deepens the knowledge. This is sometimes translated as *true knowledge* (or simply “knowledge” in 1:2). All three times that *epignosis* (“true knowledge”) appears in these verses, it is followed by *God*, *Jesus*, or both. Therefore, *true knowledge* points to a more profound, experiential knowledge of Jesus. Knowing Jesus better is the essence of spiritual growth.

In v 2, the “grace and peace of God” are multiplied to us by knowing (*epignosis*) Jesus in our experience, and we see the importance of this again in v 3. The *everything* that God has given believers in order to live a godly life comes to fruition when they know Jesus intimately.

¹¹ Wallace, *Grammar*, 573.

¹² 2 Peter 1:2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 12, 14, 16, 20; 2:9, 12, 20, 21(2x); 3:3, 17, 18.

C. Believers Are Invited and Summoned to Know Jesus Well (1:3c)

God has given believers everything they need in order to live a godly life and has “*called* us by His own glory and excellence.” The word *called* is often misunderstood. The English word *call* (or *called*/*calling*) is found 255 times in the NT. This word is used in a variety of ways, including:

- Requested to come to something, invited (“Now Jesus *called* His disciples to Him...” Matt 15:32).
- Invited to believe in Jesus for eternal life (“God is faithful, through whom you were *called* into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” 1 Cor 1:9).
- To cry out for help or deliverance (“For ‘everyone who *calls* on the name of the Lord will be saved” Rom 10:13).
- Commissioned for a task (“Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, *called* as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God...” Rom 1:1).
- Named (“...but he shall be *called* John” Luke 1:60).
- Described (“...that we would be *called* children of God” 1 John 3:1).
- Summoned to something specific (“For you were *called* to freedom, brothers and sisters” Gal 5:13. “For God has not *called* us for impurity, but in sanctification” 1 Thess 4:7; and “I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward *call* of God in Christ Jesus” Phil 3:14).

(Emphasis added in each reference.)

We must look at the context in order to understand Peter’s use of the word *call* in 2 Pet 1:3. Peter desires that these believers experience God’s favor and peace (1:2a) through experientially knowing Jesus better (1:2b). He goes on to say that God has given believers everything (1:3) they need to live a godly life. These first three verses focus on believers’ 1) experiencing grace and peace and 2) living a godly life by knowing Jesus more intimately.

Second Peter focuses on growing spiritually—from the beginning of the book (1:1-11) to the final command to “grow” in the last verse (3:18). What Peter is *calling* believers to at the beginning of the letter is *commanded* at the end of the letter.

Call is best understood as “a summons to believers to grow spiritually through knowing Jesus intimately.” This calling is important, and Peter will return to the word *call* in v 10.

D. God’s Invitation to Godly Living Is an Expression of His Character (1:3d)

At the end of v 3, Jesus “called” Christians “by His own glory and excellence.” “His own glory and excellence” describes Jesus (see 2:20). This call from God is accomplished by His attributes of *glory and excellence*. Another way to say it is that God’s calling to know Jesus well is an “expression of His *glory and virtue*.”¹³

E. What Does It Look Like When a Believer Is Developing Experiential Knowledge of Jesus?

Brittney is a Christian, and in this example of her typical workday, she experiences closeness to Jesus.¹⁴ Each day, she wakes up thinking about pleasing Jesus. She thanks Jesus for the good things in her life and asks Him to use her.

On her way to work, riding the light rail, she reads her Bible. The Bible guides her life and thinking. Although Brittney does not legalistically have a “quiet time” every day, she makes a point to recall, recite, and meditate on important verses in order to live them out. Although she works for a non-Christian boss, she does her work well “for the Lord.” She is alert to opportunities to talk with co-workers about Jesus, but she is careful—the company does not pay her to “talk about religion” during her workday. She guards her mouth from complaining and criticizing.

Brittney does not spend all her time and energy thinking about Jesus and praying; rather, she concentrates on her work and seeks to do

¹³ Hodges, *Second Peter*, 19. Italics in the original.

¹⁴ Unfortunately, in order to make this example concrete, it has to describe a specific social, marital, religious, and economic context. In this case, the woman can be described as a middle-class, married woman in a suburb of a first-world country that is at least tolerant of Christians. There are many other situations that could also be used to illustrate *experiential knowledge of Jesus* in daily life.

it well. When things get tense and stressful, she prays and trusts that Jesus will get her through it. When she gets frustrated or intentionally sins, she pauses and then runs toward Jesus—not away from Him—thankful again for His forgiveness. At night, she talks with her husband and family about her day and the good things God did. Before falling asleep, she thanks Jesus for His kindness and goodness to her and her family.

Brittney is experiencing Jesus a little bit more every day.

Although your life may not currently match Brittney's, these are the kinds of things that characterize someone who is seeking to know Jesus more intimately every day. Start where you are spiritually; if you have not already, choose to make some of these attitudes and perspectives part of your daily life.

Peter continues his letter by explaining how believers can become partners with God by reflecting His divine nature.

IV. GOD HAS PROVIDED PROMISES TO ENABLE BELIEVERS TO BECOME GODLY (2 PETER 1:4)

A. By God's Glory and Excellence, He Has Given Extraordinary Promises (1:4a)

The good news of v 3 gets even better in v 4, which begins with the phrase, "Through these," referring to God's "glory and excellence." From God's character of light and goodness, "He *has granted* to us His precious and magnificent promises (emphasis added)" (1:4a). The Greek *has granted* is repeated here and has the same meaning that it did in v 3: "to give formally." God has formally presented to believers promises that are still valid today.

The promises are precious because they are valuable and have great worth.¹⁵ They are magnificent because they are extraordinary, such as the promise of Christ's return (3:4, 9, 13).¹⁶ Simply put, God's promises are beyond compare because they come from God. Who else can make promises like these? God's promises are completely trustworthy.

¹⁵ Green, *Jude & 2 Peter*, 185.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

B. What Are the Promises to Which Peter Refers? (1:4a)

In 2 Peter 3, the word *promise* is used three times, each referencing the promise of Christ's return that is ultimately followed by new heavens and a new earth:

- 2 Pet 3:4: "Where is the *promise* of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation."
- 2 Pet 3:9: "The Lord is not slow about His *promise*, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."
- 2 Pet 3:13: "But according to His *promise* we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells."
(Emphasis added in each reference.)

The *promises* (plural) in v 4 certainly include the *promise* (singular) found in 2 Peter 3 concerning Christ's return. This is the ultimate promise of our final destination, which should give us perspective on all of life. But because *promises* is plural in v 4, it points to more than one promise; it includes promises outside 2 Peter. The Greek word *promise* has a range of meanings, including "announcement," "profess," and "promise."¹⁷ This means that God's statements ("announcements") can be considered promises because they are true, and God will deliver on them if they are legitimately applicable to us today.

Within 2 Pet 1:1-11, we find at least two statements that should be considered promises. In v 3, God has "granted to us everything" we need to live a godly life. Then, v 11 says that God will provide for certain believers an "abundantly supplied" entrance into the eternal kingdom. These verses present important truths that function as promises for Christians today.

Other statements in the Bible can also be viewed as promises. For example, Paul writes to Timothy, "For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline" (2 Tim 1:7). Timothy was Paul's apostolic representative in Ephesus, and as a younger man (1 Tim 4:12), he may have lacked confidence. Paul encourages him

¹⁷ S.v. *epangelia*, G2039, *NIDNTT*, vol. 2, 230.

and reminds him of what God has done for believers. This truth can function as a promise when applied to our lives.

C. How Do the Promises in 2 Peter 1:4 Relate to the *Everything* in Verse 3? (1:3-4)

The similar sentence structures in vv 3 and 4 are diagrammed below:

1:3 “His divine power
 has granted to us
 everything pertaining to life and godliness”

1:4 “He
 has granted to us
 His precious and magnificent promises”

What is the relationship between the direct objects of the two phrases? Are the *promises* referring to everything we need? Probably not. The word *everything* is more general and broader than *promises*, which is specific. At a minimum, the promises are part of the *everything we need*. However, there is no indication from the passage that the promises represent the entirety of *everything we need*.

What does “everything we need” refer to? Answer: The Bible (i.e., God’s revelation). Promises are part of that revelation from God, but not all of it. Paul argues for the complete sufficiency of God’s Word in his first letter to Timothy: “All Scripture is inspired by God and beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man [or woman] of God may be fully capable, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17). God has revealed and preserved in the Bible everything a believer needs to live a godly life.

D. The Purpose of the Promises Is for Believers to Become Partners with God by Reflecting His Nature (1:4b)

Second Peter 1:4 unveils a profound purpose for God’s promises—participation in the divine nature: “Through these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, *so that* by them you may become partakers of [the] divine nature...” The purpose (“so that”)¹⁸ of these promises is that the readers (you) *become partakers of the divine*

¹⁸ Wallace suggests in 2 Pet 1:4 that the *hina* with the subjunctive verb, *become*, is a “possible instance” of “Purpose-Result hena Clause” (Wallace, *Grammar*, 473-74). It seems better to take this *hina*-subjunctive combination as indicating only purpose because the “*intention* of the action of the main verb” (Wallace, 472), *become* has as its goal “partakers of the divine nature.”

nature. The Greek word *partakers*, found ten times in the NT, means “one who takes part in something with someone, companion, partner, sharer.”¹⁹

This phrase has generated discussion about whether a person shares in God’s very essence and becomes immortal and incorruptible, or if the focus is on moral transformation, sharing in God’s holy character. The *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (NIDNTT) concludes, “This last option would seem to be supported by the strong ethical focus of the context (1:3-9).”²⁰ The word *partakers* indicates what happens when a believer bases his or her thinking, faith, actions, and hope on what God has promised, thereby becoming a closer partner with God and reflecting His character.

