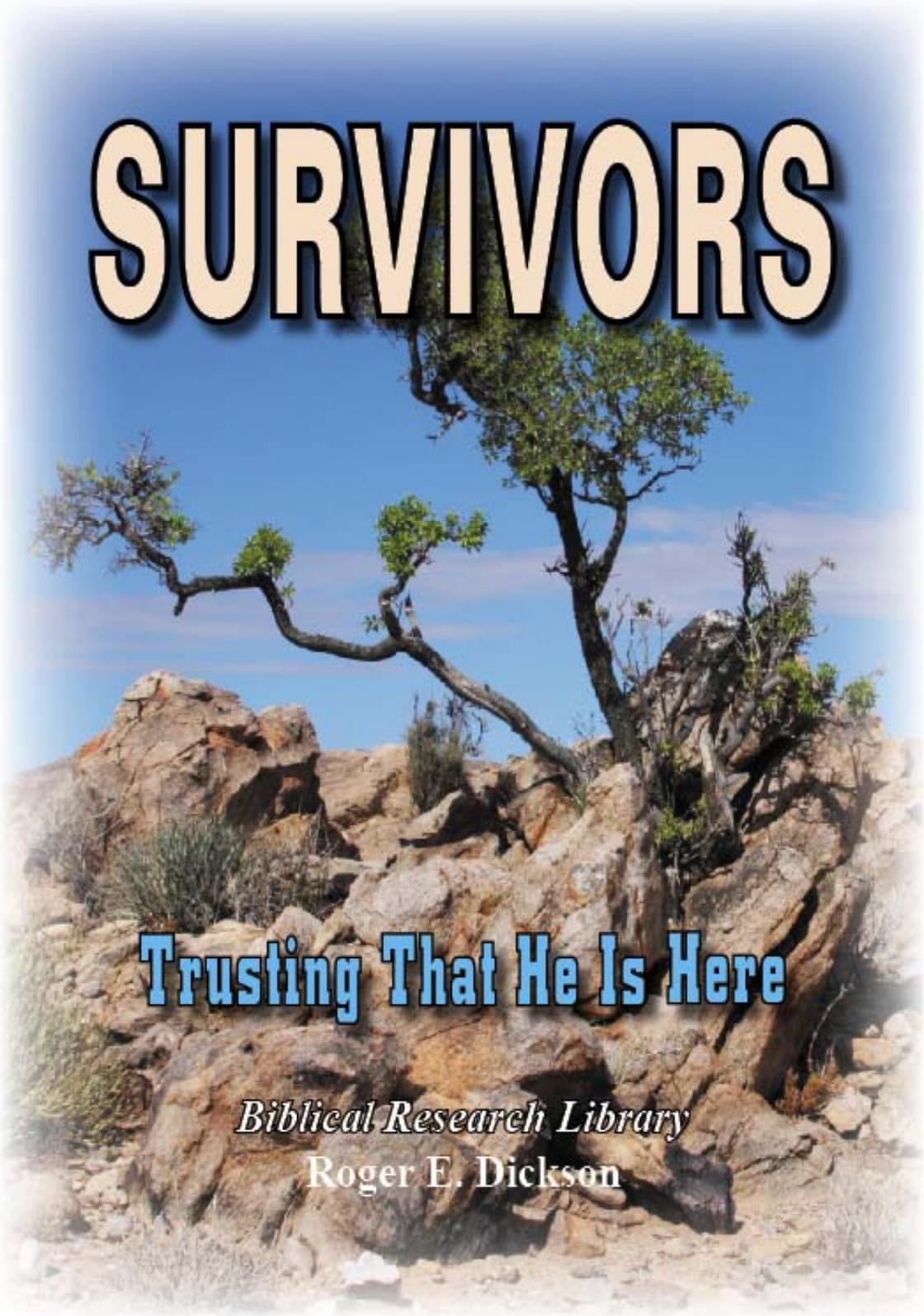


SURVIVORS

A gnarled, weathered tree with sparse green leaves grows from a rocky, reddish-brown outcrop. The background is a clear blue sky with a few wispy clouds. The overall scene is arid and rugged.

Trusting That He Is Here

Biblical Research Library

Roger E. Dickson

CONTENTS

Introduction – 3

1 – *Survivor Destiny* – 8

2 – *Survivor Joy* – 11

3 – *Survivor By The Word* – 14

4 – *Survivor Spirituality* – 17

5 – *Survivor Submission* – 22

6 – *Survivor Families* – 27

7 – *Survivor Husbands & Fathers* – 32

8 – *Survivor Discipleship* – 35

9 – *Survivor Lives* – 39

10 – *Survivor Faithfulness* – 47

11 – *Survivor Leadership* – 50

12 – *Survivor Character* – 54

13 – *Epilogue* – 58



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Cover Theme: *SURVIVAL* (The Karoo Desert in northwestern South Africa, R.E.D.)

SURVIVORS!

The primary message of the instructions that Peter, James and Jude wrote to the Jewish Christian Diaspora was that they would survive. They would survive the traumatic social chaos that was about to be unleashed by the Roman Empire on nationalistic Jews. Two millennia of Jewish heritage was about to come to an end. The prophecies of both Daniel and Jesus were coming into fulfillment. It was the “end of all things” in reference to national Israel, and thus, it was as if the Jews’ world was coming apart as the Son of God worked by proxy from heaven through Rome to consummate national Israel. Jesus was coming in time in judgment on those Jews who rejected Him as the Messiah and Savior of the world. The exhortations of Peter, James and Jude, therefore, were written to Christian Jews in order to prepare them for the end of national Israel.

Once the Jewish Christians suffered through the consummation of national Israel in A.D. 70, all Christians would then be headed into another dark hour of history. Rome would eventually arise to be a theocratic beast that would persecute those she considered to be insurrectionists to the state by not confessing Caesar as lord. Before this state persecution, the Holy Spirit would again deliver a specific letter of encouragement to Christians who were headed into two centuries of trial. The visions of Revelation would offer this encouragement. The Christians who would endure this persecution would have the letters of 1,2 Peter, James and Jude as encouragement that God would deliver on His promises that the saints would survive. The saints must simply remember that they have the victory if they only remain faithful. We thus have these inspired letters of encouragement today where God made good on His promises to His people. We read the message of these New Testament letters to be reassured that God will do the same for us, regardless of the hard times we must endure before the final coming of His Son. As secondary recipients of the message of these letters, we know where we must focus in our discipleship if we are to overcome any suffering that Satan would bring upon us.

INTRODUCTION

The First Survival Letter of Peter

The rewarding experience about studying through the document of 1 Peter is that this letter came forth from the pen of a married man who had led his wife here, there and who knows where throughout the ancient world (1 Co 9:5). We are never informed concerning the name of Peter's wife, but from his younger days before he was called into apostleship, he had taken a wife before he met Jesus (See Mt 8:14).

We consider what this married man wrote in these two epistles from the perspective of one who is concerned about families in the existing historical turmoil of his latter years. These were not the best of times, but times of apprehension and international turmoil. Over thirty-five years before, Jesus had forewarned His disciples of these times. They would be times when *"nation will rise up against nation and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines and earthquakes in various places"* (Mt 24:7).

In writing around A.D. 65, we are only five years away from Rome's crack-down on Peter's heritage, the Jews. All his Jewishness was about to be destroyed with the death of over one million Jews during the war against national Israel that culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70. Regardless of the turmoil of the times, Peter sought to comfort his Jewish Christian readers by reminding them of what Jesus promised: *"But he who will endure to the*

end, the same will be saved" (Mt 24:13).

As all the other disciples of Jesus, Peter's audience believed the last prophecy of Jesus in Matthew 24 concerning the termination of the Jewish state. When they finally accepted Jesus as the resurrected Son of God, they believed His judgment on Jerusalem:

Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down (Mt 24:2).

We are sure that these words cut to the heart of the Jewish disciples who had 2,000 years of heritage behind them, specifically 1,400 years of history since they had resided in the land of promise as a nation. But it was all going away, and Peter writes within only a few years of the consummation of national Israel in order to comfort those who would suffer the termination of their Jewish heritage.

So his first words that are directed by the leading of the Holy Spirit are words of hope in the midst of all the political turmoil of the day. In the middle of so much suffering that his fellow Jews were about to endure, Peter sought to give hope in the midst of social chaos. Since they were disciples of the only begotten Son of God, then they must look past the turmoil of the day and rejoice in the victory that they would have over all that is of this world. They would suffer for a brief period, but they would be survivors

through the power of the name of Jesus.

We must conclude that there lies behind Peter's exhortation a plea that his fellow Jews throughout the Roman Empire must stay away from Jerusalem. He writes "*to the sojourners of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.*"^{1:1} He writes to keep them away from Jerusalem, which some possibly would periodically visit as Jews during the annual Passover/Pentecost feast. But in a few years, Rome would choose this feast time to surround Jerusalem in order to eradicate from the Empire the most radical zealot Jews. Since Peter assumed the ministry of being the apostle to the circumcision (Jews) (Gl 2:7), then we conclude that he accepted the responsibility of watching over his fellow Jews in reference to the coming fulfillment of the prophecy of both Daniel and Jesus concerning the consummation of national Israel (Dn 12). He thus writes to all the Jews who are scattered throughout the Roman Empire to stay home and away from Jerusalem.

We can only identify indirectly with the first recipients of 1,2 Peter, James, Jude and Revelation. These five letters were written specifically to those Jewish Christians who were moving into the fulfillment of the prophecy of Daniel and Jesus concerning the consummation of national Israel. (Some commentators assume that even Revelation was written with the same purpose.) The consummation of national Israel would turn the world of Jewish Christians upside down. According to the Jewish historian, Josephus, an estimated 1.1 million Jews

across the Roman Empire would die. We may not be able to fully identify with his slaughter of a race of people, but certainly, the message of encouragement of the Holy Spirit has permeated history to this day.

We must suppose that there were Christian Jews during this "end of times" who were going to suffer greatly as a result of this crack down on nationalistic Jews. If we were there as Jewish Christians, we would have believed Jesus' prophecy of Matthew 24. Therefore, we would know that we would have to endure the times because we were Jews. During the conflict, some Roman soldiers had little desire to separate a Jewish Christian from an unbelieving insurrectionist Jew. Both were going to endure the heat of Rome's determination to put down the Jewish insurrectionists throughout the Empire.

The Jewish Christians, therefore, were going into great suffering regardless of their submission to the state of Rome. Rome's war against the political Israel was against the radicalization of Jewish nationalists. Because the Jewish nationalists promoted a theocratic government according to the Old Testament law, Rome was going to put down any rebellion against Roman government. We understand, therefore, why Peter exhorts Jewish Christians to submit to Roman rule.^{2:13,14}

Christians, on the other hand, did not promote a theocratic state. Nevertheless, Roman soldiers might not make the distinction between the faith of believing and unbelieving Jews. To many

Romans, all Jews were insurrectionist terrorists who were working to overthrow the power of the Roman state. The political state of affairs of the time was not much different than today when a theocratic system of religion seeks to overthrow a secular government that promotes the freedom of religion. At the time Peter wrote, Rome allowed the freedom of religion. Though Nero had a personal vendetta against Christians, this was not the policy of the Roman government. What the nationalistic Jews wanted to do, however, was to carve out of the Roman Empire their own theocratic state in Palestine as it was in the days of David. So in the background of what Peter, James and Jude wrote, was this political tension between secular state government and Jewish theocratic religiosity.

In the historical context of Peter's Jewish readers, it was time to confess that one was a Christian^{4:16} in order not to be associated with the nationalistic Jews who wanted to set up their own theocratic state that was independent from Rome. In these times one's confession to be a Christian would possibly save his life. At least this is what transpired during the final days of Rome's battle against Jerusalem. Confessed Christians escaped death by being allowed to flee from Jerusalem.

Unfortunately, there would come a time after theocratic Judaism had been suppressed that confessing that one was a Christian would mean going to the lions. Nevertheless, during the tyranny of Nero's rule of Rome that ended with his

suicide in A.D. 68, Christians in Rome were intimidated into hiding in the middle 60s. But at the time Peter wrote of things that would come a few years later, Nero would be dead. Galba, Otho and Vitellius momentarily reigned as Caesars of Rome in 68 and 69. The tyranny of Nero's personal vendetta was gone, and eventually Vespasian followed Vitellius (69-79) and brought relief to the Christians.

This relief from direct persecution of Christians would last until the years of Caesar Domitian. It would be during the reign of Domitian that Christianity would head into its darkest hour of persecution. It would be during these years of persecution that the apostle John, through the book of Revelation, would bring comfort to Christians, who for the next two centuries, would go in and out of persecution. But until that time came, the Christian Jews of Peter, James and Jude's time needed comfort. They needed to know that God was in control. We could conclude that the Holy Spirit would give Jewish Christians of their day words of encouragement that were relevant to their immediate situation. Many of them would suffer wrongfully during the time of the consummation of national Israel. Nevertheless, they must remain faithful as disciples of Jesus Christ.

What would be unfair on our part today is to assume that the messages of encouragement that were initially written to the early Jewish Christians somehow bypassed them. We often steal the immediate message of comfort written directly to them by supposing that the Spirit

was speaking directly to us today in reference to the end of all things. In other words, some today suppose that when 1, 2 Peter, James and Jude were written, the Spirit was speaking something that was directly related to us today in reference to the coming of the Lord. The Spirit somehow bypassed the Jewish Christians who lived in the middle 60s when their world was coming apart.

If we lived two thousand years ago, and concluded that these letters of encouragement were not written specifically to us, then encouraging statements of the letters would have little reference to our suffering. If we, living two thousand years ago, were to interpret these letters correctly, therefore, then we would have to suppose that the message of the letters had little reference to us as we were going into times of social chaos as a result of Rome's termination of Jewish nationalism. In reference to the message of Revelation, we would have to ignore the message of the entire book because it would have little reference to our immediate suffering at the hand of the state persecution of the Roman Empire.

It seems that some today are very narcissistic in their interpretation of the Bible in reference to messages of encouragement that the Spirit wrote specifically to give the initial readers of His inspired letters of encouragement in times of international turmoil in the first century.

We must keep in mind that the Jews of the first century were experiencing the end of 2,000 years of heritage. So we must not deprive these Jewish brethren of the direct encouragement of the in-

spired letters written to them, while we bask ourselves in some end-of-time fantasies that supposedly had no relevance to them. In fact, when Peter, James and Jude spoke of the "end of all things" and the "coming of the Lord," we often want to steal from the early recipients of these letters the encouragement the Holy Spirit meant to send to them to prepare for the consummation of their heritage as Jews.

What is the correct view of these letters is the fact that they were written directly to the Jewish Christians throughout the Roman Empire. The message of comfort and encouragement was directly relevant to them in their struggles to endure the end of their Jewish heritage. This does not mean that the message of encouragement is not relevant to us today. Only the historical events of the letters must be relevant only to the initial recipients of the letters. What the Holy Spirit said to the initial recipients would be the same encouragement He would say to us today if we were in similar circumstances.

Though the message was directed to saints who lived two thousand years ago, the encouragement is applicable to all saints who have found themselves in similar situations since that time. If the Spirit would deem it necessary to write a letter today to saints who were going into the same circumstances as the initial recipients of the letters, then He would say the same thing. Therefore, all those today who find themselves in similar circumstances as the initial recipients must gain encouragement from what was said to them. The Spirit needs to write no

more letters of encouragement. He needs to raise up no more prophets to speak hope to the people. If people desire encouragement from the Holy Spirit in times of trouble, **then they need to study the messages of 1, 2 Peter, James, Jude and Revelation.**

In our study of the Spirit's message of encouragement to those who were suffering through Jewish or Roman persecution, we are cautioned not to twist statements of specific finality in time as a reference to us today in reference to the end of time. In Matthew 24 and Luke 21, Jesus spoke of the "end." But the context of His prophecy was not the end of the world. It was the end of God's work through national Israel, which end took place when Rome finalized Israel in A.D. 70.

