

**THE FIRST
EPISTLE
OF PETER**

.....
**LUTHER E.
SCHWARTZKOPF**

LIVING WAY
BIBLE STUDY

Living Way Bible Study, Inc. (LWBS) is an auxiliary of the Pacific Southwest District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). All studies are written and/or edited by LCMS pastors. We have been providing studies to churches throughout the U.S. and Canada since 1982.

COST-EFFECTIVE:

LWBS is a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation. We rely solely on freewill offerings from our classes to produce Living Way Bible Study materials. We provide an original of the study, from which you are then free to make copies for your class. Please honor our copyright of these materials.

As a non-profit organization, we appreciate your donations, which enable us to continue to produce and promote the study of God's Word.

If you have any questions or comments on this study, please contact us. We are always eager to hear from our students and appreciate your comments.

Living Way Bible Study, Inc.

info4LWBS@aol.com

www.livingwaybiblestudy.org

 facebook.com/livingwaybiblestudy

Copyright © 1982, 2014 by Living Way Bible Study, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form without permission from Living Way Bible Study, Inc.

WELCOME TO LIVING WAY BIBLE STUDY (LWBS)

LWBS is a practical course of study with a special emphasis on the application of God's Word to the life of the individual. While emphasizing practical application, LWBS presents each book of the Bible as the holy, inspired, Word of God, the confessional position of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Our purpose is to help equip believers to live joyfully in God's redeeming love and to share with others God's plan of salvation.

It is our prayer that the Holy Spirit will use this study to help you grow in your knowledge and appreciation of our God and His Word. *"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."* 2 Peter 3:18

STUDY STRUCTURE

LIVING WAY BIBLE STUDY SUGGESTS THIS FOUR-STEP METHOD

- 1. PERSONAL* – The student prays for guidance from the Holy Spirit and answers the Personal Application (P.A.) questions at home using only the Bible (no commentaries).
- 2. SMALL GROUPS* – The class meets for an opening and divides into small groups of 8–10 people. The small group leader guides the group through the P.A. questions, encouraging each to share their answers and discuss further as time allows.
- 3. THE MESSAGE* – The lecture or message is given by a pastor or layperson who has researched the material and presents the study, giving personal insight and augmenting, but not duplicating, the author's comments.
- 4. THE NARRATIVE* – The author's comments or narrative, along with the P.A. questions for the next lesson, are given out at the end of the class. At the next class meeting, before answering the P.A. questions, the small groups may choose to review the author's comments of the last lesson, and share what each has highlighted as meaningful or important.

With this four-step method the student has the opportunity to study the particular section of Scripture covered by the lesson from four different approaches. This emphasizes the Bible text and gives the student an understanding and ownership for each section studied.

Each lesson should be stapled together according to the number of the lesson in the right-hand corner of the page. The P.A. questions for the next week should be attached after the author's narrative for the current week, as they will be the home study for the next class session.

The first meeting of the class is an introduction to the study. Since the members of the small groups have no P.A. questions to discuss at the first meeting, they may use the time to get acquainted or to tell what they hope to receive by studying this course. At the first meeting, the lecturer presents background information about the course, using the Introduction lesson as a guide.

THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

LUTHER E. SCHWARTZKOPF

8 LESSONS

AUTHOR INFORMATION	I	The Price He Paid is Our Motive for Reverent Fear 1 Peter 1:17–21	17
BIBLIOGRAPHY	III	All This Should Move Us to a Life of Love 1 Peter 1:22–25	19
LESSON 1 : INTRODUCTION	1	The Word Will Help Us to Grow in Love 1 Peter 2:1–3	20
Our Personal Mission Statement	1	Personal Application – 1 Peter 2:4–10	21
About the Author	2		
Peter’s Ministry and Mission	2		
The Authenticity of Peter’s Authorship	3		
When Was 1 Peter Written?	4		
Where Was 1 Peter Written?	4		
The Intended First Readers	5		
A General Epistle	5		
Personal Application – 1 Peter 1:1–12	6		
LESSON 2 : 1 PETER 1:1–12	8		
How We Got to be People of God’s World 1 Peter 1:1–3	8		
We Are Guaranteed a Fantastic Retirement 1 Peter 1:4–5	10		
We Can Live Joyfully, No Matter What 1 Peter 1:6–9	11		
Believers Are Most Privileged – 1 Peter 1:10–12	12		
Personal Application – 1 Peter 1:13–2:3	13		
LESSON 3 : 1 PETER 1:13–2:3	16		
Our Primary Mission in Life	16		
Our Lifestyle Shows We Really Are God’s People 1 Peter 1:13–16	16		
		LESSON 4 : 1 PETER 2:4–10	24
		We Are in Good Company	24
		We Have a Special Relationship with Jesus 1 Peter 2:4	24
		With Fellow Believers, We Are God’s Temple 1 Peter 2:5a	25
		We Are a Holy Priesthood – 1 Peter 2:5B	25
		We Will Share in Christ’s Glory – 1 Peter 2:6–8	26
		We Are Special People With a Special Mission 1 Peter 2:9–10	26
		Personal Application – 1 Peter 2:11–3:7	28
		LESSON 5 : 1 PETER 2:11–3:7	31
		Our First Loyalty is to Our Homeland 1 Peter 2:11–12	31
		During Our Sojourn, We Strive to be Good Citizens 1 Peter 2:13–17	32
		We Are Respectful of the Existing Social Order 1 Peter 2:18–25	33
		Wives and Husbands as Servants of God 1 Peter 3:1–7	34
		Personal Application – 1 Peter 3:8–4:6	36

THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

LUTHER E. SCHWARTZKOPF

8 LESSONS



LESSON 6 : 1 PETER 3:8-4:6	39	LESSON 8 : 1 PETER 5:1-14	54
The Goal of Our “Mission”	39	The Importance of Faithful Pastors	
Be A Blessing to Fellow Believers		Peter 5:1-4	54
1 Peter 3:8-12	39	Humbly Submit to One Another – 1 Peter 5:5	55
Be A Blessing Even When You Suffer for It		Humbly Submit Also to God – 1 Peter 5:6-7	56
1 Peter 3:13-17	40	Be Ready for the Conflict – 1 Peter 5:8-11	56
Christ’s Suffering & Death Overcame Evil		The Concern of Others — A Source of Strength	
1 Peter 3:18-22	41	1 Peter 5:12-14	58
Like Jesus, Overcome Sin in Your Life			
1 Peter 4:1-6	42		
Personal Application – 1 Peter 4:7-19	44		
LESSON 7 : 1 PETER 4:7-19	47		
Keep Close to God Through Fervent Prayer			
1 Peter 4:7	47		
Keep Close to One Another – 1 Peter 4:8-11	48		
“Hang in There” Even When Things Get Rough			
1 Peter 4:12-14	49		
Be Sure of the Source of Suffering – 1 Peter 4:15	50		
Hold Firm and Trust in God – 1 Peter 4:16-19	50		
Personal Application – 1 Peter 5:1-14	51		



THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

AUTHOR INFORMATION

LUTHER E. SCHWARTZKOPF



LWBS Courses: *The Epistle of James*
The Letter of Paul to the Colossians
The First Epistle of Peter
The Second Epistle of Peter & Jude
Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians

Born in China of missionary parents (1922)

Graduated from Concordia College (Milwaukee) in 1940 and Concordia Seminary (St. Louis) in 1945

Received degree in Sociology and graduate studies in Counseling Psychology from California State University (San Bernardino, CA)

Spent entire ministry in the Southern CA District (1945–1988) Missionary-at-large, E. Sierra area (1945–48)

Immanuel, Oceanside and Fallbrook (1948–50)

Trinity, San Bernardino (1950–72)

First full-time Director of Arrowhead Lutheran Camp (1972–88)

Served on District Bible Institute staff in the 1950's; developed and taught courses: How to Study the Bible and God's Purpose for Lutheran Women

Graduate Bethel Bible Series Bible Study Institute

Served twenty (20) years on Synodical District, Mission Services Department, six years as chairman

Retired from full-time ministry in 1988, with wife (Ruth) moved back to Bishop, CA to be with grandchildren and enjoy the outdoor activities as well as the beauty and majesty of the High Sierras

Called to Glory — May 13, 2006

THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

ABOUT THE AUTHOR	2
PETER'S MINISTRY AND MISSION	2
THE AUTHENTICITY OF PETER'S AUTHORSHIP	3
WHEN WAS 1 PETER WRITTEN?	4
WHERE WAS 1 PETER WRITTEN?	4
THE INTENDED FIRST READERS	5
A GENERAL EPISTLE	5
PERSONAL APPLICATION – 1 PETER 1:1–12	6

“If we can pick up on this theme of being exiles in a godless and hostile world, we will be able to appreciate the main thrust of Peter’s letter.”



OUR PERSONAL MISSION STATEMENT

“What on earth are you doing, for heaven’s sake!” This is one way to put it. Another way to put it might be to ask the question, “Do you have a personal mission statement?” Have you ever formulated a clear and precise statement regarding your purpose in life as a Christian? Have you ever taken the time to spell out in specific terms the various things which you will need to do, as well as the things you will never do, if you hope to fulfill your personal mission in life?