The next phrase, “having escaped the corruption that is in the world on account of lust” (1:4c), raises the question of when *did* or when *does* this happen? If this happened previously, such as when someone first believed in Jesus for eternal life, then it would be true now. However, most believers do not claim the full truth of this phrase in their current lives; struggling with lust, understood broadly, is a common experience.

Another option is to view “having escaped” (an aorist aspect participle) as contemporaneous to “becoming partakers” (an aorist aspect subjunctive verb).²¹ In this way, as a person moves toward becoming more like Jesus, there is a corresponding result of being freed from the world’s corruption. This appears to best fit the context—just before Peter commands believers to supply, or add, seven virtues to the faith they already possess.

One of the benefits of becoming more like Christ is the freedom believers have from the world’s corruption, even if it is sourced in our fleshly desires.²² Hodges summarizes it well: “Peter affirms that these valuable promises are how (‘through these’) we can be sharers (‘partakers’) of God’s nature and can escape the lust-driven corruption of the world around us.”²³

¹⁹ BDAG, s.v. *koinonos*. Accessed in Accordance.

²⁰ NIDNTT, s.v. *koivonos*, vol. 2, 712.

²¹ Wallace, talking about the time aspect of a participle, says, “But if the main verb is also aorist, this participle *may* indicate contemporaneous time.” In footnote 2 on the same page he observes, “the aorist participle is more frequently contemporaneous in the epistles than in narrative literature.” Wallace, *Grammar*, 614. **Become partakers** is the purpose, resulting in **having escaped**.

²² NASB20 *Greek Dictionary*, 1939. *Epithumia*, 1937; *desire*, *longing*, *lust*, *coveting*. Translated with these English words: *coveting* (2), *desire* (4), *desires* (7), *eagerly* (1), *impulses* (1), *long for* (1), *lust* (5), *lustful* (1), *lusts* (15), *passion* (1).

²³ Hodges, *Second Peter*, 19.

V. THE FIRST COMMAND: ADD THESE VIRTUES TO YOUR FAITH (2 PETER 1:5-7)

A. Believers Are Commanded to Add Virtues to Their Faith (1:5a)

“Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith *supply*... (1:5). By starting with, “Now for this very reason,” Peter is pointing us back to what God has done in vv 3-4: God *granted* everything believers need for godly living, and He granted believers His valuable promises. Based on these provisions, it stands to reason that in response, and “applying all diligence,” believers should strive to grow in their spiritual life by “supplying” to their faith the seven virtues that follow (1:5b-7). The importance of growing spiritually is emphasized by the word *supply*. The Greek word, *epixorageo*, is an active command, meaning that spiritual growth requires deliberate effort on the believer’s part. A believer can choose to obey or disobey. Some believers will supply these things, and some will not.

The meaning of *supply* is “to provide something in addition to what already exists—‘to add.’”²⁴ These virtues are not simply found, picked up, and then added to a believer’s life, as if he were a character in a video game. The person has to actively work to add them.

Because the readers of Peter’s letter have faith, their foundation is already in place and is solid. Believers construct their lives on top of their existing faith by adding or building *with* these seven virtues. Paul uses a similar image of believers building on the foundation of Christ in 1 Cor 3:10-15.

The phrase “applying all diligence” (1:5) is an idiom that means “to do your very best.”²⁵ The participle *applying* is used as an imperative.²⁶ Believers are to apply all diligence. The word *diligent* (*spoudazo*) means

²⁴ Louw & Nida, 59.74.

²⁵ Ibid., 68.64, *spoudan pasan pareisthero*: (an idiom, literally ‘to bring every effort to’) to do one’s very best in attempting to do something — ‘to do one’s best, to make every effort to, to try as hard as possible.’

²⁶ In Matt 28:19-20, the participle *go* (aorist aspect) precedes the main verb and takes on the mood of the main verb, *make disciples* (also aorist). Since *make disciples* is in the imperative mood, *go* functions as an imperative as well. Wallace, *Grammar*, 645. This is called an *attendant circumstance* use of the participle (Wallace, 640). The configuration is the same as here in v 5. The participle *applying* (aorist aspect) precedes the main verb, *supply* (aorist aspect), which is in the imperative mood. Therefore, *applying* takes on the mood of the main verb and functions as an imperative.

“earnestness”²⁷ and is found four times in 2 Peter. Three times, Peter instructs readers to be diligent (1:5, 10; 3:14), and in 1:15, he says, “and I will also be diligent.”

Work and effort are involved in adding these things to a believer’s faith. But what does “work and effort” look like? At a minimum, it consists of intentionally focusing on developing the seven virtues that follow. It would also include studying to understand these virtues and what they would look like in your life. This would then be followed by specific activities to improve in these areas and evaluation in order to determine progress or lack thereof. A believer does not attain these virtues without effort and work over time. God commands believers to put in the effort to add these virtues.

B. The Seven Virtues²⁸ Peter Commands Believers to Add to Their Faith (1:5b-7)

Peter identifies seven virtues that we as believers are to add to our faith: *moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love.*

This list is not meant to be exhaustive, but representative. The NT includes many other commands for believers that could be on this list. In other words, this is not *the* definitive list of virtues, but they are undoubtedly crucial for believers to develop.

In v 8, Peter comments on the importance of these virtues “increasing.” This means that they are not virtues we either have or do not have; rather, they are found to various degrees in various people.

1. The first virtue: *moral excellence* (1:5b)

Peter begins the list by instructing believers to add moral excellence to their foundation of faith. Jesus has this quality, as previously mentioned in v 3: ...“Him who called us by His own glory and *excellence*.” However, v 3 refers to Jesus’ excelling²⁹ in every aspect of His being, not just morally. Verse 5 focuses on believers’ living in a way that is morally pleasing to God. This excellence points to a higher standard than the

²⁷ William Mounce, *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), s.v. *diligence*, 182.

²⁸ The word *virtue* is a better word than *qualities* here. Qualities are broader, including both positive and negative characteristics. *Virtues* denotes morally good and desirable qualities that are pleasing to God.

²⁹ “1. the fact or state of excelling; superiority; eminence.” Dictionary.com. Accessed Mar 3, 2025.

world's and a higher standard than that of other believers who have not added this virtue to their lives.

It seems counterintuitive that Peter would start with moral excellence rather than knowledge. Knowledge of God's Word and standards could provide the starting point for what moral excellence looks like. Yet, in 1 Pet 2:1-2, moral instruction precedes the study of God's Word: "Therefore, *rid [yourselves]* of all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, and like newborn babies, *long for* the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation... (emphasis added)." There is no mistaking Peter's message: To study and learn from God's Word effectively, believers must first "clear the moral clutter off their desks," removing the obstacles that hinder spiritual growth.

One way to illustrate moral excellence is by comparing it to a compass. Believers must use their moral compass to navigate through the temptations and challenges of life. But this does not happen overnight. It takes practice.

Moral excellence includes honesty in financial dealings, integrity at work, sexual purity, and speaking the truth in love.

2. The second virtue: *knowledge* (1:5b-6a)

Believers are to add knowledge to their foundation of faith. Because the context is focused on believers' growing spiritually, this knowledge refers to what God has said. Our knowledge of God's Word is not automatic...it takes work. The Greek word for *knowledge* is *gnosis*, which is found three times in 2 Peter (twice here, once in 3:18) and focuses on knowing information. The other word translated *knowledge* in 2 Peter is *epignosis* (1:2, 3, 8; 2:20), which is focused on experiential, relational knowing, as discussed earlier.

For believers, knowledge is like a topographical map; they are to actively read, study, and interact with the Bible in order to understand God's values and gain an eternal perspective on life. The knowledge of God's Word is a lifelong journey. Adding knowledge can happen in different ways, such as regular and planned reading of the Bible, attending a Bible study group, or actively engaging in an adult Sunday School class.

3. The third virtue: *self-control* (1:6)

Believers are to add self-control to their foundation of faith. This virtue is seen to various degrees among believers. Some have a great deal of self-control, and others have less. Self-control is needed to master our thoughts, emotions, reactions, habits, spending, words, and other impulses that are not pleasing to God or helpful to others. Self-control is the implementation of what we have learned from the Bible. It means not being driven by or reacting with our emotions but rather doing what pleases Jesus. Improving self-control generally takes a great deal of trial and error. Bad habits often develop over decades, so they are not quickly corrected.

Improving self-control includes thinking carefully before speaking, being aware of one's desires, putting guardrails in place to prevent temptation, and working on areas where self-control is lacking (e.g., eating and spending money).

4. The fourth virtue: *perseverance* (1:6)

Believers are to add perseverance to their foundation of faith. We most often think of perseverance as being required when life is tough, and that is true—whether we are dealing with illnesses, unanswered prayers, difficult marriages, demanding children, financial struggles, difficult bosses, our dying bodies, etc.

But this virtue also plays a vital role in continuing positive daily habits, such as exercising and reading our Bible. In this sense, it is related to self-control. Seeking to do what is right is often met with challenges, and perseverance is required in order to push through those challenges.

In Greek, *perseverance* means “patient enduring.”³⁰ James 1:3 says, “knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance [i.e., *perseverance*]” Romans 5:3-4 says something similar: “knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope...”

On the positive side, 1 Thess 1:3 speaks of the perseverance of hope in Jesus: “constantly keeping in mind your work of faith and labor of love and perseverance of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ...” This is the

³⁰ The NASB 2020 Greek Dictionary says this word translated *perseverance*, means, “a remaining behind, a patient enduring” and is translated three different ways in the NASB: *endurance* (7), *patient enduring* (1), *perseverance* (24). Accessed in Accordance.

future focus Peter addresses in 2 Peter 3. Believers are to continuously look forward to (i.e., persevere in our belief in) the return of Christ.