Nevertheless, any judgment of God "in time" illustrates His final judgment at the end of the world. We can apply in-time judgments as illustrations of end-

of-time judgment because of Jude's use of the prophecy of Enoch. Jude used the prophecy of Enoch to refer to the destruction of national Israel in A.D. 70. However, Enoch's prophecy was originally spoken in the historical context of the flood of Noah's day when God brought judgment on the ungodly by taking them away in the flood (Jd 14,15). But Jude used Enoch's prophecy in reference to the end of national Israel. We could take the liberty to assume that God will do the same at the end of the world. We do not weaken the power of the judgment of God at the end of time by keeping the original fulfillment of those prophecies that were originally made in reference to events that would transpire in time. All in-time judgments of God illustrate and reaffirm that there is a final judgment to come. In fact, in-time judgments affirm that God does not go back on His promise that the world as we know it is coming to an end.

Chapter 1

Survivor Destiny

In order to endure tough times, Christians must focus on their spiritual blessings that they have in Christ. In view of the existing circumstances in which Peter's readers lived, it was time to "count their blessings, and name them one by one." Because of the circumstances of the times, it was time for the disciples to be reminded of the spiritual blessings that they had in Christ, for it was going to get worse before it got better.

"Blessed be the God... who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."^{1:3} The apostles had hoped in Jesus while they were with Him during His earthly ministry. However, their hope was shattered when they stood at the foot of the cross and watched their leader die a painful death which they considered shameful and humiliating. After the crucifixion and burial, the two despondent

disciples on the road to Emmaus even said, “*We were hoping that it was He [Jesus] who was going to redeem Israel*” (Lk 24:21). But all hope was lost at the sound of a nail through an outstretch hand. To them, Jesus’ cry from the cross, “It is finished,” were words of finality, not beginning. To the disciples, their dreams in Jesus were finished.

But the cross was only the beginning of the story of their lives. All hope was regained when Jesus came forth from the tomb. All Christians now have a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In contrast to this, the hope of people today who place their faith in their dead prophets is in vain. What hope can a dead prophet give to those who will follow in his steps to the grave. But not so with Jesus. Our hope lives because He lives. It is for this reason that we do not place our faith in dead prophets, but in the living Son of God.

Because of the resurrection of the Son of God, our hope for an inheritance is specific. It is not abstract, though we cannot realize through our humanly defined words the full extent of that which is beyond our experience. Regardless of the limitations of our dictionary, there are some specifics understood that are enough to lay a solid foundation upon which we can have hope. The Holy Spirit assumes that even with our limited understanding of that which is beyond our experiences, we can have a strong hope that will take us through the most difficult times that can exist on this earth. Peter, therefore, seeks to define in few

words the inheritance that is awaiting every faithful disciple.

A. It is imperishable.

Ours is an inheritance that is not corrupted by the decay that sets in when any organic material of this world dies. Since our earthly body is organic after this world, it will decay away at death. But the nature of the environment which is coming for all Christians is an enduring immortality. Because we will be in the eternal presence of God who only has eternity, then we will drink from His eternal spirit, and thus, suffer death no more. This is an existence that is not affected by time. And thus, when Jesus comes, “*this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality*” (1 Co 15:53).

So when this perishable has put on the imperishable, and this mortal has put on immortality, then will be brought to pass the saying that is written, “Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Co 15:54).

Since that which causes the organic to decay away is gone in the eternal existence that is to come, then we will be in an environment wherein the concept of perishing will no longer exist. We will be able to strike from our dictionary the words “corruptible,” “perishable” and “mortal.” We look forward to an existence that is “*reserved in heaven for you.*”^{1:4}

B. It is undefiled.

This reserved inheritance is unstained by that which is of this world. It is unspoiled and pure in comparison to that which we now experience. The Greek word that is translated in the text “undefiled” is also used in reference to the purity of Jesus, our high priest, “*who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners ...*” (Hb 7:26). John pictured that those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life will go into a realm wherein “*by no means will there enter into it anything profane or one who defiles ...*” (Rv 21:27). The heavenly inheritance is undefiled because those who would defile it will be denied entrance.

C. It will not fade away.

In the description of the inheritance to come, Peter says that it “*does not fade away.*”^{1:4} He uses the Greek word *amarantos*. The name of the Amaranth flower comes from this word, which name is used by writers to refer to human immortality. And such we will experience in the inheritance to come. We will be immortal beings in the presence of the One who only has eternity.

D. It is reserved.

Peter’s statement is worded to say that it is not heaven that is reserved. It is that which we receive in the existence of heaven. Those who are in heaven will be blessed with immortality, and thus, away from the presence of those who

would defile them. They will not wither away because of the sustaining eternity we will receive in the presence of God. Those things that curse us in our mortal bodies in this life will not be a part of the eternal heavenly realm of existence to come. We thus seek deliverance from our fear of death with which we are burdened all our lifetime (Hb 2:15). Because of our toil in this world, we look for the eternal rest that is reserved for us in a heavenly environment.

E. We are kept by power.

In order to inherit that which is reserved for us, we “*are kept by the power of God through faith.*”^{1:5} We remember the statement of the Hebrew writer, that our Lord Jesus is now “*upholding all things by the word of His power.*” (Hb 1:3). Both the world in which we now live, and we ourselves, are kept in existence until this world fulfills its purpose for existence.

The words “kept” and “upholding” indicate that we do not sustain our existence on our own power. The world is not held together by the force of natural laws. It is God who holds together the natural laws in order to keep this world held together by natural laws. It is He who continues our bodily existence on this earth until our earthly time expires in death. We conclude, therefore, that God did not create the world, and then venture off to a galaxy far away. We are not deist, but of those who have faith that God sustains all that exists in the material and biological world in order to bring

His obedient children into the realm of His eternal existence.

It is interesting that the Greek word used here for “kept” can also be translated “guarded.” It is from the Greek word that means to be protected by a military guard. We are protected by our King Jesus while in this earthly realm of

existence. As long as we stay in His realm of protection, we are guarded from the roaring lion who seeks to devour us. Therefore, “*be sober, be vigilant. Your adversary the devil walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*”^{5:8}

Chapter 2

Survivor Joy

Hope for the inheritance that is set before the disciples of Christ should be an occasion to “*greatly rejoice.*”^{1:6} If our rejoicing has faded, then we need to be reassured by these statements of Peter and other writers who remind us of that which is promised to those who faithfully survive the struggles of this world. The New Testament writers wrote for the purpose stated by Paul when he pictured the final coming of Jesus and our resurrection: “*Therefore, comfort one another with these words*” (1 Th 4:18). We need to read more of the encouraging words of our Bible if we are in times of despair. “*So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ*” (Rm 10:17). A struggling faith needs a faithful word of encouragement.

Jesus forewarned His disciples of the suffering that would come as a result of living the life of a disciple. Therefore, He comforted them by saying, “*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake ...*” (Mt 5:10). The occasion for such rejoicing that was spoken by Peter, was spoken by Jesus during His earthly ministry. “*Rejoice and*

be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven” (Mt 5:12). We are blessed in persecution because we are reminded of the reward that will be given to all those who survive the persecution of this world.

A. The suffering will pass.

Peter’s view of suffering is comforting. The duration of the suffering was only “*for a little while.*”^{1:6} His readers must suffer the turmoil of the Roman war against the Jewish state. However, during the time of suffering, they must remember that it will soon pass. Paul sought to focus our minds beyond the “*little while*” of the suffering when he wrote, “*For our light affliction that is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*” (2 Co 4:17). The one suffering must always keep in mind that that which causes the suffering will eventually pass away. Even in comparison to our lifetime, which times are cursed with “*trouble and sorrow,*” we must remember, as the psalmist said, that our brief

life “*is cut off and we fly away*” (Ps 90:10; see Js 1:10,11). So we find comfort in the fact that our life “*is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away*” (Js 4:14).

Our life is simply a brief existence of time between two eternities. In view of this brevity, both Peter and James move us to be encouraged by the fact that our lives are but for a moment in comparison to eternity. And since this is true, then the focus of our brief life should be on that which is beyond life. With the following words, Jesus sought to focus our minds beyond the physical body:

And do not fear those who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Mt 10:28).

B. Life is too short to be taken seriously.

When we understand the brevity of life, and the eternal plan of God in the creation of this world, we have reason to rejoice in our sufferings. “*Count it all joy,*” James reminded his readers, “*when you fall into various trials, knowing that the trying of your faith produces patience*” (Js 1:2,3). Some poet correctly stated this truth:

O, trouble’s a ton,
Or a troubles an ounce;
Or a trouble is what you make it.
And it isn’t the fact that you’re
hurt that counts,
But only how did you take it.

As a pilot of our own airplane, I perfected my skills only when I ventured through thunderstorms of nature that tested my ability to fly an airplane. Once on a flight from Miami, Florida on our way to our home in the Caribbean, my family and I had to fly through a tropical depression of many thunderstorms. As we flew through the storms, the rain pounded against the windscreen of the airplane. The airplane was jolted from one turbulent shake to another. For what seemed to be an eternity, we were jostled around inside that small airplane until we finally flew clear of the storms. All my family was quite shaken by the experience, but they had trusted in their father pilot to take them through the storms. And this is exactly what we must do in life. We must always keep the following precious words of the psalmist in mind when we are flying through the storms of life:

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth is removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling (Ps 46:1-3)

C. Allow faith to be refined.

Too many Christians want to reach the promised land without going through the wilderness. A tested faith is “*much more precious than gold that perishes.*”^{1:7} This is true because a faith that is refined with suffering will “*be found to praise*

and honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ"^{1:7} Our refined faith takes our minds into the heavenly realm wherein Jesus Christ now exists at the right hand of God. It is a faith that allows us to see beyond the confines of our troubled world.

It is our tested faith that allows us to love Jesus beyond the realm of this existence of suffering. It is the nature of the tested faith to "*rejoice with joy inexpressible,*" regardless of the sufferings through which we must go in this world.^{1:8} Peter wants us to remember that it is this refined faith that is necessary in order to receive the outcome of that in which we believe and that for which we hope. So he reminds his readers that the outcome is "*the salvation of your souls.*"^{1:9}

For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake (Ph 1:29).

D. Thank God for your salvation.

It was the mystery of this salvation that sparked inquiry by the Old Testament prophets who were given only pieces of the puzzle that was finally revealed completely through Jesus Christ. They "*inquired and searched diligently,*"^{1:10} but were never given the opportunity to see the full picture of the mystery that would

be revealed through Jesus (Ep 3:3-5). It was only through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that they were given pieces of the picture that we now see clearly in Christ. Through the revealed pieces, therefore, "*they ministered the things that are now reported*" to us, and now written in the New Testament to build our faith.^{1:12}

We must note that before the revelation of the hidden things, all was a mystery. Paul used the word "mystery" in the context of Ephesians 3:3-5 to explain that it was something unknown at one time in history, but later revealed through actual fulfillment in life. Paul wrote, "*... by revelation He [God] made known to me the mystery*" (Ep 3:3). There is no longer a mystery of the gospel, for Paul stated that he "*wrote before in few words*" the fulfillment of that which was spoken through the prophets (Ep 3:3). And indeed he did in statements that defined the mystery as the death of Jesus for our sins, His burial, and His resurrection for our sins (See 1 Co 15:1-4). "*Therefore,*" Paul wrote, "*when you read you can understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, **which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men** [the prophets], **as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy** [New Testament] *apostles and prophets*" (Ep 3:4,5).*

Chapter 3

Survivor By The Word

Because the mystery of the gospel has been revealed, it is a time to “*gird up the loins of your mind.*”^{1:13} It is a time for sober living and to “*hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*”^{1:13} Our hope is our motivation not to live “*according to the former lusts*” of our lives that we lived before we became disciples.^{1:14} Our former life was a time when we “*walked according to the ways of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience*” (Ep 2:2). As God, who is not of the material world, is holy, Christians must separate themselves from worldly living through all holy living that is not of this world.^{1:15}

A. Live the obedient life.

Peter reminds us that we must be “*obedient children.*”^{1:14} The word “obedient” means that we do not live by “faith only.” As disciples of Jesus, **we must do something**. James asked, “*What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?*” (Js 2:14). The answer to the questions is obvious. “*Even so faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead*” (Js 2:17). So James seemingly interrogates the “faith only” person with the question, “*But are you willing to know, O foolish man, that faith without*

works is dead?” (Js 2:20). And then James concludes with the demonstrative statement: “*You see then that a man is justified by works and **not by faith only***” (Js 2:24).

The theological hypocrite is the one who stands up before an audience and proclaims that everyone is saved by “faith only,” but in the next breath he reminds the audience that they must obediently show up next Sunday morning, and especially with their contribution.

Obedience to God’s commands does not assume that we are either saved by works or living legally. It is a condemning doctrine to preach that one is saved by ignoring obedience to what God commands as to do in order to be saved. It is an ungrateful faith to believe that one will enter a final rest for which he did not work. We must remember that God, “*without respect of persons judges according to each one’s work.*”^{1:17} And work assumes obedience to commands. Work assumes obedience in response to grace (See 2 Co 4:15). Therefore, Peter admonishes that his audience must “*pass the time of your journey on earth in fear.*”^{1:17}

The lazy disciple must remember that we “*were not redeemed with corruptible things ... but with the precious blood of Christ ...*”^{1:18,19} If this fact does not motivate faithful obedience, then we are doing as the Hebrew writer stated concerning some of his readers:

Of how much severer punishment do you suppose will he be thought worthy who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and has counted as a common thing the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? (Hb 10:29).

B. Live in thanksgiving.

The redemptive work of the Son of God was planned before the creation of the world.^{1:20} Of necessity, redemption from sin had to be planned also in order that we not be able to accuse God of being fiendish in His creation of those whom He knew would separate themselves from Him through sin. There would have been no righteousness in creation if there were no plan in place to reconcile and restore sinners to their Creator. The cross, therefore, was not an accident. When John stated of Jesus, “*He came to His own and His own did not receive Him*” (Jn 1:11), he was not saying that the Jews’ rejection of Jesus was an accident. The coming of the Son was planned, and the rejection was fore-known. **It was God’s plan to use the rejection to accomplish our redemption.** If there had been no rejection, then there would have been no cross. If there were no cross, then there would have been no redemption. The cross was thus the eternal plan of God to offer redemption to humanity. Redemption “*with the precious blood of Christ*”^{1:19} was not an afterthought of God to bring His creation back into His fellowship.

The redemption came to us through

the grace of God. Listen to what Paul said concerning this grace, and what it causes in the hearts of the redeemed:

For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace that is reaching many people may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God (2 Co 4:15).

Grace moved God to give His only begotten Son (Jn 3:16). Our response to God’s grace is our overwhelming thanks, and certainly our giving as He gave to us. The life of a disciple is a life of **thanksgiving**. An old Chinese proverb reads, “When you drink from the stream, remember the spring.” It is as Seneca stated, “Nothing is more honorable than a grateful heart.” We would be honorable disciples by remembering where we quenched our thirst for redemption through the grace of God.

C. Live as begotten children.

In response to the grace of God, Peter’s readers had obeyed the gospel of the death of Jesus for their sins and experienced the resurrection by being raised out of a tomb of baptismal water. We cannot overlook the significance of this example as it is stated in the text of verses 22-25. Peter declared, “... *you have purified your souls in obeying the truth* ...”^{1:22} The verb tense of “have purified” is perfect participle. Something happened in their lives in the past that continued with results into the present. That which was continuing was their “*sincere love of the brethren.*”^{1:22} This way of life

began at a point of time in the past. Peter explains the time in the statement, “*having been born again.*”^{1:23} The verb tense here is perfect passive. In other words, they were acted upon at a time in the past. Some translations use the phrase “begotten again.” We are born free of sin in our physical birth, but sin later enters into our lives (Rm 3:23). So we must be born again in order to live the sinless life under the continual cleansing blood of Jesus (1 Jn 1:7).