The First Epistle of Peter offers clear guidelines for the believer who is serious about formulating such a “Personal Mission Statement.”

Dr. Martin Luther included this short letter (only 105 verses) on his “short list” of the most important books in the New Testament. His contemporary Dutch authority on the New Testament, Erasmus, called it “an epistle sparse in words, crammed with content.” Lutheran scholar Martin Franzmann, in his *The Word of the Lord Grows*, writes, “Anyone looking for a key book which will unlock the meaning of the whole New Testament would do well to give his days and nights to this book!”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The opening verse of this letter identifies the author as “Peter: an apostle of Jesus Christ.” Originally Peter’s name was “Simeon,” a Hebrew word which means “hearing”— something which Peter wasn’t too good at during his discipleship days. “Simon,” the Greek version of this, was applied to Peter forty-nine times in the New Testament. Shortly after He called Simon to follow Him, Jesus gave him the name “Cephas,” which is the Aramaic word for “rock” (John 1:42) hence, the Greek name “Peter” which also means “rock.” The frequency of the combination “Simon Peter” and the phrase “Simon who was known as Peter” indicates that from early on the new name which Jesus gave him became the popular way of referring to him.

Peter was the son of Jonas (or John). He had grown up in his father’s home in the fishing village of Bethsaida, which is on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. Like his father and other disciples of Jesus, Peter was a fisherman. He also had a home in Capernaum, just a few miles south and west of his “home town” (Mark 1:29–30). Paul mentions (1 Corinthians 9:5) that Peter was married and that his wife often accompanied him on missionary trips.

Peter was one of the first to become a disciple of Jesus. It was at the invitation of his brother Andrew, a follower of John the Baptist, that Peter met Jesus (John 1:40–42). With James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Peter was part of the “inner circle.” This trio of disciples often accompanied Jesus for special experiences (e.g. The Transfiguration, Mark 9:2–8; and in Gethsemane, Mark 14:33).

In the Gospels, Peter comes across as a quick-tempered, highly emotional, undependable, “foot in his mouth kind of guy.” However, following his reinstatement to discipleship at Jesus’ post resurrection appearance (John 21) and

the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2), Peter began to live up to the nickname “Rocky” (taken from the Greek). His forceful preaching on Pentecost (Acts 2:14–40), blessed by the Holy Spirit, led to the conversion of 3,000 people who were “added to the Church” on that one day! (Acts 2:41).

PETER’S MINISTRY AND MISSION

In the beginning, Peter’s ministry seems to have been primarily among his fellow Jews in and around Jerusalem. Yet, by God’s direction Peter ministered to non-Jews as well. In fact, he has the distinction of being the first to receive Gentiles into church fellowship, as the account of the conversion of the Roman Centurion Cornelius and his family reports in Acts 10.

Acts (12:17–18) tells us that Peter made a quick decision to leave Jerusalem in A.D. 44 at the outbreak of persecutions against the followers of Jesus, instigated by the wicked King Herod Agrippa. We aren’t told, however, where he went. Peter does reappear briefly in Jerusalem in connection with the special council (Acts 15). Here, chairman James calls Peter by his Hebrew name Simeon.

The question of whether or not Peter ever made it to Rome has been a subject of debate for many years. Lutheran scholar Dr. Paul Maier writes in the historical notes of his novel *Flames of Rome* that the “current consensus” is in favor of the idea that Peter did make it to Rome. He points to a letter, which Clement of Rome sent to the people in Corinth in A.D. 96. In this letter he ties the martyrdom of Peter and Paul with those of the Christian martyrs who gave their lives during Nero’s persecution in A.D. 64. Maier’s notes also mention, “there are numerous references by Christian authors to the martyrdom of Peter and Paul in Rome.” The date of Peter’s arrival in Rome is likewise shrouded in mystery, but it probably was shortly before his martyrdom.

The actual site of Peter’s execution and burial plot is said to have been in the garden adjacent to Nero’s palace, which was situated across the Tiber River from the main part of Rome. The first Christian Emperor Constantine (ca 280–337) had a chapel erected here in honor of Saint Peter. Today, on this site stands the magnificent renaissance Basilica of St. Peter and adjoining it, St. Peter’s Square.

The legend that Peter was crucified upside down has been pretty well accepted since the time of Origen, the renowned Church Father (A.D. 185–253). Many scholars today question the reliability of this legend because there was no early tradition stemming from Rome itself suggesting that he was, indeed, crucified in this way, and they feel that the claim has “an apocryphal ring” to it.