Imagine that you are ascending a steep hill. Without additional effort and perseverance, you might never reach the top. Believers must persevere through difficult things because God uses our hardships to produce positive results.

Perseverance is developed through challenges (Jas 1:3), but challenges rarely go away quickly. Frequently, what we learn and gain from hard times is not fully realized until after the trial is finished.

Along these lines, it is important to shift from a temporal to an eternal perspective on life (2 Corinthians 4–5). God’s perspective includes more than meets the eye: “Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer person is decaying, yet our inner [person] is being renewed day by day” (2 Cor 4:16).

Serving Jesus is not a waste of time and energy. First Corinthians 15:58 says, “Therefore, my beloved brothers [and sisters], be firm, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not [in] vain in the Lord.” This is relevant to teaching and proclaiming the Free Grace Message of Life. We are in the minority and face opposition, requiring patience.

This focus on Jesus is evident in Heb 12:1-3: “...let’s run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking only at Jesus, the originator and perfecter of the faith...For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

5. The fifth virtue: *godliness* (1:6b-7a)

Believers are to add godliness to their foundation of faith. When we think of godliness, we think of someone dedicated to living for Jesus. This virtue is marked by piety or devotion to God. Verse 3 uses this same word: “...His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and *godliness*.” Yet we must *add* godliness to our faith—it does not just happen.

Reverence, trust, and obedience are hallmarks of godliness. People who exhibit godliness bring a certain calmness to situations, especially in the midst of hardship. God is in charge, so these people can rest in Him, and they seek to serve others.

Growing in godliness includes spending time in the Bible, focusing on what pleases Jesus, reflecting on life to see God's involvement, and praying throughout the day as you live, work, and play.

6. The sixth virtue: *brotherly kindness* (1:7)

Believers are to add *brotherly kindness* to their foundation of faith. This centers on loving and caring about fellow believers in practical ways, ranging from material support to emotional encouragement. It is about not only being pleasant but also being actively helpful. The Greek word is *philadelphia*, which literally means "brotherly love." Brotherly kindness is demonstrated when someone cares enough to get involved.

Examples of brotherly kindness include the "one another" commands,³¹ providing a meal for family when someone is sick, and intentionally asking how someone is doing. People feel valued and encouraged when someone pays attention and listens. This type of love is directed primarily toward fellow Christians. The *love* talked about next is broader.

7. The seventh virtue: *love* (1:7)

Believers are to add love to their foundation of faith. This is a different love from *brotherly kindness*. This is not a romantic emotion. This virtue is self-giving, committed, and other-oriented, and it extends to believers and nonbelievers. It is the well-known Greek word *agape*, which is found 116 times in the NT. When John 3:16 says that God "*loved* the world," the verb form of this word is used. A working definition for *love* from John 3:16 could be "doing God's best for another." God did something: He gave. He gave what mankind needed, not what it would have asked for. God gave His best—His "one and only Son." Jesus hanging on the cross is the ultimate representation of *love*.

Richard Bauckham says, "In 2 Peter, love, as the crowning virtue, encompasses all the others."³² Finishing the list with *love* is not only the "top of the list," but also the motivation and guiding principle behind the other six virtues. Jesus said, "I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (John 13:34). This list ends with *love* because of its importance.

³¹ <https://www.watermark.org/blog/the-one-anothers-of-scripture>. Accessed Feb 20, 2024.

³² Richard Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1983), 187.

Some examples of love would be:

- engaging in actions that benefit others, not yourself.
- doing something for someone that costs you time, money, or convenience.
- performing secret acts of kindness that help meet someone else's needs.

When we put love into action, it is doing God's best for another. Gene Green explains, "Love is a 'cognitive emotion' that places the welfare of the other in the first place. Love is not passive, as Paul notes, love labors (1 Thess 1:3), actively seeking to benefit others (1 Thess 4:10)."³³

C. The Order of the List and the Relationship of the Virtues

Is there any significance to the order of the list? Some progression and building of the virtues are taking place. The list starts with moral virtue and ends with love. One might expect there to be a moral focus throughout, ending in flawless perfection—often based on a misinterpretation of Matt 5:48.³⁴ Here, Peter goes from *living right* to *loving right*, which makes sense in light of Jesus' summary of the OT: to love God and love your neighbor.³⁵ To love God and others well necessitates living a godly life (moral excellence and godliness) directed by the Bible (knowledge) with continuous effort (self-control and perseverance). These are required in order to love well (brotherly kindness and love). These virtues build on one another and are related in various ways, so they can be worked on simultaneously.

³³ Green, *Jude & 2 Peter*, 196.

³⁴ The context of Matt 5:48 is Jesus' teaching concerning love. Believers who are living kingdom values should love completely as God does, which includes loving one's enemies. Michael Vanlaningham comments on Matt 5:48, "Perfect might be translated better as 'mature.' Jesus expects His followers to show the same kind of mature love for everyone, those who are pleasant and difficult, as God shows to them, especially by joyfully meeting their daily needs." (*The Moody Bible Commentary* [Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014], 1463.) Jesus is teaching about mature or complete love, not flawless moral perfection. This is the kind of love that is discussed here in 2 Pet 1:7.

³⁵ Matthew 22:37-38, Mark 12:30-31, and Luke 10:27.

HOW TO LONG FOR THE PURE MILK OF THE WORD 1 PETER 2:1-3

ROBERT WILKIN

I. INTRODUCTION

My second campus director with Campus Crusade for Christ warned me about the danger of loving the Bible. He said that we are to love God, not the Bible. To love the Bible, he said, was to worship it, not God.

What do you think about his warning? Do you agree or disagree?

Many passages in Scripture address what our attitude toward God's Word should be.¹ One of those passages is 1 Pet 2:1-3.

First Peter was written around AD 64, probably from Rome (see 1 Pet 5:13).

Peter was writing to Jewish believers who were pilgrims or sojourners. The Greek of 1 Pet 2:1 indicates they were *chosen sojourners*, not "elect according to foreknowledge," as most English translations read. The Greek *eklektois* is found in v 1 immediately before *parepidēmois*, "sojourners." Verse 1 should be translated as, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the chosen sojourners/pilgrims of the diaspora/dispersion..." (author's translation). That is, these Jewish believers had been dispersed from their homelands by God's choice.

II. PREPARE YOURSELF TO RECEIVE GOD'S WORD BY LAYING ASIDE THOSE THINGS THAT WOULD HINDER RECEPTION (1 PETER 2:1)

Before we can do what Peter commands in v 2, we must wear the proper spiritual clothing.

Peter is discussing preparing ourselves to receive God's Word each week.

¹ For example, nearly every one of the 176 verses in Psalm 119 talks about God's Word. See also Matt 24:35; Eph 6:17; Col 3:16; 1 Thess 2:13; 2 Thess 3:1; 2 Tim 3:16; 4:2; Heb 4:12; 1 Pet 2:23-25.

To be prepared to receive God's Word, believers must lay aside those things that would hinder them from desiring and receiving God's Word.

We are to lay aside "all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking." Peter is not giving a complete list.

These sins affect the local church. Peter knows that turmoil in a local church hinders the people caught up in it from desiring the pure milk of the Word.

These attitudes and actions look both back and forward. They look back to the command to love one another (1:22) and forward to the command to desire the pure milk of the word that we may grow thereby (2:2).

These sinful attitudes and actions hinder us from loving one another and taking in God's Word.

Grudem says,

Peter implies that 'putting away' unloving practices (v. 1) is necessary for spiritual growth (v. 2). Someone who is practising [sic] 'deceit' or 'envy' or 'slander' will not be able truly to long for 'pure spiritual milk.'²

Best points out "that the ability to receive spiritual nourishment... and the sharing of fellowship with other Christians are interdependent"³ (p. 97).

Hodges commented on the clothing metaphor that Peter uses in v 1:

2:1. The phrase **laying aside then** draws a logical conclusion from the preceding. If love is the true goal of the purified soul—love which is steadfast and enduring like God's Word—we must put away all that is inconsistent with it. The verb *laying aside* (*apotithēmi*) was often used literally of taking off clothes. The well-dressed Christian does not wear **malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, or slander**. These things went out of fashion when we were born again. They are hopelessly out of style. Are we spiritually stylish Christians? Do

² Wayne Grudem, *1 Peter*, Tyndale Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 94.

³ Ernest Best, *1 Peter*, The New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 97.

we wear the new clothing of a new life, or the filthy rags of a bygone day?⁴

For the first fifteen centuries of church history, few people had even a single book of the Bible in their homes. They only received the Word at church on Sundays.

Even today, our spiritual nourishment should come primarily from the messages we hear in our local churches.

Kelly comments,

If distinctions are to be drawn, **wickedness** (*kakia*: an all-inclusive term) and **deceit** stand for general attitudes disruptive of community life, while the remaining three words are plurals denoting the practical expressions of hypocrisy, envy and slanderous backbiting.⁵

Grudem says, “All these sins aim at harming other people, whereas love seeks the good of others.”⁶

We are to love, honor, and cherish God’s Word. We need it to grow.

III. DESIRE THE PURE MILK OF THE WORD (1 PETER 2:2A)

Babies love mother’s milk. When a baby is hungry, it will make its strong desire known.

We are to hunger for God’s Word just as a baby craves milk.

Milk is physical nourishment. God’s Word is spiritual nourishment.

Babies grow by taking in milk. Christians grow by taking in God’s Word.

Peter does not use the word *milk* to refer only to the basic, elementary teachings of God’s Word. In 1 Cor 3:2, Paul speaks of the milk of the Word and the solid food of the Word, using *milk* to refer to the food baby Christians eat. The author of Hebrews makes the same distinction in Heb 5:12-14:

...you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come

⁴ Zane C. Hodges, *1-2 Peter & Jude*, Grace in Focus Commentary Series (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2024), 29.