Their sanctified life began according to what Jesus stated: “*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*” (Jn 3:5). Paul used the passive tense of the verb when he reminded the Roman Christians “*that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death*” (Rm 6:3). When one is born again, he is passively baptized by someone. He is washed passively by God with the blood of the Lamb. In words of action, one is lowered in a grave of water by someone else, and then cleansed of sin by God who acts upon our soul. And thus, when the repentant believer comes forth from the grave of water, he has obeyed the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus for the remission of his sins (At 2:38; 22:16). He is thus born again of the water and of the Holy Spirit.

It is the word of God that reveals this message to us, and thus, Peter states that we have “*been born again ... by the word of God that lives and abides.*”^{1:23}

If the word of God did not exist today, then all men would be ignorant of what

one must do in order to be born again. For this reason Peter reminds us to be thankful that “*the word of the Lord endures forever.*”^{1:25} It is this word that is the medium by which the good news of Jesus’ death for our sins on the cross and His resurrection for our hope is revealed.^{1:25} It is this word that reveals the eternal mystery of God that has now been revealed (Ep 3:3-5).

We can now understand the prayer statement of Jesus in John 17:17: “*Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.*” Because “*the seed is the word of God*” (Lk 8:11), when it is preached it brings forth fruit when people obey the gospel that is revealed through the written word of God. When the word of the gospel is preached, then comes to pass that of which James wrote: “*Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth ...*” (Js 1:18).

Christians existed in the province of Achaia because Paul preached the gospel in all Achaia. He later wrote to these disciples that “*I have brought you forth through the gospel*” which he had preached to them (1 Co 4:15; 15:1-4). We must never forget the revelation that Jesus stated: “*The words that I speak to you, they are spirit and they are life*” (Jn 6:63). They are spirit and life because it is through the medium of words that the story of the cross and resurrection are revealed. Not only this, but revealed also is how the repentant believer can join in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus in obedience to the gospel (See Rm 6:3-6).

Chapter 4

Survivor Spirituality

In the first letter of Peter, Peter writes with his heritage in mind in order to address the new nation of God that was born out of national Israel over thirty-five years before. The covenant and law that God had with Israel came to a close in A.D. 30, but now the state of Israel was coming to a close in less than five years and will be gone forever. There was a new nation of God's people on earth that had taken the place of the old. A spiritual had replaced the physical. As opposed to the citizens of the old who were rising up in rebellion against Rome, the new citizens of the spiritual were characterized by an example of submission, not only to God, but also to civil government.

This is the exhortation from God to all Christians throughout history who would find themselves as residents in hostile environments. Those who would be disciples of Jesus must learn the spirit of submission to civil government in order to bring glory to the God of heaven.

These words of Peter are some of the best there are in the Holy Scriptures that define the difference between the religions of man, and the faith of those who have submitted to the one true and living God. Those who would be tempted to take up arms and commit acts of terrorism and war to promote a theocratic religion, cannot claim to have a faith that originates from God if they live in rebellion against civil government.

Peter's readers were living in a time where Jewish nationalists were launching acts of terrorism against a state (the Roman Empire) that sought to maintain law and order. The nationalistic Jewish terrorists were rebelling against Rome in order to promote their own theocratic state. In this context, Peter was writing to Jewish Christians that they not be caught up in such carnality. They must remember who they are as the spiritual nation of God that is without territory. They must remember that there is a separation between the spiritual nation of God and any state government that is of this world. They must, therefore, keep in mind Paul's words that were written many years before:

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but powerful through God for the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Co 10:4,5).

“New born babes,”^{2:2} as the citizens of God's holy nation are continually in the struggle of “laying aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisies and envies and all evil speakings.”^{2:1} It is significant to notice how Peter says they are able to do this. They “desire the sincere milk of the word.”^{2:2} They study their

Bibles, and if they do not, then they are not babes in Christ. We must not forget that a disciple of Jesus is always identified by his worn Bible. Because we study our Bibles, we are not as misguided religionists today who seek out a concert assembly of emotionally charged participants who desire to lose control of themselves in an hour of ecstasy. Such are not as the noble-minded Bereans who “received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily ...” (At 17:11).

One’s identity as a disciple is not in a colorful assembly, but in a daily thirst for the word of God, and a daily living of that word. Therefore, unless they be misled by the religions surrounding them, Peter writes to clarify the identity of the citizens of the kingdom of God.

A. Lay aside wickedness.

In order to accomplish their desire to be disciples of Jesus, disciples must do as Peter instructed. “*Laying aside*”^{2:1} is from the Greek word that was used when one took off his garments and laid them aside. In this context, Peter exhorts that they discard the old way of behavior in order to live the life of a disciple. They must “*cast off the works of darkness*” and “*put on the armor of light*” (Rm 13:12). James said the same: “*Therefore, lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word that is able to save your souls*” (Js 1:21).

If we would seek a list of specifics as to what must be “laid aside,” then Paul

listed them in the text of Colossians 3:8-10. Works (behavior) of darkness would be things as anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy speech and lying (See Ep 4:22-31). The list of the works of the flesh go on in Galatians 5:19-21: fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envyings, drunkenness, revelries, and the such like.

A visitor to the coal mining area of eastern America once noticed a unique flower that grew in the midst of the coal mines. He wondered why the flower was not dirty from the coal dust of the area. So he threw some coal dust on the flower and the dust immediately slid off the pedals of the flower. What the Holy Spirit through Peter, James and Paul was seeking to convey to us is that if we lay aside the old garments of darkness, we too will eventually be citizens in the kingdom where wickedness will simply slide off. We will not be tempted beyond that which we are able to bear (1 Co 10:13). When we have resisted the devil, he will flee (Js 4:7).

B. Put on Christ.

We must understand that when one puts on Christ, it is as John wrote: “*Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has not seen Him or known Him*” (1 Jn 3:6). It is not that putting on Christ is a guarantee against committing a sin. What John means is that those who abide in Christ are no longer living a life of sin. But those who would continue a

life of sin, do not know the One who died for their sins. John clarified this in the following statement: *“Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous”* (1 Jn 3:7). The one who is obediently practicing that which is according to the will of God, is righteous because the grace of God is appropriated to his sins. It is the righteousness of Jesus that declares one redeemed. When one has put on Christ in baptism, God puts away his sins through the continual washing of his sins by the blood of Jesus (1 Jn 1:7).

It is not good enough to “put off” wickedness unless we “put on” something in its place. “Putting off” leaves an emotional vacuum. Unless one fills the vacuum, invariably he will return to that which he “put off” (Compare Mt 12:43-45; 2 Pt 2:20-22).

In order to be those from whom wickedness slides off, we must **“put on the Lord Jesus Christ”** (Rm 13:14). This “putting on” started the day we came dripping wet from the waters of baptism. *“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ”* (Gl 3:27). Those who have not passed through the waters of baptism in order to wash away sins (At 22:16), have not put on Christ. They have left themselves vulnerable to return to darkness. Faith alone is not sufficient to keep one from returning to one’s former way of life. One must actively put on obedience in order to survive the committed life. Those who have obediently dressed themselves in the garment of Jesus Christ,

and subsequently walk obediently in the light of God’s commands (1 Jn 1:7), have shielded themselves from darkness.

C. Thirst for the word of God.

In order to know what to do to walk obediently in the light, one must know where to walk. We must keep in mind that our fortitude against wickedness is conditioned on our obedience to the word of God. It is not within our power to determine our own steps (Jr 10:23). As citizens of God’s nation, we must continually *“desire the sincere milk of the word so that”* we may grow.^{2,2} If there is no growth in the grace and knowledge of Jesus, then spiritual death will soon come (2 Pt 3:18). We must, therefore, *“hunger and thirst after righteousness”* (Mt 5:6). We must be as David described the true disciple: *“... his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night”* (Ps 1:2). As a disciple of Jesus, we must be able to say, *“Your word I have hidden in my heart so that I might not sin against You”* (Ps 119:11). If we lay up the word of God in our hearts, then the world will slide off. We will be able to resist the devil and he will flee.^{5,9} It is as James said, *“Resist the devil and he will flee from you”* (Js 4:7).

D. Be a living example.

Each disciple has come *“to Him [Christ] as to a living stone.”*^{2,4} Peter reflected on that which revived their hope as Jesus’ first disciples. God *“has begotten us again to a living hope through*

the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."^{1:3}

Jesus Christ is not another head stone in a graveyard that marks the termination of so many self-proclaimed prophets. He is not as the crookedly cut stone that the builders would reject in building a building. On the contrary, He is the exact cornerstone from which the measurements of the building have been made. He is the "*chief cornerstone*" of all that we are as the house of God.^{2:6}

Christians are the "*living stones*" who *are being built up a spiritual house*" by their spiritual measurement from the Chief Corner Stone.^{2:5} Those who measure themselves from the image of Jesus Christ, are offering unto God their lives as a reasonable response to the Sonship of Jesus (Rm 12:1). And thus, they have come to Jesus "*to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*"^{1:5}

In our offering, there can be no compromises. It is as someone said, "Compromise is always wrong when it means to sacrifice a principle." We must not be like the young soldier during the American civil war of the nineteenth century who supposedly wanted to play it safe. So he dressed in the grey pants of the uniform of the Confederate Army of the south, but with the blue coat of the uniform of the Union Army of the north. The problem was that he was shot at by both sides in the conflict. When we make our sacrifice for Jesus, there must be no doubt as to which side of the mortal conflict we stand in our war against the forces of evil. Paul exhorted that every Christian

"*put on the whole armor of God ...*" (Ep 6:11). In doing so, we will "*be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might*" (Ep 6:10).

During the historical times of the day, many false christs had arisen among the Jews in order to call the people to be patriotic in restoring the Jewish state as it was in the days of David. During His prophecy of the fall of the Jewish state, Jesus prophesied that self-proclaimed christs would come. He prophesied, "*For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ.' And they will deceive many*" (Mt 24:5). But Jesus warned, "*Then if anyone says to you, 'Lo, here is Christ,' or 'There,' do not believe it*" (Mt 24:23). Nevertheless, many did believe the self-proclaimed christs, and thus, they were greatly disappointed either when the self-proclaimed christs were killed in the Jewish wars against Rome, or when they were taken into captivity after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. But Peter reassured his readers that the true Living Stone will not disappoint them.^{2:6} He will be good for His promises.

The Living Stone that the rebellious Jews rejected (Jn 1:11), became "*a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.*"^{2:8} He became such to everyone who would not accept Him as the Christ sent from God. So "*they stumbled, being disobedient to the word.*"^{2:8} And when the word of the gospel is preached throughout the world today, the same rejection happens.

Peter did not mean in the statement, "*to this they were appointed,*" that God had predestined them to rejection. Such

thinking would make God fiendish for allowing someone to be born into this world whom He had predestined to burn in hell against his own volition. The “appointed” were “*vessels of wrath prepared for destruction*” (Rm 9:22) because they chose to rebel against the living God. God is not willing that any should perish, and thus the offer of the gospel of salvation is to all people (2 Pt 3:9). God has predestined the destruction that would come upon all those who would choose to reject the gospel, but He has not predestined anyone individually to reject the gospel. Therefore, if one chooses to reject Jesus Christ, then he becomes “appointed” to the destruction that God predestined would come upon all the disobedient (See 2 Th 1:6-9). If one rejects the gospel, then he has joined with those who are appointed to destruction.

But the obedient have become a part of the royal priesthood.^{2:9} They are the new holy nation.^{2:9} God “*has called you unto His kingdom and glory*” (1 Th 2:12). “*God has not called us to impurity, but in holiness*” (1 Th 4:7). He has called us into this royal priesthood through the preaching of the gospel (2 Th 2:14). It is the message of the gospel that calls individuals into making a choice concerning obedience to that which God requires we do in order to wash away our sins (See At 22:16). It can be no other way, lest we make God fiendish by suggesting that He has predestined individuals to either heaven or hell.

As a reminder, Peter wrote, “*You in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God.*”^{2:10} Those who are

outside Christ are not the people of God. In order to become a part of the people of God, one must enter into the holy nation through the door of obedience to the gospel. Paul explained it clearly: “*For as many of you as were **baptized into Christ** have put on Christ*” (Gl 3:27). One cannot claim to be of the people of God **unless he has put on Christ**. And one cannot put on Christ **unless he is immersed into Christ**. In view of this fact, what do we think Satan would do to keep individuals from becoming a part of the people of God?

If Paul’s preceding statement is true—and it is—then Satan would convince people to think that they were the people of God on the other side of the waters of the new birth. He would convince people that a “sinner’s prayer” or “an acceptance of Jesus into one’s heart” was all that is needed to bring one into a saving relationship with God. Unfortunately, there will be a great deal of disappointed people in the judgment who have not dressed themselves with Christ by refusing to be buried and raised with Christ (See Rm 6:3-6).

E. Be a sojourner and pilgrim.

For those Christians who would engage themselves in efforts to make war against governments who function for our peace, they need to remember that our citizenship is far above any government of this world. We must remember that “*our citizenship is in heaven*” (Ph 3:20). And because our citizenship is in heaven, Peter exhorts that we “*pass the*

time of your journey on earth in fear.”^{1:17}

We must be sojourners and pilgrims who war against the lusts of the flesh, not against the state. Paul exhorted, “*put on the whole armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil*” (Ep 6:11). Sojourners are passing through every nation that comes into existence. Pilgrims have their minds set on a new destination that is not of this world (Cl 3:1,2). The sojourner, therefore, can remain faithful in his journey because his mind is focused on that which is beyond the land in which he is sojourning. It could not have been said better than in the following words:

Brethren, I count not myself to have laid hold. But one thing I do, forgetting those things that are behind and reaching forward to those things that are before. I press toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus

(Ph 3:13,14).

As we sojourn among the unbelievers, we maintain the integrity of our holiness through honesty. We heed the lifestyle that Jesus directed: “*Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven*” (Mt 5:16). When the unbeliever observes our good works, he has the opportunity to “*glorify God in the day of visitation,*” the day when God brings judgment on national Israel.^{2:12} In other words, when a Roman soldier came breaking through a Christian’s door, a humble disciple should be discovered inside the house, one who was submissive to the law of the state in which he lived. It would be a moment when a disciple of Jesus should immediately confess that he was a Christian, and not some Jewish insurrectionist working against the state of Rome.

Chapter 5 Survivor Submission

Since the Jewish disciples to whom Peter was writing were living in an era where nationalistic Jews were taking up arms against the Roman state, no better words could have been written to the citizens of God’s spiritual nation than what are inscribed in 1 Peter 2:13-25. This is the Holy Spirit’s instructions concerning our behavior as citizens of any earthly kingdom. Though we understand that our real citizenship is not of any kingdom of this world, we must be subservient to the civil governments of this world. We must

rejoice when presidents and kings rule over men in the fear of God. The last words from King David exemplified the blessing of God-fearing rulers:

The God of Israel said. The Rock of Israel spoke to me. “He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he will be as the light of the morning when the sun rises, even a morning without clouds, as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain (2 Sm 23:3,4).

Rulers of governments must remember that *“righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people”* (Pv 14:34). Therefore, *“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord ...”* (Ps 33:12).

When righteousness is not typical of the king’s house, however, then Christians must remember that their King in heaven is over all kings of this earth (1 Tm 6:15). It is sometimes necessary, therefore, when the earthly rulers work against God, that disciples of King Jesus must take a stand for what is right. It is sometimes as Peter and John said to the religious rulers of Jerusalem: *“Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things that we have seen and heard”* (At 4:19,20).