Peter was one of the first to become a disciple of Jesus. It was at the invitation of his brother Andrew, a follower of John the Baptist, that Peter met Jesus.

• • •

THE AUTHENTICITY OF PETER’S AUTHORSHIP

That Simon Peter was, in fact, the author of this letter had early and strong support. The letter was explicitly ascribed to Peter by that group of “church fathers” whose opinions carried tremendous weight in their day and beyond — men such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, all of whom lived and worked during the latter portion of the second and the beginning of the third century (A.D.). The fourth century historian Eusebius, of Alexandria, in his *Ecclesiastical History* noted that Peter’s authorship of this letter was “universally accepted” by the Church without any doubt.

Nevertheless, there are many modern scholars who are bold enough to challenge this strong witness. At the head of their list of objections is their observation that the quality of the Greek in this letter is much too polished for Peter. It is true that in Acts 4:13 the disciples are referred to as “uneducated, common men.” However, the Greek word for “uneducated” (*agrammotos*) does not mean illiterate. In this context, it very likely means simply that the disciples were without formal training in the Holy Scriptures. They didn’t have diplomas from any of the rabbinical schools.

Without question, the Greek of 1 Peter is a cut or two above that of 2 Peter. Most conservative Bible scholars point to verse twelve of Chapter 5 to explain this difference. Here the apostle Peter states that “By Silvanus...I have written to you.” The Greek word for “by” literally means “through” or “by means of.” Silvanus is regarded as another name for Silas who was the apostle Paul’s faithful co-worker (see Acts 15:22–29; 2 Corinthians 1:19). With Paul, he co-authored the letters which Paul sent to the Thessalonians.

It may very well have been that when Paul was executed in Rome, his colleague Silvanus (Silas) made himself available to assist Peter. Peter was very likely happy to have the assistance of such a competent servant of the Lord, especially since Silas had been with Paul on his missionary trips among the people of Asia Minor for whom this letter was intended. Peter was glad to use him as his “amanuensis,” the person who actually put his hand to the stylus and wrote the words. In this case, Peter would tell Silas what he wanted to say — maybe in Aramaic, his mother tongue. Silas would then put Peter’s thoughts and ideas into words, and grammatically form them into Greek. Even though Silas did the actual composing and writing, it would in essence be Peter’s epistle.

Without going into detail, other objections from modern scholars can be just as easily explained away. We are on pretty solid ground if we follow the testimony of the early church and accept Peter as the author of this letter.

WHEN WAS 1 PETER WRITTEN?

Putting a date on this first letter of Peter may not be quite as simple. However, everything points to sometime during the period of Nero’s reign, which was from A.D. 54 to A.D. 68. It cannot be dated earlier than A.D. 60 since it shows familiarity with Paul’s “prison letters” — Colossians and Ephesians dated A.D. 60. Some scholars feel that since Peter still calls for unequivocal loyalty to the state (2:13–17), it probably was written prior to Nero’s official persecution which began in A.D. 64.

Very likely, it was written shortly after the martyrdom of Paul in A.D. 62, but just before the horrible persecution of Christians ordered by Nero — A.D. 63 or early 64.

WHERE WAS 1 PETER WRITTEN?

In 5:13, Peter designates the place from which the letter was being sent as “Babylon.” There seems to be agreement among Bible scholars that Peter was using this name in a symbolic way (Cp. Revelation 17:9–10) and as a “code word” for Rome. This fits with what we have written above about the date of writing and earlier about Peter’s being in Rome around this time period.

THE INTENDED FIRST READERS

According to verse one, this letter was addressed, first of all, to the Christians in the five provinces of Asia Minor (modern Turkey). You may recall that the apostle Paul focused his missionary efforts in the two provinces of Galatia and Asia — the southern and southwestern portions of Asia Minor. The seven churches of Revelation are all in Asia.

Peter's missionary trips apparently took him to the southeast and the north. You may recall that on his second missionary journey, the apostle Paul "attempted to go into Bithynia, but the spirit of Jesus did not allow them" (Acts 16:7). It may very well have been, that unknown to Paul, his colleague Peter was already ministering to the people in that province.

Some believe that shortly before his beheading, the apostle Paul had encouraged Peter to write a letter of encouragement to all of the Asia Minor congregations — those he himself and Silvanus had served and those Peter had worked with. The purpose of such a "circular letter" would be to warn them all about the anti-Christian movement already underway in Rome, and which would probably soon make its way to Asia Minor. Peter is preparing his readers for a blow that is about to fall, rather than one that has already hit them.