⁵ J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude*, Thornapple Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1969), 83.

⁶ Grudem, *1 Peter*, 94.

to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their sense exercised to discern both good and evil.

Peter, however, uses *milk* to refer to all the teachings in God's Word. His point concerns the strong desire we should have to take in God's Word. He is not suggesting that his readers are young believers or that they receive only basic teaching.

The start of v 2 is variously translated as "pure spiritual milk" (NIV, NET, HCSB, ESV, LEB), "sincere milk of the word" (KJV), or "pure milk of the word" (NKJV, NASB, MEV).

Hodges gave an outstanding explanation of that phrase:

The major problem in the phrase **the sincere milk of the word** revolves around the significance of word (*logikon*). The basic significance of the word involves several facts. First, it is a reference to what pertains to the rational faculty of man...Second, it is a reference to what is spiritual, that is, not literal...Third, its nearness in context to a discussion of God's Word indicates this is doubtless what Peter had in mind (cf. 1 Pet 1:23). These various meanings are not mutually exclusive. God's Word is a kind of spiritual and non-literal milk which feeds man on the level of his mental and rational faculties. So perhaps the best way to render this phrase would be "the spiritual milk of the Word" (*1-2 Peter & Jude*, p. 29).

When we hear God's Word taught, do we have a strong desire to hear and receive it?

Do we expect our minds to be renewed by the teaching of God's Word? Do we understand that our actions will be transformed when our minds are right?

The preacher's job is to prepare the spiritual meal.

The listener's job is to prepare himself for that meal. He should be coming to church with great anticipation.

Sometimes that's hard, isn't it?

We can be sick or tired. We can be distracted by family issues, financial concerns, weather, and so much more.

Everyone, preachers included, needs to desire the pure milk of the Word.

Sanctification requires that we love, honor, and cherish God's Word.

Peter explains what happens when you hungrily partake of God's Word.

IV. THAT YOU MAY GROW THEREBY (1 PETER 2:2B)

If a Christian feeds on God's Word, he will grow.

If a Christian does not feed on God's Word, he will not grow.

Growth for the Christian comes by taking in God's Word.

In Rom 12:2, Paul wrote, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed *by the renewing of your mind...*"

The Word of God renews the mind, as Paul said in 2 Cor 3:18:

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror [=God's Word] the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

To be spiritually mature, we must have what Paul calls "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor 2:16). If we think the way Christ thinks, we can act the way Christ acts.

Translations of 1 Pet 2:2 that follow the Critical Text add the words *for salvation* after *so that you may grow by it* (HCSB, NASB, ESV, LEB). They suggest that one must grow in order to be saved from eternal condemnation.

Schreiner writes:

Spiritual growth is necessary for eschatological salvation. Understanding "salvation" as an end-time reality fits with 1:5 and 1:9, as we argued in the commentary on those verses. Some commentators, however, make the mistake of saying that Peter referred to end-time salvation rather than spiritual maturity. This is a false dichotomy. Peter's point is that spiritual growth is necessary for eschatological salvation. The evidence

that one has been begotten by the Father through the word is that believers continue to long for that word and become increasingly mature. Such a view fits well, incidentally, with the argument of 2 Pet 1:5-11.⁷

If by *eschatological salvation* he meant ruling with Christ in the life to come, he would be correct. However, Schreiner means that one's eternal destiny depends on ongoing spiritual growth. That contradicts the promise of everlasting life. Once someone believes in Christ, he is secure forever (e.g., John 11:26). No spiritual growth is necessary to win everlasting life.

Dauids has the same understanding of 1 Pet 2:2:

The goal of their "growing up" (so fitting in a context of new birth and babies) is salvation. Salvation is not spoken of as something that they have already, but, as in 1:5, 9, they will receive the reward at the revelation of Christ. Likewise on the natural level birth is not the end of a process, with life being a static gift, but the beginning of a process of life culminating in full maturity, a concept also familiar in Paul (e.g., Rom. 5:9; 13:11; 1 Cor. 1:18).⁸

Salvation in 1 Peter concerns saving one's life in the sense of having the fullness of life now and in the life to come. It does not concern one's eternal destiny. But the Majority Text does not include the words *for salvation*.

The Spirit of God takes the Word of God and changes our thinking. He changes our view of the world and life. And when our thinking changes, our behavior is transformed.

That is why we need to be in a church that clearly proclaims God's Word.

The Word of God causes the believer to grow *if he is receptive*. Remember the Parable of the Four Soils. Soils two, three, and four all receive the Word, but only soil four is good soil for the Word. Only it has a noble and good heart and brings forth mature fruit.

We need God's word to remain in fellowship with God and continue to grow in our faith.

⁷ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 101.

⁸ Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 83.

V. BEWARE OF COUNTERFEIT METHODS OF GROWTH

Before looking at v 3, it is important to realize that what Peter has said in v 2 is radically different from the methods for spiritual growth promoted by most flavors of Christianity today.

Contemplative spirituality is a popular method. Grow by being silent. Grow by listening for some small inner voice. Grow by clearing your mind.

Instead, we are to grow by filling our minds with Scripture.

Contemplative spirituality is antithetical to growing by the Word of God.

Charismatic experience is a popular method. People grow by speaking in tongues, attending healing services, hearing prophetic messages, and having emotional experiences.

This method is antithetical to growing by the Word of God.

Seeker-sensitive preaching is a popular method. Messages are designed by some lead church in a network of hundreds or thousands of churches. They are heavy on illustrations and applications and light on the Bible. Sermons don't explain God's Word; they explain the teaching in the latest self-help books.

This method is antithetical to growing by the Word of God.

Legalistic practices are a popular method. Don't eat certain foods. Don't use alcohol. Women can't wear slacks. Men can't let their hair touch their ears or collars. Jewelry is forbidden. Men can't have facial hair—or men must have facial hair. Don't smoke. Don't chew tobacco. Read at least five Bible chapters a day. Fast once a week.

This method, too, is antithetical to growing by the Word of God.

Verse-by-verse Bible teaching is not popular today. But it should be.

VI. IF YOU HAVE TASTED THAT THE LORD IS GRACIOUS (1 PETER 2:3)

Peter's remarks are an allusion, a loose reference, to Ps 34:8 in the MT and Ps 33:9 in the LXX: "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!"

Most commentators note that the word *LORD* in Ps 34:8 is *Yahweh* and that it refers to God the Father.

Elliott comments,

“Lord” (*kyrios*), moreover, in the Petrine context no longer refers to God as it did in the psalm but to Jesus Christ. This shift in meaning is evident from both the intentional substitution of *kyrios* (“Lord”) for *theos* (“God”) in 1:25a (and the interpretation of “word” as the “good news” concerning Jesus Christ [1:25b relating to 1:10-12]) and the following words of 2:4, where the pronoun “him” refers back to *kyrios* and forward to Jesus Christ (vv 5-6).⁹

However, in the OT, *Yahweh* often refers to the Second Person of the Trinity, though this was not recognized until the NT. Peter understands *Yahweh* in Ps 34:8 to refer to the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no reason to assume that Peter changed the reference from God the Father to God the Son.

In 2:3, Peter uses a word that sounds like *Christ* (*Christos* in Greek). The word is *chrēstos*, which means *kind* or *good*. This is a play on words. The reader sees that Peter is talking about Christ: The Lord, that is Christ, is *chrēstos*, kind or good to us. To be kind or good is to respond to people with favor, with blessings, whether deserved or undeserved.

Chrēstos only occurs two other times in the NT, both in the Synoptics. In a famous discipleship text in Matt 11:30, the Lord Jesus said, “For my yoke is easy [*chrēstos*] and My burden is light.” Compare 1 John 5:3, “His commandments are not burdensome.”

In Luke 6:35, the Lord Jesus said that the Most High God “is kind [*chrēstos*] to the unthankful and evil.”

Best paraphrases 1 Pet 2:3 as, “You have tasted that the Lord is good (= Christ), i.e., good for food, for growth” (p. 99).

Hodges explains v 3 and summarizes vv 1-3:

2:3. The conditional clause **if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good**...is a first class (Type A) protasis. It assumes that Peter’s readers have indeed tasted the goodness and benevolence of the Lord. Desire for God’s Word hinges on our taste of God’s goodness to us in Christ. Peter now embarks on a long and extremely rich doctrinal exposition of that goodness.

⁹ John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 403.

Note that what follows deals with God's grace to us collectively, that is, with the Church.

In context, he is doubtless thinking of the assembly where the "spiritual milk" is ministered to us. If we are to properly desire that milk we must lay aside those attitudes of spirit which create friction and ill will toward the brethren, and we must concentrate on God's rich grace to us. An assembly filled with malice, envy, and such like will not be able to grow properly through the ministry of the Word.¹⁰

Sadly, most churches today proclaim a saving message that is contrary to God's grace. The result is that many people who go to church regularly have not yet tasted that the Lord is good and gracious.

Of course, many people believed in Christ for everlasting life in the past but were later duped by false teachings. They tasted the goodness of God in the past. But Peter says that to grow by God's Word (v 2), we must have an ongoing appreciation of God's goodness.

To continue "being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 2:5), we must be part of a Christian assembly where God's Word is clearly taught in a loving atmosphere. Hodges writes, "I would regard being built (*oikodomeisthe*) as a customary, or gnomic, present. The phrase could thus be rendered, 'To whom, whenever you come, you are built up.'"¹¹

VII. CONCLUSION

My second campus director with Campus Crusade for Christ was wrong. It is not idolatry to love God's Word. If we love God, then we love His communication to us.