A. Live as a submitted citizen.

If there is no oppression from the civil government, then Christians, as citizens of a state government, must submit as Jesus to the laws of the land (See Mt 17:24-27; Mk 12:17). Therefore, we will not fail in our responsibilities as Paul wrote to Titus: *“Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work”* (Ti 3:1). As citizens, we must assume our citizenship responsibilities *“to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, forbearing, showing all meekness to all men”* (Ti 3:2; see Ep 4:29). We thus obey the laws of the land for the Lord’s sake.^{2:13} We will always remember Paul’s exhortation to all Christians in reference to our

relationship with civil government:

Therefore, I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior (1 Tm 2:1-3).

“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake”^{2:13} In order to give glory to the One whom we have submitted ourselves, we must submit to the authority of the state in which we live. We must remember that the authorities of the state have been *“sent by Him [God] for the punishment of evildoers.”*^{2:14} And since we seek to live in a civil environment of peace, civil government must exist.

As Peter walks us through these instructions, we must keep in mind that he is teaching that church and state must remain separate. It is not the work of the church to be the state in which both believers and unbelievers reside. It is not the work of the state to determine the moral standards by which the citizens of the kingdom of God must behave themselves. We will not become as a Nazi Germany when a few unbelievers controlled the moral direction of the state.

The Bible is not a constitution for the state, and thus the church must always function in the spiritual and moral environment of the citizens who live under the law of the civil state. The problem comes when either the state takes on

the function of the spiritual kingdom of God (the church), or when the church seeks to establish the civil laws for the government. Christianity is not a theocracy. Christians must never find themselves in a situation where “Christianity” becomes the law of the state, and then Christians use the sword of the state to impose the law of God on the citizens of the state.

Christianity is not like Islam. There is no “Sharia Law” in Christianity that must be imposed on the citizens of the state when Christians are the majority citizenship of the state. If one would choose to be a citizen of the spiritual kingdom of Christ, then he must be called into citizenship through a voluntary submission to King Jesus. One does not become a Christian at the point of a gun, but through the appeal of the gospel.

What happened during the years of the Dark Ages of Europe was the development of an apostate religion. The adherents of this religion (Roman Catholicism) assumed the power of a state in order to intimidate by persecution those who would not submit to the dictates of the state religion, Roman Catholicism. In order to propagate this state religion, and to expand into Palestine, Crusades were organized to make war with Muslims who controlled the “Holy Land.” What transpired during the era of the Crusades, was actually two theocratic states making war with one another. Neither theocracy was from God, and thus, historians make a critical error by assuming that the Crusades were a band of sword-bearing Christians in Europe making war with

Muslims in Palestine. The reality of the matter was simply one army of apostates making war with army of those who did not accept Jesus as the Son of God. Christianity had long ceased to exist among the army of apostates who marched in crusades from Europe to Palestine.

We must not forget that every Christian must “*be subject to the governing authorities*” of the civil state (Rm 13:1). This means that Christianity is not a civil state. The reason for the submission is that “*there is no authority except from God. The authorities that exist are ordained by God*” (Rm 13:1). The authorities of the state are separate from the Christians who are to submit.

It is not that a specific civil government is directly instituted by God to govern the people. The constitution of a state is not inspired by God. Only Israel of old had such a constitution. Today, the rule of civil government is instituted by God to strike terror in the hearts of evildoers who would introduce social chaos into society (Rm 13:3). Therefore, if one would do evil, he should “*be afraid, for the [government] does not bear the sword in vain because he is the minister of God, an avenger to execute wrath on him who does evil*” (Rm 13:4).

Under the law of civil government, Christians can “*live as free men.*”^{2:16} There is no freedom without law, and thus, law protects the free from coming into the bondage of tyrants. Not only is this a principle of living under civil government, but it is also a principle of living under the law of Christ. We have

gazed “into the perfect law of liberty,” and thus, as James said, continue “to abide in it ...” (Js 1:25). However, though we are set free by law, we cannot use our “freedom as a covering for evil” to sin against law.^{2:16}

We live under grace that brings God’s mercy into our imperfect behavior, but our freedom through grace must not be used as an occasion to live contrary to the law of God. Jude said that some “turn the grace of our God into licentiousness,” and thus they “deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” (Jd 4). If one would behave sinfully according to the law of God, thinking that the grace of God covers his willful sin, then he has denied that Jesus is the Master and Lord of his behavior. But in living the submitted life to our Lord Jesus, it is only natural to “honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.”^{2:17}

B. Live as a servant.

At the time Peter wrote, over half of the population of the Roman Empire was composed of bondservants (slaves). It was among these that the freedom of the gospel spread rapidly throughout the Empire. The bondservants, therefore, needed specific encouragement to emulate in their lives the behavior of a disciple of Jesus. Therefore, Peter instructs the Christian bondservants, “be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh.”^{2:18} He goes point of stressing that it is commendable to submit even if

“one endures grief, suffering wrongfully.”^{2:19} Here is what he meant: “But if when you do right and suffer, you take it patiently, **this is commendable with God.**”^{2:20}

It is commendable to suffer even though one is innocent because of what Jesus said to those who drove nails through His innocent hands on the cross. “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Lk 23:34). Such godly suffering was reflected in the last words of Stephen when he was stoned to death: “Lord, do not lay this sin to their charge” (At 7:60). What the enemies of all righteousness were doing in stoning Stephen was sin against God, but still he called on God’s grace that they not be charged with this sin. This is the spirit of true discipleship. When we are suffering wrongfully, therefore, it would be good to remember that it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord” (Rm 12:19).

(We must not forget what was transpiring in the final days of Rome’s war against nationalistic Jews. Some of the bondservants who were slaves to Romans, were Christians. We can only imagine the dilemma these Christians would be in as Romans with Christian slaves persecuted Jewish Christians. This was a moral dilemma that was certainly far beyond any employee submitting to an employer in our modern-day economic culture. Imagine being in the situation that some Christian slaves were in during the war of Rome against national Israel.)

C. Live like Jesus.

Since the Jewish Christians were about to suffer indirectly the punishment that was going to be measured out on the nationalistic Jewish insurrectionists, they needed to remember that “*Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps.*”^{2:21} Jesus could have commanded that we willfully suffer. But His words would have been empty without His voluntary example of suffering for us. In living the life of a disciple, we must never forget that words of instruction alone are not the main thing. Living the life of the words is the unveiling of the power of the words. Someone correctly advised:

When telling your children a story,
And you use yourself as a sample,
Perhaps you should do it as a warning,
And not a shining example.

Peter said “*that by **doing right** you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.*”^{2:15} When Jesus “*was reviled, **He did not revile again. When He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.***”^{2:23} When Paul and Barnabas passed through cities where there were Christians who had been such for no longer than a few months, they prepared these new disciples for their future. Luke records that Paul and Barnabas exhorted the new disciples “*to continue in the faith, and teaching that **we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom***

of God” (At 14:22).

We must remember our sins for which Jesus suffered in order to bear “*in His own body on the tree.*”^{2:24} We always count our many blessings we have in Christ, but sometimes, we must remember all our sins for which He suffered to bring us into Christ. It was by His wounds that we are made alive. We have heard the voice of Jesus because He laid down His life for us (Jn 10:16,17). And because He laid down His life for us, we were drawn to Him for healing. We must let Him know through our surrendered living that His suffering was not in vain.

Many years ago, there was published in *Life Magazine* of America an incident that happened after the American Civil War between 1861 and 1865. The Lord’s Supper was being served in a church building in Richmond, Virginia when a freed slave walked forward in order to partake of the Supper. The membership began to stir until an old man walked up and kneeled down beside the freed slave. Because of the example of the old man, the entire congregation of defeated slave-owning Southerners eventually followed his example and kneeled with the former slave. The old man was General Robert E. Lee who had led the Confederate Army of the southern states of America against the freedom of the slaves. He had in 1865 surrendered the Confederate Army to the Union Army of the northern states, and then, led an example for his fellow slave owners of the south to surrender themselves to the new social order of life in America.

All to Jesus I surrender,
 All to Him I freely give;
 I will ever love and trust Him,
 In His presence daily live.
 (Judson W. van de Venter - 1896)

Chapter 6

Survivor Families

The theme of Peter's exhortations of chapter 3 are expressed in a quoted statement from Psalm 34:12: "*What man is he who desires life and loves many days, that he may see good?*" The answer, of course, is that we all want to see good days. The psalmist explained what was required in order to enjoy a good life, which requirements Peter places directly in the middle of his own.^{3:10-12} So in order to see these good days, Peter sets out to explain what is necessary in our behavior as the disciples of Jesus in order to enjoy that about which Jesus promised in John 10:10: "*I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*"

One might wonder why Peter, in the historical context of the consummation of national Israel, would discuss family relationships. The answer why he gives some final encouragement to families was inferred in Jesus' prophecy about forty years before: "*And woe to those who are with child and to those who are nursing infants in those days*" (Mt 24:19). The days of fleeing were especially trying to all family relationships. Paul would even advise that men and women remain single: "*Therefore, I suppose that this is good because of the*

present distress, that it is good for a man to remain [celebrate and single] as he is" (1 Co 7:26).

Jesus continued to warn, "*And you will be betrayed both by parents and brothers and relatives and friends*" (Lk 21:16). On another occasion, but still in the context of His prophesy concerning the termination of national Israel, Jesus prophesied, "*And a brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child. And the children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death*" (Mt 10:21).

In times of war, family structures break down. What Peter's readers were heading into was a war environment that Rome would launch across the Empire. They would unleash the sword against Jewish insurrectionists to once and for all break the back of the Jewish rebellion. It would be a time when Jewish fathers and husbands needed to remain committed to their families in order that their families survive. Wives and mothers needed to be strong in following the leadership of their husbands. As their part, children needed to be in subjection to their parents. We thus assume that in Peter's mind all the social turmoil that would come in reference to the end of

national Israel drove him to write these special exhortations to Jewish Christian families across the Roman Empire.

In order to reassure Christian families, Peter begins by first speaking to wives,^{3:1-6} and then to husbands,^{3:7} then generally to the spiritual nation of God, the church.^{3:8-12} He concludes by addressing the family of God in the present environment in which they were enduring in order to maintain their faith.^{3:13-22} The abundant life is enjoyed when our families are directed by God, when our citizenship is maintained by godly behavior, and when we conduct our lives as disciples of the One who reigns over all things.

A. Society needs family norms.

In reference to the domestic relationships of the family, society always needs norms in which to be instructed and guided. These norms can either come from God, or from the society in which we live. Since the family is the heart of the function of society, then any dysfunction in society can be traced back to dysfunctional homes. And when discussing dysfunction in our homes, we assume that the norms of the world have been, to some extent, used to guide our families. Through both Paul and Peter, the Holy Spirit seeks to alert us to the invasion of worldly norms into our families. In the context of Ephesians 5:22-24, Paul's Spirit-directed pen revealed added information to that of Peter in this context.

Peter's instructions are placed in this text in view of the current circum-

stances in which his readers lived, and the trying days that were coming. In view of what Peter prophesied in 4:7, that "*the end of all things is at hand,*" we conclude from the Holy Spirit's instructions in this context that strong family units would be needed to survive the struggles that were coming. What the Spirit says, therefore, must be understood in the immediate historical context of the day. However, his exhortations should be reviewed at any time in history when the disciples are undergoing struggles that would test their faith. When in struggle, therefore, Christians should focus on Spirit-inspired principles that define Christians to be disciples of Christ.

B. The wife is the trend setter.

The key "player" in establishing a stable family in a troubled society is the example of the wife in reference to setting an example of respect and submission for the children. Though society as a whole may be in a state of chaos, it is the responsibility of the wife and mother to bring peace and calm to the family through the demeanor of her strength. This was particularly true at a time when arrogant Jews were defiantly rebelling against the state of Rome. In order to prepare their children for the coming years of arrogant defiance that would be typical of the insurrectionist Jews, the Holy Spirit instructs Christian mothers to set for their children an example of respect and submission. Her respect for her husband through submission would help prevent her children from becom-

ing radicalized by nationalistic Jews after they left home.

It is the spirit of all Christians to manifest submission in order to establish peace in domestic and civil relationships. Paul introduced his instructions concerning the family with the statement, "...submitting to one another in the fear of God" (Ep 5:21). The culture of the church must be identified by the principle of submission. On the part of every disciple, the teaching of submission starts in the home. If submission is not taught in the home, then the home will produce anarchists as citizens of society.

C. Submission governs society.

Submission is the social mechanism by which society is held today. The character of submission begins in the home and is taught to children through example. And in order to develop this essential quality in the character of future citizens of society, examples must be illustrated for the children. For this reason, therefore, Peter mandated that wives "*be submissive to your own husbands.*"^{3:1}

The wife must understand that her work of submission is a ministry of leadership. She leads in the character development of her children by manifesting how one should submit to civil authority and God. If there is no example in societies of submission in the family, then the children are emotionally ill equipped to face a world that is controlled by Satan. They leave the family with a spirit of defiance, not knowing how to conduct themselves with their fellow citizens in

society as a whole. Mobs and riots in the streets of a society are evidence that submission was not taught in the homes of the families of the society.

In order for a wife to render submission to the head of the family, the head must be present in the family. Fatherless homes often produce anarchists in society. Children who grow up in a home environment where there is no father, cannot learn from the example of a wife submitting to a husband. Societies that are cursed with marches and riots in the streets are usually those societies with many fatherless homes.

D. God gives law for purposes.

Since the Holy Spirit gave the instructions to wives to submit to their husbands, then we must conclude that there is a divine purpose for the instructions. If wives do not submit to their own husbands, therefore, we must expect that something unfortunate will happen in the lives of the children when they leave the home.

God did not give arbitrary instructions for the home with no purpose in mind. There were reasons behind the instructions. Since the instructions come from God, then we would first obey the instructions without asking questions because we seek to obey God. But if we need reasons for the instructions, then we must simply observe the dysfunctions of society in order to discover what happens when people do not follow the instructions of God.

E. Submission for evangelism.

In the context of Peter's instructions, there is a contrast made between the way of the world for the married woman, and the example of the godly disciple. A lack of submission on the part of the wife manifests to the world arrogance and defiance on the part of the wife, which is the way of the world. But in the domestic setting that Peter addresses, his reason for giving instructions concerning the submissive example of the wife is not only for the preservation of society, but also for evangelistic reasons. The reason for the submission is for the purpose "*that if any [unbelieving husbands] do not obey the word, they, without the word, may be won by the behavior of the wives.*"^{3:1}

This is evangelism through the power of performing the word of God. This is the meaning of Jesus' mandate for unity which He gave to His disciples during His earthly ministry. They were to maintain their unity with one another "*so that the world may believe that You sent Me*" (Jn 17:21). The same principle of godly behavior should be manifested by the wife who is married to an unbeliever. The unbelieving husband may be won to Christ when he "*observes your pure behavior combined with fear*" of God.^{3:2} If a woman is married to one who is not a Christian, then her submissive behavior is evangelistic, and thus, she is showing her love for her husband in order to illustrate the love of Christ. As Christ submitted to our needs through the cross, and thus drew us to Him, then submissive

wives might draw their unbelieving husbands to Christ through their submission.

F. Dress for successful outreach.

In order to be successful in this evangelistic outreach, the adornment of the wife's body "*should not be outward,*" and thus according to the world.^{3:3} Godly wives must recognize that their evangelistic outreach to their unbelieving husbands begins in the closet and before their mirrors. When the Christian wife steps out of the house and into the public, there is a manner by which she can be identified as a woman of dignity, and not a woman of the world. A godly woman manifests her submission to her husband by dressing in a manner by which she is not advertising her body to other men.

Christian women must "*dress themselves in modest clothing.*" (1 Tm 2:9). Though the word "modest" may be subject to the definition of present times, there is still something that is considered modesty by the world. If a Christian woman first desires the attention of worldly men in her dress, then the concept of modesty and submission to her husband takes second place in her eyes when she sees herself in a mirror. Every Christian woman must remember that in the eyes of the Holy Spirit there is such a thing as modesty. Christian women should dress themselves as if they were presenting themselves before the mirror of the Holy Spirit. When a woman dresses herself in order to sexually arouse a man, then she knows that she has dressed immodestly.

Peter instructs that the Christian woman not adorn herself with the revealing nature of those clothes that advertise her body.^{3:3} She should dress herself with the modest apparel by which Christian wives reveal their inward spiritual focus (See 1 Tm 2:8-15). The wearing of jewelry should indicate that she is one who seeks to focus on godly matters. Both clothes and jewelry should manifest the dignity of a God-fearing woman who seeks to reveal “*the imperishable quality of a meek and quiet spirit.*”^{3:4} It is this inner character that “*is precious in the sight of God.*”^{3:4} It cannot be as the world would state, “A wife is usually satisfied with only two things: a mink over her shoulders, and a husband under her thumb.” It is both of these “styles” of behavior against which Peter and Paul advised.

G. Dress for respect.

Spiritual and physical adornment characterize the godly woman, for it is the spiritual that is revealed by the outward physical appearance. “*Holy women who trusted in God*” in the past “*adorned themselves*” inwardly with submission “*to their own husbands.*”^{3:5} Former godly wives maintained their exalted position in society through their submission to their husbands. Whenever they left this position, they were stepping down from their leadership of the home. The godly wives of old realized, as someone said, that “a good wife is like a port in a storm. A bad wife is like a storm in a port.” But it should be as one grateful

husband wrote, “A loyal wife is one who sits up with you when you are sick and puts up with you when you are well.”

In the context of the wives of the times when Peter wrote, it would be the wise wives who would see through her husbands and the understanding wives who would see their husbands and families through difficult times that were coming in only a few years. It was through these times of social chaos that Peter’s readers were going to suffer greatly. Their suffering as disciples of Jesus would increase, and thus, it was going to take strong women to see their families through the social turmoil that would come in the consummation of national Israel.

If the Christian wife would be the spiritual descendant of Sarah, then she will reveal her respect for her husband by the manner she addresses herself to her husband. Sarah’s “*calling him [Abraham] lord*”^{3:6} revealed the fact that she dressed in a physical and spiritual manner that revealed her submissive relationship to her husband. In maintaining her God-ordained relationship with her husband, she had confidence before God.

Sarah’s behavior was such, not because she was fearful of Abraham, but as Paul revealed in reference to the motive for our submission to one another. It was “*in the fear of God*” (Ep 5:21). We seek to manifest in our behavior what “*is precious in the sight of God*” in order to be pleasing to God.^{3:4} And when wives so behave as Sarah, then truly they are her spiritual children. All society, therefore, benefits from the submission that wives exercise toward their husbands.

Chapter 7

Survivor Husbands & Fathers

Peter exhorts husbands to “*dwelling with your wives with understanding.*”^{3:7} Paul added that “*husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies*” (Ep 5:28). As the husband “*nourishes and cherishes*” his own body, so he should do the same to his wife (Ep 5:29). The ideal husband would be the man who remains truly faithful to his wife, but at the same time remains as charming to her as if he were not married to her. If courting would continue until “death do us part,” then there would be no greater and fulfilling relationship on earth than what would exist between a husband and wife.

To dwell with one’s wife means to live in harmony with one’s wife while giving honor to her. Sometimes it might be as someone said, “A good husband is one who stands by his wife in troubles she would not have if she had not married him.” There might be some truth to that statement.

A. Husbands are to love their wives.

A husband who does not love and cherish his wife is either indifferent toward his wife or lives as a tyrant. Unloving husbands are usually focused on themselves. And thus, they usually give little attention to their wives. In order to maintain his headship in the family, an unloving husband often seeks to dominate his wife by subjecting her to be in his ownership. The beauty of Christian-

ity over man-made religions is that the man in a Christian marriage considers his wife a maiden to be loved, not as property to be owned.

It is almost without exception throughout the world that man-made religions are identified by the oppression of the woman in some manner in marriage and in society. Husbands in such religions do not see themselves as encouragers of their wives to be the best they can be in the world in which they live. The well-known Billy Sunday once said, “Try praising your wife, even if it frightens her at first.” Unfortunately, because of their own inferiority complexes, the husbands of man-made religions will seek to exalt themselves by oppressing the women of their religion.

In order to maintain a healthy relationship between a husband and wife, someone gave the following good advice that should characterize the attitude of both the husband and wife. Both should be ...

- ... slow to suspect, quick, to trust;
- ... slow to condemn, quick to justify;
- ... slow to expose, quick to shield;
- ... slow to reprimand, quick to forbear;
- ... slow to demand, quick to give;
- ... slow to resent, quick to forgive;
- ... slow to hinder, quick to help;
- ... slow to belittle, quick to encourage;
- ... slow to provoke, quick to calm.

B. Husbands are to dwell with their wives.

Husbands must dwell with their wives in a manner that reflects “*giving honor to the wife as to the weaker vessel.*”^{3:7} “Dwell” means that the husband and father must at least show up at home enough to be considered dwelling with his family. Those homes that have no “dwelling” fathers are those homes that have no example of how authority cherishes a woman.

Socially dysfunctional boys come out of fatherless homes. They are often dysfunctional in that they do not know how to treat a wife in a marriage relationship. If a young man has grown up in a fatherless family, then it must be assumed that his behavior toward a woman in marriage will often be challenged since he had no home life in which to observe how a man should love a woman in marriage. In such cases, it is imperative that the young man learn the love of God as it is carried out in Christian families in order to lovingly dwell with his wife.

From 1957 to 1961, Douglas MacArthur II served as Counselor of the State Department of America in Japan. He served under John F. Dulles. As Dulles, MacArthur was an obsessive worker to rebuild Japan after WW II.

Time Magazine once reported a brief telephone conversation that Dulles had with the wife of MacArthur. Dulles called and asked for Douglas. Mrs. MacArthur, in her frustration of trying to run a family with an absent husband, thought that the phone call was from one

of her husband’s aides. She sharply and irritably replied to Dulles on the phone, “MacArthur is where MacArthur always is weekdays, Saturdays, Sundays and nights ... **in his office!**”

When Dulles hung up the phone, MacArthur received a phone call with the orders from Dulles, “Go home at once, boy! Your home front is crumbling!”

Nevertheless, we remember reading the 8th century Greek mythology entitled the *Iliad*. It was a story of how Odysseus, the husband of Penelope, remained faithful to her husband in his absence. Odysseus fought in the Trojan War that lasted for ten years, and then, through a ten-year struggle, he sought to make his way home to his beloved Penelope.

During the twenty-year absence of Odysseus, it was assumed back home that he had died in the war. Therefore, assuming that he was dead, numerous unscrupulous suitors competed for the hand of Penelope. However, Penelope would not believe that her husband was dead. In order to keep the suitors at bay, she told them that she would not make her choice concerning which suitor she would choose for marriage until she had completed the weaving of a funeral pall for her father-in-law. Every night she unraveled what she had woven during the day. The suitors were persistent, but their persistence was weak in comparison to her love for her absent husband. Eventually, Odysseus completed his epic journey home and fell into the loving arms of his beloved Penelope. The suitors disappeared.

C. **Husbands must be there for their wives.**

The woman's weakness is not in intellect, but physically. In the case of a gentle woman, her weakness is her tenderness and sensitivity in the hostile environment in which she lives. It is the responsibility of the husband to maintain the harmonious relationship of the marriage in order "*that your prayers not be hindered.*"^{3:7} His spiritual leadership is manifested in the fact that he maintains a home environment in which all family members may have a spiritual connection with God and a sense of security. The wife leads in the family through her living example of submission to the head of the family (See Ep 5:22,23). The husband leads in his loving consideration for his wife in respecting her thinking. It is like the sign of a frustrated manager of a wallpaper and paint store because he was tired of so much wallpaper and paint being returned: "Husbands choosing colors must have a note from their wives."

Christians must always assume that the societies in which they live are dysfunctional in some way in reference to what God requires in family relationships. This is true because the world does not use the word of God as the standard by which the family is structured. The world establishes its own function of the family. For this reason, therefore, Christian families must be cautious about structuring their family values and behavior after the social environment in which

they live.

Christian families must always assume that in some worldly structured families there is behavior that is contrary to the word of God. The **only** way Christian families can discover these dysfunctions is to study the word of God. We can never know what is abnormal behavior unless we study in the Bible that which is normal.

If we discover that our family is in some way structured after the ways of the world, then we must make a decision. The decision is to whether we will obey God or man. If we choose to obey the way of man to establish the values and structure of our family, then we must be prepared to live with the consequences that come from living contrary to the word of God. As the head of the Christian family, this responsibility rests primarily on the shoulders of the head of the family.

Those wives who have children, but are married with unbelieving husbands, must be assured that they can be successful in bringing up their children to respect the will of God. Eunice, a Jewish woman, lived with a Greek husband, whom we assume, had no faith in the one true and living God. We are told that the couple were the parents of only one child. Nevertheless, Eunice did her faithful work as a believing mother and wife by instilling in her son a genuine faith that eventually led Timothy, her son, to be a great man of God (At 16:1-3; 2 Tm 1:5; 3:15).

Chapter 8

Survivor Discipleship

There is nothing greater to take one individually through times of toil and turmoil than the fellowship of a strong family. And that which makes strong families are true disciples of Jesus Christ who take their commitment to our Lord very seriously. The life of a disciple that is guided by the word of Christ is a life that is designed to encounter and conquer every struggle that this world can offer.

A. The life of a disciple:

In order to be more than conquerors over the struggles of this world (Rm 8:37), the first relational strength that disciples must have with one another is that they “*be of one mind.*”^{3:8} As stated previously, the strength of their witness to the world is that for which Jesus asked when He prayed that His disciples “*may be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You*” (Jn 17:21; see 1 Co 1:10). In order to have and sustain this type of relationship as the family of God, each member of the body must have “*compassion one for another.*”^{3:8}

Love, kindheartedness and humility should be typical of the social nature of the body of Christ. In order to develop the social environment among brethren, each member must “*not render evil for evil or insult for insult.*”^{3:9} Those who would “*inherit a blessing,*” must be known for blessing others.^{3:9}

There is a very practical life-style

by which, as a group, the family of God can overcome the turmoil that is in the world. In our relationships as a family, everyone must “*refrain his tongue from evil and his lips that they speak no deceit.*”^{3:10} Speaking evil of one another destroys relationships. Lies make relationships impossible. Therefore, each one of us must be determined to “*turn away from evil and do good.*”^{3:11} Each one of us must be peacemakers if we are to have genuine relationships with one another.^{3:11} We must remember Jesus’ declaration: “*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God*” (Mt 5:9). If we are not of the character that Jesus herein infers, then we must remember that “*the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.*”^{3:12}

B. The courageous disciple:

Paul wrote to Christians in Rome who had suffered under Nero. Peter wrote to Jewish Christians who would in the near future suffer indirectly at the hand of the Roman against the Jews. Both writers asked a question for which those by faith could answer correctly. Paul asked, “*Who will lay anything to the charge of God’s elect*” (Rm 8:33)? Peter asked, “*And who is he who will harm you if you follow what is good?*”^{3:13} Both writers were asking their questions in the context of those who would attack both their spiritual relationship with God and

their physical bodies. These Christians were going into the turmoil that would result from the end of national Israel. But if their spiritual strength prevailed, then they did not need worry about what might happen to their physical presence in this world. The Christians of the day, while under persecution, must be faithful, even though to many it would mean death (See Rv 2:10). But death for one's faith is not the real enemy against the righteous of God. The real enemy is unseen.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in high places (Ep 6:12).

In this spiritual warfare, many will lose their physical presence in this world. However, **there is absolutely no one of this world who can separate us from the love of God.** Physical death is only a separation of the body from our spirit (Js 2:26). But this separation will in no way cause a separation of our spirit from God. We must always answer the question correctly that Paul posed, *“If God is for us, who can be against us?”* (Rm 8:31). The answer is that no one can win against God, and thus, no one can win against those who belong to God. So, *“... in all these things we are **more than conquerors** through Him who loved us”* (Rm 8:37). There is nothing of this world that *“will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Rm 8:39).

If one would, therefore, *“suffer for*

righteousness sake,” Peter encouraged, ***“do not be afraid ... and do not be troubled.”***^{3:14} The means by which we conquer fear and anxiety is to *“sanctify Christ as Lord God”* in our hearts.^{3:15} When we behave in a courageous manner in times of suffering, those who are burdened with the worries of the world will inquire concerning our faith. And thus, every Christian must *“be ready always to give a defense to everyone who asks”* concerning that which empowers him to maintain his strength through the turmoil of this present world.^{3:15}

C. The hated disciple:

When Jesus said to His disciples that the world would hate you because they hated Him, He knew that the hate of the world would be generated from the evil that is within the heart of the haters (Jn 7:7; 14:18,19). Peter stated that the hate of the world would be revealed *“when they slander you as evildoers.”*^{3:16} It would not be that the disciples were doing evil in the sight of God. They would refuse to live according to the evil standards of the world.

If you were of the world, the world would love its own. But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you (Jn 15:19).

Nevertheless, at least most of the world can recognize that which is good. When those who are of the world recognize *“good behavior in Christ”* they *“will be*

ashamed."^{3:16} Because the good of the righteous is pure, all that the world can do to manifest its antagonism against the Christian is to resort to slander. The worldly thus speak lies against those they envy.

D. The slandered disciple:

Slander is speaking falsely in order to bring shame upon the individual against whom it is directed. But when the recipient of slander knows that his heart is right before God, then he knows that his "*good conscience*"^{3:16} is untouched, regardless of all the slander that would be launched against him. When one is behaving according to what he believes God wants him to do, then he is undeterred by those who slander out of either jealousy, or simply worldly thinking. If one "*suffers for doing right,*"^{3:17} then he can have confidence toward God. When we hear slander against us, we should always find comfort in God as King David:

For I have heard the slander of many. Fear was on every side. While they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life. But I trust in You, O Lord. I said, "You are my God" (Ps 31:13,14).

In reference to those who would engage themselves in slander against their brothers and sisters in Christ, they need to remember the word of God: "***Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, him I will cut off.*** The one who has

a haughty look and an arrogant heart, I will not endure" (Ps 101:5). The slanderous person will be cut off simply because he is as Solomon stated: "*He who hides hatred with lying lips, and who utters slander, is a fool*" (Pv 10:18). At the time these words were spoken, God was taking national Israel into the Babylonian captivity of 586 B.C. Through the preaching of Jeremiah, one of the social dysfunctions of the Israelites was identified by God:

Let everyone be on guard against his neighbor, and do not trust any brother, for every brother deals craftily and every neighbor goes about as a slanderer (Jr 9:4).

If this would ever become the social environment of the family of God, then the family would be headed for the same judgment that God unleashed on national Israel. Therefore, if one does evil by lying to and slandering his brother in Christ, then he will suffer the vengeance of God for harming God's family.

E. The obedient disciple:

Jesus led the way on our road to suffering. He suffered as "*the just for the unjust.*"^{3:18} And we were the unjust who were dead in our sins, for which He suffered once and for all on the cross.^{3:18}

Peter takes us on a journey with the spirit of Christ after He died on the cross and before His resurrection. Though Jesus' body died on the cross, He was "*made alive by the Spirit.*"^{3:18} In this

state of being “*He went and proclaimed [announced] to the spirits in prison.*”^{3:19} These were those spirits in the hadean world who “*were disobedient when the longsuffering of God waited patiently in the days of Noah*” while Noah preached and built the ark.^{3:20}

Peter does not reveal the purpose for this journey of Christ in the spirit. We would only assume that those who refused to listen to the righteous preacher Noah needed to know that what Noah preached had been fulfilled. As a part of their eternal torment, they needed to gnash their teeth over the fact that they rejected that by which Noah and his family were rewarded. After their death they lifted up their eyes in hades, “*being in torments*” (Lk 16:23). In contrast to this destiny, Noah and his family found themselves in the comfort of God (See Lk 16:23-31). They were rewarded with the comfort of God because of their faithful obedience.