Christian growth comes by partaking of God's Word. Peter understands that it is vitally important that local churches not only accurately proclaim God's Word but also do so in a loving context. A church filled with rancor is not conducive to spiritual growth. A church filled with love and encouragement is (cf. Heb 10:23-25).

We sometimes hear about new believers being on fire for the Lord. What is meant is that they still have tremendous enthusiasm and are

¹⁰ Hodges, *1-2 Peter & Jude*, 30.

¹¹ Ibid.

still greatly moved by God's grace. The implication is that it is natural for those who've been believers for a long time to cool off.

The opposite is undoubtedly true. The longer we walk with the Lord Jesus, the sweeter He grows. Our love, gratitude, and desire to please Him should be ever increasing.

BOOK REVIEWS

Unveiling Eternity: Discover Your Forever Future. By John Claey's. N.P., 2023. 391 pp. Paper, \$16.99.

In *Unveiling Eternity*, John Claey's takes the reader from what God originally intended for eternity when He created the universe to what eternity future will be like. This future will include a new heaven and earth.

The book is crystal clear on the gospel of eternal life. That life can never be lost (pp. 36, 38, 107, 115, 204). Claey's says that in eternity, there will be two "overarching" groups of people: Those who have believed in Jesus for eternal life and those who have not (p. 9). Those in the lake of fire will be there because they were not in the book of life. They did not believe in Christ for eternal life (p. 43).

The purpose of the book is to challenge and encourage believers to live for eternity (p. 329). To that end, Claey's explains what the Scriptures say about it. The eternal kingdom of Christ will be beyond anything we can imagine.

In God's original creation, He wanted mankind to multiply and rule over the works of His hands. Those objectives will continue in eternity (pp. 17-19).

God created man to have a perfect relationship with others and with Him. Sin, however, marred those relationships. Sin's consequences, including physical death, passed to all men. This death also has a spiritual component. Claey's says that Adam and Eve were spiritually saved by believing in the One who was to come (p. 34).

Claey's presents several principles and facts, supporting them with Scripture. For example, he explains that man is comprised of three parts: body, soul, and spirit. The spirit connects the soul to the body (p. 45). He explains that the idea of soul sleep is unbiblical. After death, the soul is aware and can speak. People also learn after they die (p. 57). This is true for believers and unbelievers alike. He shows that every believer who dies today goes to be with the Lord (pp. 45, 46, 50).

Claey's rightly points out that the lake of fire and its torments are eternal (p. 57). He believes that the people there will never understand that eternal life would have been given to them had they believed in

Christ for it. They will always think they are in the lake of fire because their works were not good enough (pp. 57, 60).

Prior to Christ's resurrection, paradise was located in Hades. Now, it is in heaven with Him. In eternity, it will be with Him on the new earth (p. 73). Eternity will not be a recycled or renewed universe, but a completely new one. During the millennial kingdom, dramatic changes will be made to this world. It will be more fruitful (pp. 76-77).

In eternity, the New Jerusalem will be the home base of all believers, including Jewish and NT believers (p. 89). Although sin will exist during the millennial kingdom, it will not exist in the new heaven and earth.

Claeys teaches a great deal about rewards. All believers will be in the kingdom, but there will be differences among believers. There will also be differences in the lake of fire (pp. 90-91). The experience and level of torment of unbelievers will not be the same.

Faithful believers will serve the Lord in ways that the unfaithful will not. Faithful believers, for example, will see His face (Matt 5:8) (p. 112). These privileges, or lack thereof, will be determined by the works done in this life. The more we serve Christ now, the greater the capacity we will have to serve Him in His kingdom (p. 224).

Believers will be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ to determine their rewards. They will be judged only for works done after they believed, not for their works as unbelievers. If they show mercy to others now, they will be shown mercy on that day (p. 119). Some believers will rule with Christ, but others will not. Rewards will be eternal, not just for the millennial kingdom (p. 100).

While resurrected believers in glorified bodies will live in the New Jerusalem, this reviewer agrees with Claeys that outside the city there will be "nations" made up of people in physical bodies. They will not sin and will be descendants of the children who are living at the end of the millennial kingdom. They will be able to reproduce and will fulfill the original mandate of God for mankind to multiply and fill His creation (pp. 133, 152). The millennial kingdom will last through the first 1,000 years of eternity. While many believe that children will be born only during the millennial kingdom, procreation will, in fact, continue forever (Isa 65:23; Zech 10:8; Ezek 47:22). The number of citizens in Christ's kingdom will grow eternally.

Faithful believers will rule over cities among the nations outside the New Jerusalem. They will work and travel to do so. The New Jerusalem will be enormous, with room for one trillion people (p. 166-69).

In Christ's kingdom, we will retain our identities (pp. 184, 191- 94). Our minds will function much better than they do today. We will remember our past, including our sins. While we will feel shame at the Bema for our disobedience, that shame will not continue into the kingdom (p. 197).

The kingdom will have an economy. Claeys suggests that it will be capitalistic in nature, and certainly not socialistic (p. 224). Through our works, we can invest in that future economy. The rewards will include possessions, prestige, and power. We will work as a means of serving Him. People will build, plant, write music, fish, and raise crops and livestock (p. 235).

We will continue to learn in the kingdom, including from God's Word. Christ will personally teach us. We will eat with friends and family, including feasts of worship and fellowship. Faithful believers will dine with the Lord. The phrase "the outer darkness" in the book of Matthew does not refer to the lake of fire, but to being outside the King's banquet hall when banquets with the King are held (pp. 254, 264, 276, 279).

In the kingdom, we will study the sciences. There will be animals, and Claeys believes the Lord will even bring back extinct species (pp. 293-97). In chapter 14, he describes an eternity of arts and recreation. We will sing (including praise to God), put on plays, and take pleasure in physical activities such as sports.

Eternity will not be boring. Believers should long for this glorious future. But they should also want to rule and be great in the kingdom so they can serve the Lord abundantly (p. 232).

In the two appendices, Claeys debunks the common view that eternity will be a non-material place. Instead, it will be an exciting new earth and universe. He then explains that a plain sense approach to the Scriptures will lead one to the premillennial framework from which he argues in the book.

Claeys uses Scripture throughout the book to support his conclusions. He admits when there are valid Scriptural options for other views. Not all will agree with some of his conclusions. But these are minor concerns. He has accomplished his goal. He has written a book

that will give any Bible student a glimpse of how exciting Christ's eternal kingdom will be. He accurately shows that eternal life is by grace through faith alone, and that rewards will be given for good works. I highly recommend this book.

Kenneth W. Yates

Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Preaching and the Thirty-Second Commercial. By O. Wesley Allen, Jr. and Carrie La Ferle. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2021. 145 pp. Paper, \$29.00.

The title of this book interested me because I like preaching and because I teach it to theological students.

There is much to like in this book. The authors stress the need for the preacher to get the listeners' *attention*, maintain their *interest*, cause them to *desire* to do what God says, and finally move them to *action* to do what God says (pp. 63-84). They call this type of preaching AIDA (attention, interest, desire, action).

They stress the need for the preacher to give what they call *sticky stories* (pp. 86-87). These are illustrations that really stick in the hearts and minds of listeners and that illustrate the truth of Scripture under scrutiny.

Allen and La Ferle acknowledge the cumulative effect of preaching (pp. 124-33). No single sermon molds a listener's worldview. The renewing of one's mind occurs after hearing scores of sermons.

There is, however, a major problem with this book.

The authors stress the need to avoid claiming to have *the answer*. They point to our postmodern age and say that "Making clear that a range of views is possible (at the very least resurrection and heaven/hell), the preacher might then name her or his view in a way that invites people to consider it *without forcing it upon them*" (p. 132, italics added). To the authors, this is even true in evangelistic preaching: "A preacher with sensitivity to postmodern meaning-making might want to affirm the promise of eternal life *while giving hearers the freedom to shape their theology for themselves*" (p. 130, italics added). They point out that "fewer preachers are willing to claim to have the theological outlook to which all of their congregants should hold" (p. 125, italics theirs).

I recommend this book for discerning preachers only. Its negatives outweigh its positives.

Robert N. Wilkin
Associate Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Rethinking the Dates of the New Testament: The Evidence for Early Composition. By Jonathan Bernier. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2022. 318 pp. Paper, \$29.99.

Conservative NT scholars date all the books of the NT as having been written in the first century, with most saying that John's epistles and Revelation were written between AD 80 and AD 95. Some conservative NT scholars suggest that the entire NT was completed before the destruction of the temple in August of AD 70.

Liberal NT scholars used to say that some NT books were written in the middle of the second century. However, recent scholarship, even among liberal scholars, has argued that most, if not all, were completed in the first century, and some say all were completed by AD 70.

Bernier (Ph.D., McMaster University, Assistant NT Professor at Regis College, University of Toronto)—much like John A. T. Robinson (*Redating the New Testament*, 1976) who argued the entire NT was written before AD 70—argues that most of the NT was written before AD 70 and that all NT books, with the possible exception of four, were written during the first century.

However, Bernier criticizes Robinson's approach, though not his conclusions. He argues that Robinson "never explicates how he goes about building his web of imaginative construction" (p. 17). Bernier lays out his own method of determining the dating of books involving three areas: synchronization, contextualization, and authorial biography (pp. 23-27).

Synchronization asks whether there is material in a book that is "most fully intelligible only if written prior to a given event or situation" (p. 23). Contextualization "seeks to establish the text's probable relationship to the general course of early Christian development in areas such as ecclesiology, Christology, Gentile inclusion, and so on" (p. 26). Authorial biography asks, "when in her or his life a given text is best situated" (p. 27).

These are good criteria for determining the dates of NT books.