F. The saved disciple:

In 1 Peter 3:21, Peter did not move us away from the purpose for which he used Noah and his family as an illustration for our salvation. The wicked of Noah’s day could not be saved from the flood waters because of their disobedience to that which Noah preached. In contrast to their disobedience, Noah, by obedient faith, built the ark (Hb 11:7). By faith he and his family entered into the ark. It was in the ark that he and his family were saved. The flood waters separated his family from the world of sin.

Peter cuts straight to the point by saying “*the like figure whereunto even baptism does also now save us.*”^{3:21} It is not that there is mystical saving power in the water, **but it is at the point of the water that one’s sins are washed away by the blood of Jesus** (At 22:16). It is at the point of baptism that one is separated from his old life of sin (Rm 6:3-6). It is then from the water that one is born again (Jn 3:3-5). It took more than Noah’s faith to build the ark to save him and his family from the impending flood. His faith had to be coupled with obedience, as opposed to those who were disobedient. If he had not built the ark in faith, then the waters of the flood would also have consumed him and his family.

Baptism is significant as Jesus said, “*He who believes and is baptized will be saved*” (Mk 16:16). Noah built by faith, and that which he obediently built saved him. But if one’s belief is not strong enough to get him into the grave of water, then there is no reason to talk about being saved. Noah believed, and his belief both prepared and took him into the ark. One may claim to believe in Jesus Christ, but if this belief does not take him into that which will wash away his sins, then it will be as Jesus said, “*... he who does not believe will be condemned*” (Mk 16:16).

There is no reason to discuss baptism for remission of sins (At 2:38), if one is convinced that he or she is saved only by faith and without entering the “ark.” So Paul would ask the faith only disobedient, “*Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ*

were baptized into His death?” (Rm 6:3). The baptized believer has come into the “ark” of Christ, wherein there is salvation. Because he has been baptized into Christ, he has *“the appeal of a good conscience to God.”*^{3:21} He knows that he has done all that God requires that one do in order to be delivered from the flood of his past sins.

The obedient believer has become subservient to the One *“who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.”*^{3:22} The resurrected One is the controlling head over all things for the sake of the church. Paul was specific: *“And He [the Father] put all things under His [the Son’s] feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church”* (Ep 1:22).

We can find comfort in the fact that

Jesus is now King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15). The obedient can find comfort in the fact that even Caesar of Rome is under the kingdom reign of Jesus. Since all the kingdom reign of Jesus encompasses all things, then the persecuted Christian can gain strength in the fact that he is more than a conqueror than those who can conquer only nations of this world (Rm 8:37). Those who have been baptized into Christ have been lifted from the flood waters of evil, and eventually, will be delivered to a new realm of existence wherein the old will have passed away.

And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. And there will be no more death nor sorrow nor crying. Nor will there be any more pain, for the former things have passed away (Rv 21:4).

Chapter 9

Survivor Lives

The person *“who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin”* in the sense that he has committed his life to being a disciple of Jesus.^{4:1} *“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution”* (2 Tm 3:12). For this reason, Paul and Barnabas revisited those who had dedicated themselves to living the life of a disciple, *“teaching that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God”* (At 14:22).

The life of a disciple should be characterized by what Peter instructs in 1 Peter 4:1-11. There were unique histori-

cal events that were transpiring among the Jewish Christians at the time Peter wrote these words. Peter’s message in the entire book is directed specifically to Jews who had been converted to Christ, which Jews were moving into some trying times in the near future (1 Pt 1:1). Since the termination of national Israel was looming in the near future, and thus the termination of all things in reference to his readers’ Jewish heritage, then there were some special exhortations of which these Christians needed to be reminded.

A. The life of confession:

Those who have committed themselves to live according to the will of God cease living a life of sin, but do not cease from committing acts of sin. Now “*if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us*” (1 Jn 1:8). The disciple has ceased from a life of sin, but is not without sin. Nevertheless, “*if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*” (1 Jn 1:9). To be cleansed of “all unrighteousness” means that we become righteous before God through the continual cleansing of the blood of Jesus (1 Jn 1:7). It is not that we have learned to live perfectly before God according to His law, but that we are justified by His grace because we have committed ourselves to His Son. Therefore, we would not say “*that we have not sinned,*” lest “*we make Him a liar ...*” (1 Jn 1:10). On the contrary, the disciple of Jesus lives the life of continually confessing his sins before God.

B. The persecuted life:

Peter is continually conscious of the trying times into which his readers are headed. Jesus knew that He was headed for the cross, and thus He prepared His mind to suffer. As disciples of Jesus who suffered for us, Christians are to arm themselves “*also with the same mind.*”^{4:1} Peter’s readers had behaved sinfully in their former lives when they lived according to “*the will of the Gentiles.*”^{4:3} But

since their conversion to Christ, all those unrepentant friends whom they had while doing the will of the Gentiles, “*think it strange that you do not run with them in the same excess of riot.*”^{4:4} The repentant disciple is thus mocked by his former friends in the flesh because he no longer enjoys a life of rebellion against God.

C. The prepared life:

Since we would stay in the historical context of both Peter and his Jewish audience, we would understand that Jesus in the near future was ready “*to judge the living and the dead*” in bringing judgment on Jerusalem (2 Tm 4:1). We do know that the Father has given the Son the right to judge at the end of time (At 17:30,31). But we must not forget that when Jesus ascended to the right hand of God, it was then that the authority of all judgment was given to Him (See Dn 2:44; 7:13,14; Mt 28:18; Ph 2:9-11; Hb 8:1). He now reigns with the authority of all judgment over all things (1 Pt 3:22).

In the historical context of Peter’s audience, there was an **in-time** judgment coming upon unbelieving Jews who persecuted Jewish Christians simply because they left the heritage of the fathers in their acceptance that Jesus was the Messiah. The Jewish unbelievers went from city to city persecuting all those whom they considered traitors of national Israel (See At 8:1-3). But according to the prophecy of Jesus in Matthew 24 (See Lk 21), judgment would come upon unbelieving Jewish persecutors in the termination of national Israel and the destruction of

Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70. Peter, James and Jude reflected on this coming judgment. James' words are more precise:

Therefore, be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth. And he has long patience for it, until he receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near (Js 5:6,7).

This "coming of the Lord" about which James wrote, was not the final coming of the Lord at the end of time. If it were, then the word "near" would mean at least 2,000 years and James would have deceived his readers into thinking that Jesus' final coming would occur in their lifetime. Since both Peter and James were writing to the same Jewish audience (1 Pt 1:1; Js 1:1), then the coming of the Lord about which both referred was to happen **in time**. And in reference to the date of writing of both letters, this coming was going to happen within only a few years after they wrote their letters of encouragement to persecuted Jewish Christians. Therefore, their focus was on the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy that He was terminating national Israel (Mt 24). The "end of all things" in reference to national Israel was indeed at hand.^{4:7}

Since the unbelieving Jews "*will give account to Him, ... the gospel was preached [announced] also to those who are dead, so that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but living*

according to God in the spirit."^{4:5,6} Jesus was not willing that any should perish (2 Pt 3:9). Therefore, the gospel was preached to those who were spiritually dead and unresponsive to the gospel. On their first mission journey, Paul and Barnabas had said the same to their rebellious Jewish audience:

It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you [Jews]. Since you reject it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles (At 13:46).

The Jews had their chance, both during the time of Jesus' earthly ministry and the early evangelistic efforts of the church. But they rejected the gospel, and thus, they made the choice to remain dead in their sins (Jn 8:21,24). They judged themselves unworthy of eternal life because of their refusal to believe that Jesus was the Messiah. In the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, over one million unbelieving Jews would die in their sins. The fact that these unbelievers died in the destruction was evidence that they had rejected the gospel.

However, those "*men in the flesh*" who "*live according to God in the spirit,*"^{4:6} were saved in that not one Christian is known to have died in the destruction of Jerusalem. Rome took her vengeance out on the insurrectionist Jews during the Passover/Pentecost feast of A.D. 70. Jewish Christians throughout the world had listened to Jesus and the New Testament prophets, and thus, they too stayed away from Jerusalem. The

Christians believed Jesus concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. They had heeded the warnings, and thus stayed away from the end of Jerusalem. Jesus was judged just in bringing judgment upon the one million Jews who died in the war of Rome on Israel because the unbelieving Jews had rejected the gospel. That which could have saved them from doom had been preached in Jerusalem since A.D. 27, the time when Jesus first began His ministry.

D. Termination of all things:

Peter was not deceiving his readers when he made the statement, ***“But the end of all things is at hand.”***^{4:7} This “end” was something that was going to happen soon, and in their lifetime. This statement **does not** apply directly to us today. It was a coming of the Lord in judgment **in time**, and thus, it applied directly to those to whom Peter wrote.

“All things” to Peter and his Jewish readers referred to their world of Judaism and national Israel. Encompassed in the phrase “all things,” were two millennia of history that began with Abraham. “All things” was a reference to their Jewish heritage that was coming to an end. The conclusion of all these things was in the prophecy that Jesus made during His earthly ministry when He spoke to the Jews concerning the termination of national Israel:

Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple. And His disciples came to show Him the buildings of the temple.

*And Jesus said to them, “Do you not see **all these things**? Truly I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down” (Mt 24:1,3).*

“All these things” in the prophecy of Jesus was the same as the “all things” about which Peter wrote in 4:7. Reference was to God’s finalization of national Israel, for she had served her purpose of bringing the Redeemer into the world.

The termination of “all these things” was “at hand.” “At hand” did not refer to something outside the lifetime of Peter’s audience. The phrase did not refer to something that would take place over 2,000 years later. And thus, Peter, as James and Jude, **did not deceive their first readers into thinking that Jesus was coming in His final coming to terminate this world within the lifetime of their immediate readers.**

“At hand” means soon to happen. And concerning the time when Peter, James and Jude wrote, the Lord was coming with His messengers in order to rain down judgment on those Jews who rejected Jesus as the Son of God (See Jn 1:11). Jude used the prophetic words of Enoch that were originally used to refer to those unbelievers who were taken away by the flood of Noah’s day. He applied the statement of Enoch to the unbelievers who would be taken away by the destruction of national Israel:

Behold, the Lord came with ten thousands of His saints to execute judgment on all, and to convict all who are un-

godly among them of all their ungodly deeds that they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against Him (Jd 14,15).

In view of the fact that all things in reference to national Israel were drawing to a close, Peter exhorted that his Jewish readers *“be sober and watch unto prayer.”*^{4:7} Jesus said the same in the context of the end of national Israel during His earthly ministry: *“Therefore, watch, for you do not know what day your Lord is coming”* (Mt 24:42). The disciples were to watch and *“be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him”* (Mt 24:44).

Thirty-five years after this statement was made by Jesus, the disciples knew that the prophecy of Jesus was about to be fulfilled. But they did not know when Rome would make the decision to terminate national Israel. As the Roman army marched toward Jerusalem, the disciples were given only the warning that they would *“hear of wars and rumors of wars”* (Mt 24:6). These events would not be the end. *“All these are the beginning of sorrows”* in Judea (Mt 24:8). These events would be the warning to believing Jewish Christians that they should either stay away from Jerusalem, or if they lived in Jerusalem, to get out of town.

As for us today, when in times of struggle, the Holy Spirit’s advice is to maintain a sound mind. We must not fret, though it may seem that our world is coming apart. The root meaning for the word

Peter uses, “sober,” means to be safe. In other words, he is exhorting his readers to keep their minds in a safe condition. When under either suffering or persecution, we must not react to the circumstances, but act safely and sensible.

E. Maintain love.

It is interesting to note what Peter says in this context concerning the end of Israel because of what Jesus said in His prophecy that is recorded in Matthew 24 and Luke 21. Jesus said in reference to the end of all these things, that *“the love of many will grow cold”* (Mt 24:12). Peter said, *“And above all things have fervent love among yourselves, for love will cover a multitude of sins.”*^{4:8} It seems that our love for one another is strained in times of struggle. Struggle moves us to think more about ourselves than others. Peter, therefore, knew that his readers needed exhortation to focus on loving the brotherhood throughout the Roman Empire, for all believers, Jews and Gentiles, were struggling at the time Peter wrote. They were struggling under the personal vendetta of Nero against Christians. Nero subsequently committed suicide, but the persecution of Christians would continue off and on until Caesar Galarius issued the Edict of Toleration in A.D. 311 (1 Pt 1:22; 2:17).

Sometimes love for others covers a multitude of sins in ourselves. Proverbs 10:12 expresses a great truth: *“Hatred stirs up strifes, but love covers all sins.”* If we harbor hate, we will behave accordingly. We will sin against our fellow man.

But if the love of God is in our hearts, then we guard ourselves from acting in a hateful manner toward our fellow man.

We do know that during the Roman persecution that would come upon the church in the years to come, some would deny their faith in Jesus in order to escape persecution. One of the fellowship problems that developed in the church after the state persecution of Rome was lifted in A.D. 311, was on the part of some who did not want to receive back into the fellowship of the church those who had denied Jesus in order not to die for Him. But in the spirit of love, even this sin of betrayal should be forgiven. We must always remember what John wrote in reference to the forgiveness of God: *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins ...”* (1 Jn 1:9).

F. Hotels for Christ:

There were no hotels in which fleeing Christians could check into during the times of struggle. It is not surprising, therefore, to see the Holy Spirit instituting that every Christian home should be a hotel for traveling evangelists, or fleeing Christians. *“Be hospitable one to another without grumbling.”*^{4:9} Gaius was known throughout the brotherhood for being one who received and sent forth those brethren who came his way (See 3 Jn 5-8). His house was a hotel for those on the move.

It may have been that Gaius lived during these times, and thus, some of the “strangers” he took in could have been fleeing Jewish Christians (3 Jn 5,6). We

do not know all the circumstances as to why Diotrephes hindered the well-doing hospitality of Gaius and those Christians in the area as Demetrius. But since Diotrephes was one who had a Greek name of aristocracy, it may have been that he did not want to be seen as one who was working against Rome’s efforts to silence Jewish insurrection. We can only assume the circumstances and the political pressure that the early Christians had to endure, even by taking in fleeing Jews from Jerusalem (Mt 24:15-20; compare Ph 1:15-18).

When the “end of all things” transpired, many Jewish Christians would be fleeing their homes. Thirty-five years before, Jesus said that these Christians should flee Jerusalem (See Mt 24:17-20). It would be a time, therefore, when loving hospitality had to be shown to those who were fleeing from their homes in Judea. The flight of Jewish Christians had earlier happened during a local persecution by Jews upon Jewish Christians when Saul led unbelieving Jews against believing Jews (See At 8:4). The persecution about which Peter, James and Jude wrote would come indirectly on Jewish Christians who would be caught up in Rome’s termination of national Israel.

The hospitality of Christians is not to be expressed exclusively toward the household of faith. Hospitality is a behavioral pattern that Christians should have toward all men. In times when we are often burdened with receiving guests, we need to remember that as children of God we are to manifest a spirit of hospitality toward all men. And in maintain-

ing our behavior of hospitality, we must always remember what the Holy Spirit said through Paul: “*Do all things without grumbling and disputing*” (Ph 2:14).

In the historical context of what Peter foresaw, he was preparing the Jewish Christians of the Diaspora that they should be ready to receive many Jewish Christians who would be fleeing Palestine when the Romans started to bring to an end all things in reference to national Israel. They would certainly carry a great responsibility in housing a large number of resident Jewish Christians whose homes in Jerusalem were destroyed when Jerusalem was burned.

G. Gifted for ministry:

Since every person is born as a gifted human being, then we conclude that God created us to use our gifts to survive in this world. It is evident that our natural gifts that we receive as an offspring of God’s creation are to be used for living. However, in the context in which Peter writes he seems to reflect on the miraculous gifts that were distributed throughout the first century through the laying on of the apostles’ hands (At 8:17,18). Since these gifts were distributed liberally in the absence of any inspired written directions from the Spirit through the New Testament letters, then we must assume that in the background of what is said in the letters that the miraculous gifts were functioning to build up of the body of Christ. This seems to be the situation of Peter’s readers as they headed into some trying times of suffering.

Stewardship involves the use of one’s grace-given gift in ministry for others. The miraculous gifts were not given for selfish gains. This leads us to believe that in this context, the gifts under discussion were the miraculous gifts of the Spirit that Paul explained in the context of 1 Corinthians 12:28-30, which gifts he said would eventually pass away in the first century (1 Co 13:8-10). These gifts were given by the grace of God, but the natural gifts were received at birth.

Since Peter states that the gifts about which he is speaking come with the responsibility of using them to minister to others, then we would conclude that these gifts were the miraculous gifts that were specifically given only by the favor (grace) of God, and for the building up of the early church in the absence of the written word of God. These gifts were given for ministry, not to be used selfishly by the recipient to make a better life for himself.

Natural gifts, however, were different than miraculous gifts. Everyone is born with one or more natural gifts that are to be used to carry one through life. Natural gifts are to be used responsibly in order that one work for his own food and provide for his family. When we discuss natural gifts, therefore, we use the word **responsibility**. But when we refer to miraculous gifts, we use the word **stewardship**, for the miraculous gifts were not given for one’s own selfish use. This is what some tried to do in Corinth when they arrogantly spoke with other languages they had not learned. Some were using the miraculous gifts to mani-

fest their pride, and in reference to those who had the gift of teaching (prophecy), they were using their gifts arrogantly.

H. Focus on the word:

“*If anyone speaks*”^{4:11} in the context of Peter’s readers, they could not quote from the New Testament Scriptures, for most had not been fully circulated among the churches. They possibly had copies of the Old Testament Scriptures that they had read to them at the local synagogue. But we would assume in this context, however, that those who spoke must speak the revealed word of God that came to them from the Holy Spirit’s gift of prophecy. In other words, what Peter was speaking against here were those speakers who spoke nonsense, while there was one in the presence of the disciples on whom hands had been laid to receive the gift of teaching (Compare Rm 16:18; 2 Tm 4:3). The speakers of nonsense needed to be quiet while the one to whom the gift of teaching had been given could speak the oracles of God.

The word “oracles” came from its use among the religionists of the day who claimed that their priests delivered to man the “oracles” of their deity. We see such today by the same false teachers who claim before the people, “God told me.” When a preacher stands before an audience and proclaims, “God told me,” he is trying to intimidate the audience into accepting his word over theirs. Such may have been happening among some of Peter’s readers, which thing happened among apostate Israelites in past years

(Compare Jr 23). What Peter is cautioning is that his readers not fall victim to the false proclamations of the religionists who were simply false prophets seeking a following.

Years before, Jesus had warned His disciples concerning these matters: “*And many false prophets will arise and will deceive many*” (Mt 24:11). As today, so it was in the final days of Israel. “*Then if anyone says to you, ‘Lo, here is Christ,’ or ‘There, do not believe it.’*” (Mt 24:23). There are numerous false prophets today who proclaim that they are witnessing the signs of the times that indicate the final coming of Christ. We still follow the advice of Jesus. We do not believe them! We will still heed Jesus’ warning that He gave to those who would hear of proclamations of the end: “*For there will arise false christs and false prophets. They will show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.*” (Mt 24:24; see 2 Th 2:10-12). One can determine, therefore, that he is not a part of the elect if he believes the self-proclaimed prognostications of pseudo-prophets who continually cry out, “God told me!”

I. Dedicated to ministry:

There were those among Peter’s readers who had dedicated themselves, as the household of Stephanas, to the ministry of the saints (1 Co 16:15,16). In the case of Peter’s readers, they had been blessed “*with the ability that God gives.*”^{4:11} Since they had been given the ability to minister, such a blessing assumed their responsibility to use their gift

for the benefit of others (See 1 Co 12:28). God's opportunity to use our gift of ministry assumes that we will be a good steward of our ability to help others. Therefore, we must not murmur when an opportunity to minister crosses our path. The crossing may be the work of God to draw out of us our gift.

J. Glorify God.

It is significant to understand why one was to use his or her God-given gift for the benefit of others. The recipients were to use their gifts for others *"so that in all things God may be glorified*

through Jesus Christ."^{4:11} God-given gifts were to be used to the glory of God, not for the glory of ourselves. Churches should be careful, therefore, that they do not work in order to bring glory to themselves as a church. God will not profit narcissistic churches. All glory is to be given to God because it is because of His work in our lives that we are able to do that which gives Him glory. Paul's exhortation to the Colossians might help us understand this point better: *"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him"* (Cl 3:17).

Chapter 10 Survivor Faithfulness

Some Jewish Christians would surely suffer wrongfully in Rome's war against the Jewish state. They must not consider it strange, therefore, that they would undergo some wrongful treatment because they lived in the wrong neighborhood. Since some Roman soldiers made little distinction between believing and unbelieving Jews when engaging the insurrectionists, many knew enough about Jewish Christians that they understood that Christians did not live as insurrectionists to the Roman government. It was a time for Christians, therefore, to openly confess that one was a Christian, and thus, distinguish themselves from the radical unbelieving Jews.

A. Enduring fiery trials:

Peter speaks concerning the fiery trial in this context as if it were something specific, and not the general suffering that Christians generally undergo while living the life of a disciple (See At 14:22). This suffering was something that had before been revealed to them. Therefore, because the fiery trial was previously revealed to them, they must *"not think it strange concerning the fiery trial that is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you."*^{4:12}

If we have assumed correctly that the social chaos that is soon to come upon them is in reference to the end of Israel, then the fiery trial was over thirty-five years before revealed by Jesus. It had been revealed centuries before through Daniel, and other prophets. In reference

to what Rome was about to inflict upon national Israel, Jesus had previously prophesied, *“Then they will deliver you up to be afflicted and will kill you. And you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake”* (Mt 24:9). Since this prophecy was in reference to those Jewish Christians who would suffer for the name of Jesus, then this persecution came from the unbelieving Jews. Now it was time for the unbelieving Jews to pay the price for their persecution of the family of God. Jesus went on to say in Matthew 24 that great tribulation would come on the Jewish persecutors: *“For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world to this time, nor ever will”* (Mt 24:21).

The horror that Rome would unleash on a nation would be a genocide that the world had not experienced until A.D. 70. From that time, no such genocide had ever been launched against an entire nation to take the population out of existence. We must not confuse this with the genocide of Jews of WW II. The WW II genocide was against a race of people, not against a state. Jesus and Peter were speaking of the elimination of the state of Israel.

B. Joy of the persecuted:

James wrote to the same Diaspora of Jews as Peter: *“Count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the trying of your faith produces patience”* (Js 1:2,3). We must not forget, as someone wrote, that “trial is the struc-

tural steel that goes into the building of Christian character.” What is called reinforcement steel is embedded in the concrete that goes into building. It allows the concrete to withstand tremendous stresses. In the coming times of suffering, Peter and James wanted their readers to remember that spiritual structural steel was being embedded in their character through the struggles they would have to endure.

We must keep in mind that we do not deserve the final rest of heaven unless we endure the tests of this world. We must also remember Peter’s exhortations: *“But rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ’s sufferings ...”*^{4:13} *“If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you”*^{4:14} We should be as the apostles who survived the beating of the religious council of Jewish hierarchies in Jerusalem. They left the council, *“rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name”* (At 5:41).

The persecution that would come upon Peter’s readers should not be a strange thing if they believed what Jesus had prophesied thirty-five years before: *“And you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake”* (Mt 24:9). At the very beginning of Jesus’ ministry, He prepared His Jewish disciples to rejoice when they were hated.

Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven ... (Mt 5:11).

If they are “reproached for the name of Christ,”^{4:14} then they are blessed. Their persecution was evidence that they were living the life of a Christian.

If one would “suffer as an ... evil-doer,”^{4:15} however, he would deserve the suffering that would come upon him. But if one “suffers as a Christian,”^{4:16} then he can take pride in the fact that his behavior as a disciple manifests that he is living the life of a disciple. If a disciple stood on trial for being a Christian, then there should be enough evidence against him for conviction. So we would conclude that in the midst of one’s suffering for Jesus, we must at least resort to the famous words of Winston Churchill during the bombardment of England by Germany during WW II: “Never give in! Never, never, never, never!”

C. Doom because of disobedience:

If judgment bypasses the house of God because of God’s grace, then “*what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?*”^{4:17} Peter asks this question because he knows his readers know the correct answer. The answer is that Jesus is coming in judgment on unbelieving Jews to take “*vengeance on those who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (2 Th 1:8). And since the gospel is the good news about Jesus’ death for our sins and His resurrection for our hope, then there is no hope for those who do not obey the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (See 1 Co 15:1-4; Rm 6:3-6).

If “*the righteous are scarcely saved*” through their obedience to the gospel, then “*where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?*”^{4:18} (See Pv 11:31). This statement places the meaning of what Peter is writing in 1 Peter in the historical context of the coming in-time judgment on unbelieving Israel. Peter used the word “scarcely” in reference to salvation. But this “salvation” is not a reference to our salvation at the end of time. In the final judgment at the end of time, the righteous **will not** “scarcely” be saved. They will of a certainty be saved by the grace of God because they have obeyed the gospel. Their salvation will not be based on meritorious works or perfect keeping of law (Ep 2:9,10). The salvation of the righteous will always be guaranteed on the basis of what Paul said in Ephesians 2:8: “*For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.*” There is no “scarcely” about the Christian’s salvation.

But when the Roman army showed up in Judea before A.D. 70, only a few unbelieving Jews were saved by the end of Rome’s suppression of Israel. In fact, Josephus, the Jewish historian, reported that only 80,000 Jews over the one million who endured the siege remained alive and were sold into captivity. One million died. The 80,000 were those who were scarcely saved alive. However, through their confession of Jesus as the Messiah, Jewish Christians would scarcely escape the sword, but it would not be so with the unbelieving Jews. Unbelieving Jews consigned themselves

to be cut off from God because they refused to believe on Jesus.

On the medical records of a hospital in New York City in America is the story of a young 22-year old man who was brought into the emergency room with an arm that was almost severed, which arm was eventually amputated. It seems that the young man and his companion had broken a plate glass store front window in order to steal. When he reached his arm through the broken glass, some of the overhanging glass fell on his

arm. Tattooed on the arm that was amputated were the words, “Born to lose.” And such will be the fate of those who are not born again (Jn 3:3-5).

The blessedness of the righteous is that they have entrusted themselves to the grace of God. Their trust is so strong that they are willing to “*suffer according to the will of God.*”^{4:19} Through their godly living they have manifested that they have given themselves to God who will faithfully deliver on His promises to them. They have been born again to win.

Chapter 11

Survivor Leadership

When our home family and church family are functioning according to the will of God, then we live with the two strongest social environments that give us strength in times of trial. In this first letter to the Christian Jews of the Diaspora, Peter wrote to make sure that the individuals of his readership maintained their discipleship. He instructed that the structures of the home be according to the order of God’s will. In chapter 5 he wrote in order to correct any dysfunctions concerning the order of leadership in the family of God as a whole. In view of the coming struggle, the Christians to whom he wrote would be able to better endure the struggles of life as long as their home and church family relationships, over which they had control, functioned according to the will of God.

It would be the shepherds of the flock who would take the sheep through the social turmoil that was coming. As a

fellow shepherd, as well as a Jew, we know now why the Holy Spirit chose Peter to write this letter to fellow elders and Jews. Peter could identify with Jewish Christians with whom he had a common heritage. He could also identify with those persecuted sheep who would be suffering wrongfully at the hand of Roman legions. He was the perfect choice as a writer for such an epistle of encouragement to be written in times of social chaos for Jewish Christians.

A. Be a servant leader.

In order to maintain the true organic function of the body of Christ, the leadership (elders) must take ownership of their leadership responsibilities for which they were designated by the flock. They must tend to the spiritual needs of the flock of God. Peter uses the Greek word that is translated “tend” which means to

shepherd or to take care of sheep. This was an injunction that Jesus personally gave Peter many years before (Jn 21:16; see At 20:28). In this context, therefore, Peter is dealing with the organic function of the elders among the sheep, not their qualifications to be designated shepherds. They had already been designated shepherds by the sheep, and now it was time that they lead the flock of God through times of struggle.

B. Be among the sheep.

Peter writes, “*I exhort the elders who are among you ...*”^{5:1} Since Peter was writing to sheep who were scattered in the regions of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia,^{1:1} then the shepherds were among the sheep in all these regions. It seems superfluous to think that Peter had in mind only the shepherds who were among a small group of sheep who were meeting in a house in some village.

It is the organic function of the shepherds to move among the sheep throughout any particular region. The shepherds move among the sheep. The sheep do not move among the shepherds. The shepherds can lead only by being among the sheep. Shepherds who hold up with only one group of sheep in a particular region are denying the opportunity of the sheep of a region to know them as shepherds.

Shepherds do not function from behind closed doors, or send dictates from head offices. They are not corporate authorities running a religious coop-

eration. They are moving among the sheep in order to discover the needs of the sheep. If shepherds do not smell like sheep, then certainly they are not functioning among the sheep as they should. Being among the sheep, therefore, assumes that they are not stationary with only a few sheep. In the historical context of those to whom Peter addressed this epistle, the shepherds were functioning among the disciples throughout the provinces of the Roman Empire.

From the location (“Babylon”) where he was writing to those who were scattered in the Jewish Diaspora, Peter still considered himself a “*fellow elder*.”^{5:1} If he left his location and journeyed to another location, we would rightly conclude that he would not cease being an elder. If one of the elders to whom he wrote came to him, then we would also conclude that that elder would not cease being an elder while visiting Peter. Peter would have introduced the visiting elder from either Pontus or Galatia as an elder in either Pontus or Galatia. Those elders who fled Judea during the Roman siege of Jerusalem certainly did not cease shepherding the sheep who were also scattered with them. The elders who were seeing over the sheep in Jerusalem did not cease seeing over the sheep once both elders and sheep left the city limits of Jerusalem during the siege of the city.

We must separate the function of the shepherds from the “all authority” of Jesus (Mt 28:18). Elders did not move among the sheep with authority. Only Jesus has authority over His universal

body. He has not delegated any of His authority to any person or group of persons on earth. If He had, then He would not be our only Lord who is reigning from heaven over all things with all authority.

Peter carefully worded his instructions concerning the presence and ministry of the elders. The elders are to be among the sheep. It is not that the sheep are to be among the elders. The elders are not a synod of leaders to whom the sheep must cater. Peter wants to make it clear that it is the responsibility of the elders to move among the sheep in order to see after the needs of the sheep. And since nothing is said in this entire context about the assembly of the sheep at any particular location in the provinces to which he writes, then we must assume that the shepherds were moving from house to house throughout the provinces (See At 20:20).

The early church met in the homes of the members in communities throughout the ancient world. Not all the sheep in any region could meet at the same time in the same house. Therefore, for the shepherds to be among the sheep in any region, we correctly conclude that any one shepherd did not hold up in only one assembly. On the contrary, all the shepherds moved among the disciples in order to be known by all the sheep in the provinces to which this epistle was written. Keep in mind that we must not assume that the shepherds moved among assemblies. They certainly did this, but we must not forget that in order to service needs, the shepherds had to move among individual sheep. Discovering the

needs of the sheep takes place when elders relate with individuals.