Here are Bernier's conclusions regarding the dating of various NT books (see handy chart on pp. 274-75). First was Mark (AD 42-45), then Matthew (AD 45-59), Galatians (AD 47-52), 1-2 Thessalonians (AD 50-52), Hebrews (AD 50-70), 1-2 Corinthians (AD 56), Romans (AD 56-67), the Prison Epistles (AD 57-59), Luke (AD 59), 1 Peter (AD 60-69), 2 Peter (AD 60-69), John (AD 60-70), Acts (AD 62), 1 Timothy (AD 63-64), Titus (AD 63-64), 2 Timothy (AD 64-68), and Revelation (AD 68-70). The only books that he thinks may have been written after AD 70 are 1-2 John (AD 60-100), Jude (before AD 96), and 3 John (before AD 100).

It should be noted that Bernier thinks it possible that 2 Peter and the Pastoral Epistles (1-2 Timothy and Titus) were all pseudepigrapha, that is, books written by someone else who hijacked the name of a famous apostle to attract readers to his book. He gives alternative dates for those books if they are pseudepigraphic (AD 60-125, AD 60-150, AD 60-150, and AD 60-175, respectively).

His suggestion that "the...report that Jesus predicted he would raise the temple in three days" was "possibly false" (p. 66) would certainly not be received well by *JOTGES* readers.

Bernier interprets Matt 16:28 as Jesus' saying that some of His disciples "would live to see the Son of Man come in his kingdom" (p. 67), giving further evidence of his liberal views.

Bernier's reasoning has been criticized by some reviewers. For example, he accepts Irenaeus' suggestion that Mark wrote his Gospel **after** Peter and Paul's *departure*. Most scholars believe that Irenaeus was speaking of their departure from Rome. The earliest that could have been was AD 62-64, when Paul departed Rome after his first Roman imprisonment. We might question the wisdom of putting a lot of stock in the dates assigned by church fathers. Primary consideration should be given to internal considerations within books. However, Bernier, who accepts Irenaeus' suggestion, has a novel way of explaining how Mark could have written his Gospel both between AD 42-45 and after AD 62-64. Here is Bernier's imaginative explanation: "One might argue that by using the word *paradidōmi* Irenaeus indicates not when Mark's Gospel was written but rather when it was transmitted. If this is granted, one can envision a scenario in which Mark composed his Gospel, Peter approved it, Peter and Paul departed (either from Rome or life), and then Mark passed on his Gospel. This is not impossible"

(p. 76). While not impossible, it stretches credulity to suggest that Mark did not release his Gospel until twenty years after writing it.

Of particular interest to me is Bernier's dating of the book of Revelation. Zane Hodges convinced me, based on his explanation of Rev 17:10-11, that Revelation was written during the short reign of the seventh Roman king (emperor), Otho, January–April of AD 69. I was glad to see that Bernier cites those verses for his dating of the book. However, instead of the first emperor being Augustus, as is widely held, he suggests that John intended us to understand Julius Caesar as the first. If so, that would make Nero the sixth. He reigned from AD 54–68. That would mean that Revelation was written during the reign of Galba, AD 68–69.

I recommend this book for mature believers. While Bernier takes many liberal views, his dating of the NT books is mostly very early.

Robert N. Wilkin
Associate Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Participating in Abundant Life: Holistic Salvation for a Secular Age. By Mark R. Teasdale. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022. 207 pp. Paper, \$10.49.

Teasdale is a professor of evangelism and a member of the United Methodist Church. The title of the book caught my eye. I wondered what he meant by *abundant life* and *a full-orbed salvation*. Most readers of the *JOTGES* are aware that the Bible uses the word *salvation* in many different contexts; it is not used only in reference to salvation from the lake of fire.

Teasdale says that we cannot separate the spiritual from the material. He says that salvation is not just something we receive but something that we participate in. We can do that with other believers and with unbelievers who are people of goodwill. Christians can work with secular organizations for the common good of mankind. The United Way, the United Nations, and similar groups are doing the work of God. We can use language we have in common with them and be more effective witnesses for the Lord as we do His work with them. Participating in abundant life means that we must engage society in meeting the needs of others. We should seek to improve people's standard of living and

quality of life worldwide. This work will allow us to reach out to those who do not believe in Jesus.

Teasdale uses the examples of the COVID-19 pandemic and the riots after George Floyd's death to show how people everywhere desire abundant life (pp. 4-5). In the former, people were lonely and depressed. In the latter, they sought an end to racism and oppression. Christians can participate in abundant life by working to alleviate such problems.

Teasdale reads his concept of holistic salvation into the Scriptures. In John 10:10, Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He meets the social needs of His sheep. But He also meets the physical needs of all people by giving them rain, food, etc. The sheep who follow Him must also meet the needs of others. This would include feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, healing the sick, visiting the lonely, and working for racial justice (pp. 11-13).

According to Teasdale, the Holy Spirit works in many who are not believers in Jesus. These people participate in abundant life, even though they are not saved spiritually. They do so when they want to improve the quality of life of others (p. 15).

In another example of reading one's desire for social justice into a text, Teasdale discusses the Philippian jailer in Acts 16. Teasdale says that he was looking for salvation from danger and assurance of a good life after being removed from that danger. We should help others to achieve these things (p. 60).

Teasdale's gospel of eternal life is confusing and contradictory. He says that a person is secure as long as he remains in a relationship with Christ (p. 20). The different gospels preached by various Christian groups are all saving since they promote the love of God and others (p. 34). We prove our faith in Christ when we participate in the kind of holistic social work that Teasdale promotes. When we meet the needs of others, we show them that God cares for them. God wants to give them not only eternal life, but a higher standard of living as well (p. 77). We participate in abundant life when we protect others from their enemies, give joy to replace despair, provide healing when others are sick, and provide companionship for those who are lonely.

His most extended discussion of salvation is found on pp. 140-47. He is not a universalist. A person must have faith in Jesus to be eternally saved. He sees this salvation as salvation from sins. Initially,

he declares that we are “assured of eternal salvation through faith” (p. 140). It is all by grace and not by works.

Then, however, Teasdale quickly adds works. We must declare our faith (Rom 10:9-10). God will still judge how we lived (Matt 7:21). If we do not share the abundant life with others, we will not have eternal life. Those whose names are in the Book of Life must give an account of their lives based on the works they have done. That is the purpose of the books in Revelation 20, which contain works. If believers use their resources for others, God will welcome them. The parables of the servants in the Gospels teach the necessity of works. The unfaithful servant will not be in heaven. To be eternally saved, we must meet the needs of others in the present world.

Unbelievers who share in abundant life are on the path to eternal life. The Christian can show them the way by working alongside them. Through their works of goodwill, such unbelievers are like the lawyer who was “not far from the kingdom” (Mark 12:34).

Teasdale gives several scorecards for individuals and churches to determine whether they are experiencing abundant life (pp. 190-94). Our works will decide if we make it into the kingdom. Therefore, Teasdale does not believe we can have assurance of eternal life now, but these scorecards can give us hope. Clearly, Teasdale does not understand the gospel of grace: Jesus gives eternal life to all who believe in Him for it. He does not understand that eternal life can never be lost.

This book shows how different people can use the same terms, such as *abundant life* and *salvation in this life*, to mean very different things. If someone wonders how liberal Christendom might use such terms to promote a social gospel, this book provides an answer. The Holy Spirit was not providing abundant life to unbelievers who rioted after the death of George Floyd. He is not providing it to unbelievers who work at the United Nations. However attractive the title may sound, the readers of the *JOTGES* will find very little of value in this book. I do not recommend it.

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Trustworthy: Thirteen Arguments for the Reliability of the New Testament. By Benjamin C. F. Shaw. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2024. 142 pp. Paper, \$13.99.

Shaw is an apologist and adjunct professor at Liberty University. This book does not argue for the inerrancy of the Scriptures. Instead, it is for both believers and skeptics. Shaw wants to show that the books of the NT were written in the first century by those who claim to have written them. He argues that the authors spoke the truth and that many were eyewitnesses to what they wrote about. Shaw uses the word *reliable* to describe the NT (p. 10). He does not say that the authors never made a mistake. I assume he believes in inerrancy, but his goal is to convince the skeptic and layman that the NT is a historically accurate source.

In the first chapter, Shaw points out that there are thousands of Greek manuscripts of the NT. The manuscripts differ, but it is very “likely” that we have the authors’ original words. He states that the NT is the most textually attested work of the ancient world (p. 21).

Shaw says that the books of the NT are patterned after the genres of other books written in the first century. The Gospels are examples of Greco-Roman biographies, and the Epistles are like secular letters of the day. Like Revelation, there was also apocalyptic literature (p. 31).

The NT also includes many creedal statements predating the various books’ writings. An example is 1 Cor 15:1-4, based upon eyewitness accounts of Christ’s death and resurrection (pp. 61-62).

Shaw points to how we use certain criteria today to determine whether a report is reliable. If we apply those criteria to the events in the NT, those events pass the test. These criteria are: the event is reported not long after it occurs; there are multiple independent attestations; it is noted in various forms; there is embarrassing testimony; enemies support what is written; and there is consistency among the reports (pp. 65-66). The miracles Jesus performed, for example, meet all these criteria. Even His enemies admitted that He did them.

Chapter seven is titled “Undesigned Consequences.” The NT includes examples that corroborate each other unintentionally. This would almost certainly not happen if the accounts were fictional. Shaw suggests that Matt 14:1-2 and Luke 8:1-3 support the idea that news of Christ had reached Herod’s household (p. 75-76). There are also NT accounts that pagan authors corroborate.

Archaeology also supports the reliability of the NT documents. Shaw discusses various archaeological finds that agree with certain NT events. He discusses two in particular. A notice has been found that was posted on the temple in Jerusalem during the time that the events recorded in Acts 21:27-31 occurred (p. 82). The notice is a warning against Gentiles entering the temple. The uproar recorded in Acts 21 arose because Paul was believed to have brought Gentiles into the temple, which would have violated this order. Another archaeological find came in 1968 when the remains of a victim of crucifixion were found in Israel (p. 84). The body shows details that align with what the NT records about the crucifixion of Christ.

Many very early non-Christian sources mention Christ and specific events recorded in the NT. Though not sympathetic to the teachings of the NT, these sources support what is written. Josephus, a Jewish historian of the first century, writes of Christ and John the Baptist. Roman authorities such as Tacitus and Pliny the Younger also mention certain NT events (pp. 93-95). These writers do not contradict the historical accuracy of what the NT says. For example, Roman writers do not say that Jesus lived and died somewhere other than Israel.

Many very early Christian writers wrote after the NT was completed, including the Apostolic and Church Fathers. They wrote from various locations and supported what the Scriptures said. Shaw gives examples from the writings of Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, and Polycarp of Smyrna (pp. 101-106). These men were willing to suffer for what they wrote, suggesting that they were not deliberately telling lies.

Shaw includes a chapter on how the church determined which books would be included in the canon. Just as there are criteria that we use to judge whether a report is reliable, the church used specific criteria to determine which books would become part of the NT. It was not a random process. According to Shaw, we can have confidence that we have the "best sources" (p. 118). The books chosen were written by either an apostle or a close associate, written within the proper time frame, and there was widespread agreement among churches regarding each book's authenticity (pp. 110-111).

One of Shaw's arguments is admittedly less persuasive than the others but is consistent with them (p. 127). The writings of the NT have transformed the lives of countless individuals. This might indicate

Shaw's personal belief that they are inspired. He also says that this transformation can provide "indirect" evidence to unbelievers who see such change in the lives of believers.

Shaw closes his book by discussing the "minimal facts approach." This holds that something is a reliable source if it has multiple lines of evidence and is supported by virtually all scholars, including skeptics (p. 130). Certain events in the NT meet these requirements. Even most unbelieving scholars admit that Jesus died by crucifixion, that the disciples had some experience with the risen Jesus, that they were willing to suffer and die for their beliefs, that James was at first skeptical but later became a believer, and that this was also true of Paul, who had previously persecuted the church (p. 132).

This book has good apologetic value. It is very easy to read and will cause some skeptics to consider the possibility that the NT is at least "reliable" and not a con job written by the church 100 years after the events described in it. My one reservation is that I wonder whether it reflects a subtle shift among Evangelicals. Some seem to steer away from the issue of inerrancy. The position that the Bible is without error is not seen as scholarly. A document can be reliable but still have errors. Arguing in this way may make accepting the NT more palatable to some.

Shaw meets his goal of providing an introduction to this topic. He also provides "additional reading" at the end of each chapter, which will bring up the subject of inerrancy. This book would be a good source to use if you have an unbelieving friend with questions about the life of Christ and the men who wrote about Him. It also gives valuable information to new believers who have questions about the topics Shaw discusses. I recommend it.

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40 Questions about Women in Ministry. By Sue Edwards and Kelley Matthews. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2022. 323 pp. Paper, \$15.99.

Both Edwards and Matthews are graduates of Dallas Theological Seminary and have been involved in various ministries for decades. As the title suggests, they ask and answer forty questions related to the role

of women in ministry. These questions are divided into four sections: introductory issues, questions from the OT, questions from the NT (including church history), and current issues.

The authors want to maintain a high view of Scripture (p. 17). They do not give their personal opinions on the questions asked. Instead, they attempt to accurately present the various views held by others. The book tries to explain the issues involved, then leaves it to the reader to consider what the Scriptures say.

Traditionally, those who argue about the role of women in the church and home hold one of two views: Egalitarianism and Complementarianism. The first argues that women are equal to men in every way. The latter says that even though men and women are equal, they have different roles. Edwards and Matthews prefer the words *hetararchy* and *hierarchy*. A heterarch holds that a person's opportunities to lead are not based on gender but on merit and spiritual gifts (p. 29). The authors believe the groups can learn from each other (p. 34). The most important thing is to let the Scriptures, not our traditions, determine our doctrine (p. 42).

One question deals with how to determine when the Bible's teachings are cultural and when they are universal. The authors maintain that the issues are complex. They give several references to aid in studying the question further (pp. 44-46).

In discussing the creation of man and woman, the authors take a literal view of Genesis. Adam and Eve were created in the image of God, which included the idea of ruling over His creation (p. 55). There is a discussion about the role of each before the Fall. Eve was created to help Adam. Hierarchs generally say that *helper* means the woman would be a loyal and suitable assistant. Heterarchs say it means she was to supply what the man lacked so that they could thrive and work together (p. 74).

The authors address the Fall's verdict that the man would exercise authority over the woman (Gen 3:16). They discuss different views and, as usual, let the reader decide. They advise that we not engage in a battle of the sexes (p. 91). They want men and women to work together but do not explain what that looks like.

Edwards and Matthews discuss OT women, such as Deborah and Huldah, in leadership roles. The two major views suggest that these

women were equal to male prophets and rulers or that their roles were more limited than those of male leaders in the OT (pp. 96-98).

The authors point out that even some hierarchs do not insist that their view is proved by the fact that Jesus chose only men as His apostles. Heterarchs argue that this was done because of cultural concerns and point out that many women traveled with the Lord and were His disciples (pp. 117-20). Heterarchs say that Mary Magdalene was an apostle because she was the first one sent to tell others of the Lord's resurrection. Edwards and Matthews do not give their personal views on this. However, Mary's actions do not seem equivalent to what constitutes the office of *apostle*. This is one issue on which the authors should have been more assertive regarding their opinions.

I liked their discussion about the woman at the well. Edwards and Matthews say that she may not have been sexually immoral, but the victim of cultural circumstances (p. 130). She may be a heroine in the book of John.

Both major camps regarding the role of women point to the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. They all agree that God gifted women and men to serve Him and the church. Heterarchs argue that women were given the gift of prophecy (and the other gifts) in Acts 2 and were equal with men. Women should use those gifts (p. 138).

In 1 Cor 14:34-35, some heterarchs say that women are to remain silent because *wives* should not interrupt their husbands when the men are prophesying. The authors say that all factions agree there are times when women can speak (pp. 160-61).

First Timothy 2:11-15, where Paul discusses women's being saved through childbirth, is addressed using three questions (pp. 183-213). The authors rightly point out that it can be physical salvation, and they discuss various views. They do not mention that those who continue in faith are the *children*. Heterarchs often appeal to cultural considerations, including Eph 5:21-23, a passage about women submitting to their husbands (p. 217).

The book discusses the issue of women teaching men. Edwards and Matthews mention the example of Priscilla and Apollos (Acts 18:24-26). They bring out an interesting question regarding 1 Tim 2:13-14, the passage in which Paul says that Eve was deceived: If the hierarchs are correct in understanding Paul to be saying that women are more

easily deceived, then why are women allowed to teach children and other women (pp. 234-37)?

An interesting part of the book is the discussion of women in church history (pp. 241-70). The authors describe how women have played a significant role in that history, even during the Reformation. Women have often served as leaders in the church and teaching positions over men. This has included work as missionaries and in home churches. The problem is that just because those women filled these roles does not necessarily mean this was Scriptural. Those women may have been disobeying the Word of God.

Regarding current issues, the authors ask the highly practical question: Should women be deacons, pastors, or elders (pp. 271-92)? Edwards and Matthews break from their usual practice and give their personal view. They believe that women can be deacons (p. 277). The office of pastor is more complicated. There are different kinds of pastors in various churches. They suggest that some other title, such as *director*, may be better. Perhaps a woman can be called the director of children's ministries.

The book's biggest weakness is that the authors do not take a harder stand when the Scriptures are clear, such as the Scriptural prohibition of women as elders. They treat all the questions in the book as open to discussion. Even so, I recommend this book. Edwards and Matthews do not argue that women can be elders or church leaders. The book allows the reader to see the issues and the different views. It also explains why the two broad camps take the positions they do.

Kenneth W. Yates

Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Demons: What the Bible Really Says about the Powers of Darkness. By Michael S. Heiser. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020. 321 pp. Hardback, \$16.31.

A hallmark of scholarly study is that it returns to the original sources. Heiser, who received his PhD in Hebrew and Semitic languages, has undoubtedly written a scholarly book. He quotes from hundreds of original sources, including the *Gilgamesh Epic*, the Apocrypha, the OT and NT Pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Ugaritic Texts, Philo, Josephus, ancient Rabbinic works, and early

church fathers. He is an expert in his field and firmly believes that Biblical writers borrowed from these writings when they wrote their texts. This was especially true of writings during the Second Temple Jewish period (520 BC–AD 70).

Using these texts and the Scriptures, Heiser argues that Evangelicals embrace several unbiblical beliefs about demons. Among these is that the OT and NT demons are different (p. xv). Heiser says that the Satan in Job 1–2 is not the Satan in the NT and that the Bible does not teach that Satan and a third of the angels fell before the creation of man (pp. xv–xvi). He maintains that the OT has much more to say about dark spiritual forces than most think.

Heiser finds support for his views in ancient sources, which agree with the Hebrew words used in the OT. The *giants* and the *dead* mentioned in the OT (1 Chron 20:4, 6, 8; Isa 26:14) are *Rephaim*, which refer to supernatural beings who live in the underworld with the wicked dead (pp. 11, 17).

Heiser says that the word used for the scapegoat in Lev 16:7–9 is the proper name *Azazel* and represents a demon. He lives in the wilderness, a place associated with death (p. 25). Demons are also seen as animal-like figures in the wilderness in Isa 13:21–22 and as *Leviathan* and *Behemoth* in Job (3:8; 40:15–41:34) (pp. 28, 32).