C. Refrain from lordship.

It is not that the elders (shepherds) are a hierarchy of authorities in the universal body of Christ. This was the very problem Peter was addressing in this context. The shepherds were to “*shepherd the flock of God*” without lording, and thus compelling submission.^{5:2} Their shepherding of the flock included seeing over the needs of the flock as a shepherd of the field continually looks out over the individuals of the flock in order to service the needs and protect any sheep that might be in danger. Shepherds do not oversee assemblies, but see over individuals.

Their ministry as shepherds was not in the area of being decision-makers for the flock, but servicing the needs of the flock. There is a difference. Decision-makers are always looking for someone else to do the servicing. Servant leaders are always being controlled by needs. Servant shepherds should never find themselves in the situation where they are delegating that which they should be doing. If they do, then they have moved themselves into a corporate boardroom of decision-making, and thus become lords. Any shepherd who delegates that which shepherds are to be doing themselves is actually not doing that for which he has been delegated to do by the flock. It is the flock who delegates, not the shepherds. Once a shepherd moves himself into a function of delegating, then he has become a lord.

D. Encourage voluntary service and submission.

The shepherds' service was to be "*voluntarily according to God.*"^{5:2} They were to be voluntary servants who shepherded those who voluntarily submitted to their service. The household of Stephanas had "*dedicated themselves to the ministry of the saints*" (1 Co 16:15). It was the responsibility of the saints in turn to "*submit yourselves*" to their ministry (1 Co 16:16). It is submission to ministry, not authority, that maintains the organic function of the body of Christ, and the function of the shepherds.

Demagogues always get this wrong. They seek to steal some of the "all authority" that rests only with our Lord Jesus (Mt 28:18). And in their act of authority theft, they seek to submit the sheep to their control. They thus move among the flock "to call the shots" in order to reassert their authority over the flock. But this is the very thing that Peter denounces in this context (See 3 Jn 9,10). Elders who "call the shots" are lords over the flock.

E. Do not serve for money.

Since the elders were to be paid double salary (1 Tm 5:17), then we can understand why someone might take advantage of the contribution of the saints because he was "*greedy for money.*"^{5:2}

The reason for the double salary was obvious. Those who would be qualified to be shepherds would be those who were the most benevolent among the

sheep. The greatest leaders among the sheep are the greatest slaves. If the body was not protective of the shepherds who volunteered to feed and care for the sheep, then they could possibly give themselves and their families into poverty. Through the shepherds, therefore, the entire body ministered to the needs among the sheep. For this reason, serving shepherds were to be given a second salary in order to have sufficient funds to distribute among the needy of the sheep.

F. Remember there is only one Lord.

The elders were not to serve "*as being lords over those entrusted*" to them.^{5:3} Lords demand submission. The Christian has only one Lord to whom he submits (Ep 4:4-6). In reference to the use of the word "submission" in our discipleship, we submit to one another's service (1 Co 16:15,16). We submit to one another because we have submitted to the Lord Jesus. We must remember, therefore, that we submit only to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Our dedication to ministry requires submission to one another and our Lord Jesus in order that we might serve one another (Ep 5:21). Our submission to Jesus' lordship requires that we live by the authority of His command to submit to one another (Jn 14:15; 15:14).

Since lordship involves commandments to which submission must be made, then the submission of the disciple in reference to authority can only be to our Lord Jesus. If our submission to our

Lord is the same as our submission to the shepherds, then we would conclude that the shepherds have the same authority to give commandments as our Lord Jesus. It takes no Bible scholar to figure out the error of this theology. Therefore, the Bible student must understand the context in which the word “submit” is used. If it is used in the context of ministry, then reference is to submission to our ministry to one another. But if the word is used in reference to authority and command, then it used in reference to the Lord Jesus Christ as our only Lord with all authority.

G. Lead by example:

In contrast to being lords over the flock who might assume authority and demand submission, the shepherds are to lead by example, that is, by the serving example of their lives. They are before the sheep with life-style examples, not behind the sheep with commands. Lordship would demand inherent authority. Example would demand only voluntary submission to those who are dedicated to the ministry of the saints.

When the shepherds lead by example, there is no need for authority. The sheep voluntarily follow them because they seek the service of the shepherds for their needs. The shepherds’ submission to the authority of Jesus as the lord of their lives is the example that draws the sheep to follow them. When shepherds lead in this manner, they know that “*when the Chief Shepherd appears,*” they “*will receive a crown of glory that does not fade away.*”^{5:4}

Since the fellowship of the body of Christ is a community of slaves, then slaves cannot be led by the authority of command. Slaves can only be led by those who manifest in their lives the greatest example of slavehood. This is what Jesus had in mind when He spoke the following words in reference to the Gentiles who have rulers and lords among them: “... **among you it will not be so**” (Mk 10:43). Therefore, it is as Jesus concluded after He had washed the disciples’ feet during His last meeting with them on the night of His betrayal: “*And he who leads, as he who serves*” (Lk 22:26).

Chapter 12 Survivor Character

In order for the elders to shepherd the flock, the younger men of the flock must show a spirit of respect through submission. The elders cannot function if the younger do not show their respect to their elders through submission. In the context of elders leading by example, the

younger are to follow the example of the elders who have dedicated themselves to servicing the needs of others. It may have been that the young rose up against some of the elders because some of the elders had moved out of their ministry of servicing the needs of the people to lording with

commands. Peter, therefore, first corrected the lording of the elders, and then he corrected the young in that they must submit to the servanthood example of the elders. It is interesting to note that when elders start lording, the younger often start rebelling.

The wisdom of the younger is manifested by their desire to learn from the example of serving that is given by the shepherds. Autocratic shepherds will lead the church into a hierarchy of competition for power. But the elders' leading the younger by example, trains the younger to be future shepherds who will also serve the flock.

A. A community of slaves:

The church is a community of slaves. Peter takes the submission of the younger to the service of the elders beyond the younger men. He does so by stating that *"all of you be submissive to one another."*^{5:5} Paul also stated that we are to be *"submitting to one another in the fear of God"* (Ep 5:21). In this submission, we must not assume that one member has authority over other members. Reference is to our submission to one another's service. The church is a community of slaves with dirty towels. It is a community of people who are going about looking for dirty feet to wash, not kingdoms to build. Slaves have no kingdoms. Lords are always in some effort to build one.

Elders lead by serving the needs of the body. The body exalts the shepherds, therefore, by submitting to their care and

example of service. This is not a matter of who has power over others, but who is the greatest slave among the sheep. Concerning the organic function of ministry and submission thereof, we must always keep in mind the mandate of Jesus:

*You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them. And their great ones exercise authority over them. **But it will not be so among you.** But whoever desires to be great among you will be your servant* (Mk 10:42,43).

Lords cannot exist without authority and kingdoms over which they can rule. It is for this reason that Jesus is our **only** Lord (Ep 4:4-6). He is our only Lord because *"all authority has been given"* to Him in heaven and on earth (Mt 28:18). Some shepherds to whom Peter was writing were seeking to claim some of the lordship authority of Jesus. By doing so, they were seeking to submit others by the compulsion of command. Such behavior, however, is contrary to Jesus' mandate for the leaders who serve among us. When individuals seek to be the slaves of the needs of others, then there is no problem with a thirst for authority. But when little men try to wear big hats, they are always blinded.

B. A community of the humble:

Servants are to *"be clothed with humility."*^{5:5} The reason they should be so clothed is that *"God resists the proud*

and gives grace to the humble"^{5:5} (Js 4:6). And for this reason, every disciple must humble himself "*under the mighty hand of God so that He may exalt*" us when we can handle His exaltation.^{5:6} Confucius was right: "Humility is the solid foundation of all the virtues." In *Pilgrims Progress*, John Bunyan wrote,

He that is down need fear no fall,
He that is low no pride;
He that is humble ever shall,
Have God to be his guide.

Someone correctly said, "The hard way to learn humility is to act so foolishly as to be humiliated." We must keep in mind that it is a truth of human behavior that if we humbly walk with God, we are sure to be exalted by Him before all men. Only the humble, therefore, can survive the exaltation of God.

C. A community of trust:

Christians trust in God's care. If one has little faith in the care of God, then he will often cast few of his worries into the caring hand of God. In fact, we can determine if we really believe in God's care for us by how often we cast our burdens into His care. Peter exhorts that we should be "*casting all*" our cares on Him.^{5:7} His assumption is, therefore, that the life of the disciple is to be lived totally under the comfort of God's care for us.

It is not surprising that in a context where service, submission and humility are discussed, there is a statement concerning the casting of all our cares into

the helping hand of God. The proud, arrogant and self-sufficient feel little need for the help of God. When one feels that he can do everything his own way, then he does not consider the help of God. The more one depends on himself, the less he depends on God. In this way, therefore, the life of a commanding lord and the life of a humble slave are entirely different. Those who have built themselves up with all the successes of life find it difficult to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God.

D. A community of the cautious:

Because our "*adversary the devil walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*,"^{5:8} it is imperative that all Christians take seriously his threats. We should thus be on the watch for his tricks. A good study for every Christian is to learn how Satan works. We are very familiar with the behavior of Jesus, but usually very ignorant of how Satan works to take us down. When Peter exhorts us to "*be sober, be vigilant*,"^{5:8} he means that it is the responsibility of every disciple to understand how Satan works in order to devour us. We must know our enemy.

He "*walks about ... seeking*."^{5:8} It is Satan's mission to seek and to devour. We must keep in mind that he has no power outside his realm of search. Jesus has bound this old serpent with the power of the gospel (Rv 20:1,2). Therefore, as long as one stays outside his realm of captivity, then Satan cannot of his own will touch the Christian.

In this context of submission and service, one places himself in the realm of Satan's devouring by not humbling himself before God. The souls of the arrogant are always torn by the devouring teeth of the devil.

E. A community of faith:

We can "*resist him*" by "*standing firm in the faith.*"^{5:9} Peter uses a military word here that refers to resisting another military force. What James stated is true: "*Submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you*" (Js 4:7). We cannot say that we believe this passage, and at the same time, be fearful of walking through a graveyard. If we are afraid of spooks and goblins that are generated in our own imagination, then we are not standing firm in the faith. There is hypocrisy in the one who says that he is standing firm in the faith, and yet, is fearful of the senseless incantations of some voodoo priest. And while we seek to justify our imagined spooks and demons, we need to remember that man always has a problem of trying to be politically correct, and by doing so, we become spiritually incorrect. Philosophers call our sin irrational thinking. Our sociologists among us call sin cultural dysfunction. Our psychiatrists call sin social maladjustment. And then our psychologists call sin behavioral disorder. But the Bible calls sin to be sin.

We will continue to believe that "*if God is for us, who can be against us?*" (Rm 8:31). There is almost a spirit of defiance in these words of Paul. After

listing all the possibilities that might separate us from God, Paul concluded, "*I am persuaded that ...[nothing] will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Rm 8:38,39).

It is spiritual immaturity not to feel the impact of the preceding statement of Paul. Paul added, "*I can do all things through Him who strengthens me*" (Ph 4:13). This means that one can overcome all his childhood fears of spooks and goblins and witches through the power of God that works in us (Ep 3:20; Ph 2:13; Cl 1:29). If our imagined demons still haunt our thinking, then we must continue to overcome such by the strength of Christ. We must continue in our minds to repent of past thinking that was formed according to the thinking of the world.

And so Peter concluded with the statement in reference to their struggles, "*after you have suffered a while.*"^{5:10} His meaning is that the suffering under which his readers were about to go would pass. He is not talking about the lifetime suffering of living as a disciple, but something specific in his readers' future that would soon pass away. In other words, the wars of Rome against national Israel would soon pass. But the result of their suffering through these times of turmoil would be the perfection, establishment, strengthening and settling of their faith.^{5:10} What would happen would be the same as what James said to encourage his readers. They must understand that "*the trying of your faith produces patience*" (Js 1:3). A tried faith is patient to wait on God's deliverance from

any trial. Therefore, “*let patience have its perfect work so that you may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing*” (Jas 1:4).

The example of Peter’s audience is applicable to the times in our lives when we must individually pass through times of struggle. While enduring struggle, we must always remember that it will eventually pass. We must always remember that struggle is producing patience in our character. In the body of this flesh “we

groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our house that is from heaven” (2 Co 5:2). However, we must be patient for the final coming of Jesus when he will relieve us of all suffering that is common with this fleshly body (Rv 21:4). We are, therefore, as John, who concluded the Revelation of encouragement to struggling Christians. We pray, “*Even so, come Lord Jesus*” (Rv 22:20).

Epilogue

It was “*through Silvanus, our faithful brother,*”^{5:12} that Peter wrote the letter we call 1 Peter. Consider the fact that Peter was a young man when he was initially called by Jesus to be an apostle (Lk 6:13). This calling was at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, which was about thirty-five years before these words were written. Peter, indeed, was an old man at this time. He was probably somewhere in his middle sixties. So it is understandable that Silvanus functioned as his stenographer to put his Spirit-inspired message into a Greek manuscript.

Peter had “*written briefly,*”^{5:12} though we wish he had written much more. But all his immediate readers needed at the time was a brief message of encouragement from the Holy Spirit that would spiritually empower them to make it through the brief time of suffering they must endure.

“*She who is in Babylon*”^{5:13} could possibly be a reference to the church in Babylon. But we would prefer that the pronoun “she” was a reference to his beloved wife whom he had led throughout

the world since the time Jesus called him to be an apostle (See Mk 1:30,31). She was a faithful woman who followed Peter to the ends of the earth (See 1 Co 9:5).

We do not conclude that this was a reference to the church simply because the church is globally one body. Those to whom he was writing were a part of this universal body, and thus, it would have been misleading and denominational to assume that the body was divided because of the distance between Peter and his readers.

We assume that the pronoun “she” was a reference to Peter’s wife because of the personal reference to another individual in the context. This was “*Mark my son.*”^{5:13} This was not John Mark who was the cousin of Barnabas, and temporarily part of the team that left with Paul and Barnabas on Paul’s first mission journey (Cl 4:10). Since Peter would have converted many where he was at the time of writing, this Mark could have been one of his converts, though we would question why he would single out only this one convert that his readers did not per-

sonally know. We could conclude, therefore, that this was actually the son of Peter, which son was in the presence of his aged father and mother in order to care for them. Peter wanted his readers to be reassured that he and his wife were cared for by their son at this evening time of their lives.

We have sometimes been too ecclesiastical and theological in our interpretation of what should be personal texts of the Bible. We forget that the inspired documents of the New Testament were written by real people in reference to real and personal people who were certainly not ecclesiastical and theological. The early Christians were people who were struggling through life and needed words of encouragement from the Holy Spirit. I have traveled throughout the world with and without my wife. When she is not in my company, the brethren always ask, "How is Martha?" Why would we not think that the brothers and sisters to whom Peter wrote would not be asking the same thing in reference to the wife of Peter, who had followed her husband from country to country for over thirty-five years. It would take a great deal of

interpretive gymnastics to read Peter's wife and son out of this context.

"Greet one another with a kiss of love."^{5:14} Not to bind a custom of the day on the disciples, but to encourage them to continue with this most affectionate signal of fellowship, Peter enjoins on them an expression of their love for one another. We might conclude how far we have moved away from one another in our fellowship in comparing our distant handshake with this kiss of love. We remember when we lived in Brazil for many years where we learned that in every greeting men customarily hugged one another and the women kissed. It became a natural manner of greeting for us. Whenever we met a brother, the men hugged and the women kissed. When we returned to the states, and attended the first assembly of the saints we encountered, I hugged the men and Martha kissed the women upon greeting. The members took a step back in some shock. America was a culture of distant handshakes, not hugs and kisses. Regardless, *"Peace be to you all who are in Christ."*^{5:14}