The book discusses Deuteronomy 32 at length. Heiser says it teaches that since the Tower of Babel, nations are governed by supernatural beings (Deut 32:8–9, 17). Gentile nations sacrifice to these “gods,” who are rebellious angels (p. 44).

Heiser believes that there were three rebellions against God in the OT. The first was in Gen 3:1–4. There, the serpent is not the devil of the NT. He was part of the council of God. He became an enemy (the meaning of *satan*), but there would be many such enemies. When he rebelled, he was cast out of the heavenly council to the underworld; however, he is not the leader of all evil spirits (p. 71).

Only later, during Second Temple Judaism, did these rebellious spirits gain a leader known as *the Satan* (pp. 60, 90). According to Heiser, Satan as the chief of demons and fallen angels does not exist in the OT (p. 85). The writers of the NT reflect the development of the concept of Satan by later Jewish writers.

The second rebellion of angels occurred in Gen 6:1–4. Heiser strongly argues that spirit beings had sexual relations with human

women. *The sons of God* refer to these spiritual beings, who were also a part of the council of God, as was the rebellious spirit in Eden. The offspring of these unions were the Nephilim, or giants. These became demons. They are disembodied spirits. The sons of God who rebelled were cast into prison. Ninety percent of the demons (their offspring) are imprisoned, but ten percent are permitted to serve Satan, who is eventually given other names, such as *Mastema* and *Belial* (pp. 97-100). These ten percent are the demons of the NT.

This kind of teaching is found throughout Second Temple Judaism. The idea that the sons of God are human kings or the descendants of Seth is not found. According to Heiser, these ancient writings should determine how we interpret Gen 6:1-4 (p. 124).

From this discussion, Heiser clearly believes that demons are not the same as fallen angels. They are the half-human/half-spirit-being offspring of *the sons of God*.

The third rebellion, at Babel (Gen 11:1ff), also involved spirit beings who were part of the council of God. The nations were given over to these “gods” who disobeyed God. Heiser wrote about Psalm 82, describing the divine council of God, which was made up of angels who participated in this rebellion. They were initially good but became evil (pp. 153-54). Heiser says that Dan 10:13-21 describes this same event (p. 156). These lesser gods still rule over the nations and will do so until Christ returns (p. 168). Psalm 82 speaks of this situation.

In Heiser’s view, there was no rebellion of unfallen angels before God created the world. Instead, there were three episodes in which angels fell and became corrupt. These angels were part of the divine council. In the writings of various Jewish authors, Satan becomes their leader after the OT. These writers do not deny what is written in the OT. What they say are logical conclusions based on specific OT passages. In the NT, according to Heiser, various writers adopt these conclusions (pp. 175-82).

During Second Temple Judaism, the ten percent of the offspring of the sons of God—the demons—were seen as the cause of disease. When the NT speaks of Jews casting out demons (Matt 12:27), it means that somebody was cured of a disease. It was a medical matter, not a supernatural one (p. 203).

The book ends with a section on misconceptions and questions (pp. 237-67). Heiser says that Satan, rebellious angels, and demons

cannot be saved. Revelation 12:1-9 does not refer to the fall of Satan and a third of the angels before Creation but instead describes what happened at the first coming of Christ. Heiser rejects the gap theory regarding Gen 1:1-2. He makes the surprising statement that Satan and demons did not know how Jesus would save mankind—the details were hidden from them. He also says that a Christian cannot be demon-possessed and that the church is not told to cast out demons.

I do not recommend this book for laymen. It is not an easy read. At times, this reviewer struggled with getting through it. A new believer will also be left with many questions. Heiser does not have a high view of the inspiration of the Scriptures. He does not believe Daniel was written by Daniel (p. 148). He believes that the NT writers were not necessarily writing inspired words, but in many cases adopted the views of rabbinic and Jewish writers. I feel confident that Heiser does not believe Moses wrote the Pentateuch. However, the Lord affirmed its Mosaic authorship on many occasions (e.g., Matt 8:4; 19:7-8; Mark 1:44; 12:19-26; etc.). In addition, there is no reason for Moses not to understand the serpent in the garden as Satan, the leader of the fallen angels—the same Satan encountered in the NT.

This book is valuable for seeing the connection between original ancient sources and the Scriptures. What light can such sources shed on the OT and NT? Scholars often say that the NT should be interpreted in light of these sources. Heiser adopts that view. A higher view of inspiration would be that certain things in those sources can help us understand what, or why, the inspired writers wrote in some instances. Such sources can provide background information on the culture and religious thinking of the day. But much of that thinking was false. What the NT writers wrote was inspired by God and can differ from all that came before.

While I disagree with much of what Heiser says about demons, I do agree that they are the product of the union between angelic beings and human women. But I believe that because of Gen 6:1-4 and 2 Pet 2:4, not because of extra-biblical sources. In this case, those sources support what the inspired Scriptures say.

I recommend this book for the well-grounded believer interested in such a study.

Kenneth W. Yates
Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

War, Peace, and Violence: Four Christian Views. Edited by Paul Copan. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022. 240 pp. Paper, \$18.99.

As the title indicates, this book presents four different views of how a Christian should think about war and violence. The four views are: Just War, Nonviolence, Christian Realist, and Church Historical. Four scholars, in turn, argue their respective positions. Following each man's argument are the responses of the other three scholars. Eric Patterson argues the Just War position. War and violence are sometimes necessary to protect the vulnerable and to show neighborly love. Legitimate political authority can use violent force to promote these ends and achieve justice (pp. 13-14). Romans 13:1-4 gives that authority to governments. Patterson points out that the Christian should not let evil go unopposed. We live in a fallen world where evil exists (p. 15). A pacifistic view of violence ignores spiritual realities.

Just War maintains that there are causes for which it is righteous to use force. Governments must count the cost, determine the likelihood of success, and use diplomatic measures to avoid conflict. The use of force must also be proportionate to the threat. For example, it would be disproportionate to use nuclear weapons against an adversary that was mistreating its citizens. When war is conducted, Just War distinguishes between lawful and immoral targets. The former are enemy soldiers, while the latter are civilians. After the conflict, Just War says steps must be taken to ensure peace and seek reconciliation (pp. 16-17).

Patterson says that Just War has a long history, dating back to men such as Augustine and Aquinas (pp. 22-23). The church needs moral Christians to enter politics to promote these goals, as Daniel did in the OT (p. 39).

Myles Werntz presents the Nonviolence view. It is also called the Pacifist view. He holds that the killing of another human in war is against the teachings of Christ and that Christians should not engage in war (p. 67). The only role a believer should have in an army is as perhaps a chaplain or medic (p. 70). He says that OT narrations of wars might be allegorical. The other option is to see the teachings of the NT as replacing certain ethics found in the OT (p. 77).

Nonviolence calls believers to be involved in civic affairs to promote the good. They should demand that violence not be used to take the lives of others—even our enemies. Even in Nazi Germany, evil might

have been defeated from within if believers had been willing to oppose what was happening (p. 79). The Nonviolent view sees the believer as a disciple of Christ amid the evil and violence in our world. The disciple cannot separate his private life, in which he does not practice violence, from his public life, in which he supports the use of force (p. 81)

Most readers of the *JOTGES* will conclude that this is an unrealistic position. For example, Werntz suggests that the Christian response to terrorism should be a democratic process that seeks to amend unjust laws (p. 86).

A. J. Nolte argues the Christian Realist position. It emphasizes the sacred nature of life but also recognizes the effect of sin in this world, which makes war inevitable. It has much in common with the Just War view but focuses on the cost of war. Sometimes, the cost of violence is worth the price because the cost of inaction would be worse. War should be avoided whenever possible, but sometimes this is impossible (pp. 118-19).

Nolte rebukes the Just War's unwillingness to deal with the tragedy of war. The Nonviolent position is unwilling to love and help one's neighbor. He admits, however, that the Christian Realist view is more theoretical than concrete. It does not provide a "road map" to determine when war is permissible (pp. 140-41).

Nolte then tries to provide a map of a couple of scenarios. He discusses drones and concludes that they would be an acceptable alternative to traditional warfare methods. They could eliminate terrorists with minimal loss of life. The danger is that in such a sterile environment, the drone operator may have spiritual struggles later (p. 142).

Another scenario is "enhanced interrogation" (an example would be waterboarding). The realist would examine each situation to determine whether the means are justified. What would be the benefit of information gained by such techniques (p. 143)?

Meic Pearse is a proponent of the Church Historical view. He contends that both Augustine and Martin Luther spoke of two kingdoms. The believer lives in both. One is the political or public sphere. The other is the personal and private. In the latter, we are not to resort to violence. In the former, it is permissible. At the same time, the believer must remember the horrors of war (p. 174).

The OT concentrates on the political/public sphere, while the teachings of the NT emphasize our personal/private ethics (p. 180). We

cannot align the OT with nonviolence, whereas the NT leans toward pacifism. Even in the NT, Romans 13 tells us that the government has the right to conduct war. The Christian is to obey the government and can take part in armed conflict. Weapons of mass destruction have rendered Just War principles obsolete (p. 195).

Believers are to be peacemakers. Before conflict, we should seek to use persuasion to avoid it. After the conflict, we should seek to heal the wounds inflicted, whatever they may be. During the conflict, believers should try to convince others (including the enemy) of the futility of pursuing the war and to avoid atrocities (p. 196).

This is an informative book. Many of us know people who have served in the military, and some of us have served. We will probably be asked our position on this topic if we haven't been already. How should Christian soldiers view their profession? Even today, there are conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine. The US is involved in them. The vast majority of believers in our country will probably reject the pacifist view as both unrealistic and unbiblical. The other views will provide specific arguments that believers might use to justify their positions. I recommend this book.

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Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