The readers are called "exiles of the Dispersion." Many of the Jewish converts could relate to this term because they were part of the great Diaspora, which found their people fleeing to all parts of the world. However, since most of the Christians in

Asia Minor churches were Gentiles, we can assume that Peter was using this phrase in a figurative sense. He wanted to remind them that like their Jewish Christian friends, all of them should think of themselves as exiles — as aliens and pilgrims who have been dispersed in a godless and hostile world.

A GENERAL EPISTLE

First Peter is classified as a "general" epistle. It is "generic" in nature. It has a message not just for its originally intended readers. It has a message for all believers in all ages.

If we can pick up on this theme of being exiles in a godless and hostile world, we will be able to appreciate the main thrust of Peter's letter. Even though we may not face the horrendous physical and emotional persecutions which Peter's friends faced, in reality the times have not really changed all that much. We would do well to think of ourselves as pilgrims in a hostile world.

The hostility may be masked, but this makes it even more dangerous. Like the people in Asia Minor, we need to be astute enough to recognize the diabolical forces at work to rob us of our precious faith and hope. We need to be prepared. Let this serve as a powerful motivation for each of us to work up a Personal Mission Statement and have a clear idea of what it will take to carry it out.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1 PETER 1:1-12

Thank You, Father in heaven, for Your great love and mercy, which moved You to do everything that needed to be done for my eternal salvation. Help me to grow daily in my appreciation of this wonderful truth, and fill my heart with joy as I look forward to the blessedness of eternity. Amen.

1 Peter 1:1-9

1. Suppose you have a neighbor who is a Jehovah's witness. One day she says to you "You believe in the Trinity, don't you? Do you know that the word "Trinity" is not even in the Bible?" What do you say to her?

Verse 2 clearly speaks of the "threeness" of the Godhead.

What does the Father do?

What does the Son do?

What does the Spirit do?

2. What led God to bring us into His family of "chosen ones" (v. 3)?

_____ our goodness _____ His mercy _____ our potential

How does the concept of a "new birth" re-enforce this?

3. What three negative "compounds" does Peter use (v.4) to emphasize the durability of the inheritance we will one day receive as members of God's family?

What is Peter trying to get us to understand?

4. Consider Fred who has been a devout Christian all of his life, very active in his church, and always ready to speak to others about his faith. In his later years he has become a victim of Alzheimer's. His diseased mind seems to have, at best, a very blurred understanding of what the Christian religion is all about. He even refuses to take Holy Communion. Can you find something in verse 5 which might help you to console and reassure his wife, who is concerned about his eternal life.

5. According to verse 6, what should you expect might happen to you if you really try to live out your life as a member of the family of God?

What two things should we keep in mind as we deal with these trials? (Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:17; James 1:2-4)

6. In verse 7, what process in metallurgy does Peter use as an analogy to show believers how to react to trials, which come their way because of their faith?

What invaluable benefits can accrue to the believer who is tested like this?

Have you experienced such testing and blessing?

Please share with the class.

7. What does Peter say should always and in all circumstances be the dominant characteristic in our lives as God's "special people" (v. 8)?

8. According to verse 9, what blessing will be ours if we continue in the faith? How can this give us incentive and courage as well as the capability of maintaining a spirit of joy even when we're feeling the hostility of the world at its worst?

1 Peter 1:10-12

9. In the first nine verses of this letter, Peter has been singing the praises of God for all the wonderful things He has made possible for His "Chosen Ones." He wants them to appreciate how privileged and "special" they really are. What does he point to now, to get them to see that they even have "an edge" over some of God's great people in the Old Testament?

Who else had not been in on the specifics of when and where God would bring fulfillment to His great plan of salvation for the whole world?

What was true of the Asia Minor Christians is true for us, too. How should this make us feel?



FIRST PETER

1 PETER 1:1-12

WE ARE GUARANTEED A FANTASTIC RETIREMENT	
1 PETER 1:4-5	10
WE CAN LIVE JOYFULLY, NO MATTER WHAT	
1 PETER 1:6-9	11
BELIEVERS ARE MOST PRIVILEGED – 1 PETER 1:10-12	12
PERSONAL APPLICATION – 1 PETER 1:13-2:3	13

The same Holy Spirit, who spoke to these men, saw to it that the “Good News” of Jesus was announced to you, and the same Holy Spirit opened your ears to accept — the promised Messiah — as your Lord and Savior.



In the summer of 1997, after twelve years in space, the Russian space station MIR began to experience all kinds of problems. The crew of the space station, as well as scientists in the Moscow control center, knew they had to get the damaged equipment in working order as quickly as possible. After all, these men from planet earth could not survive in space without the artificial environment provided by the space station. They were only temporary residents in space. You can be sure that they never forgot that — not even for a split-second.

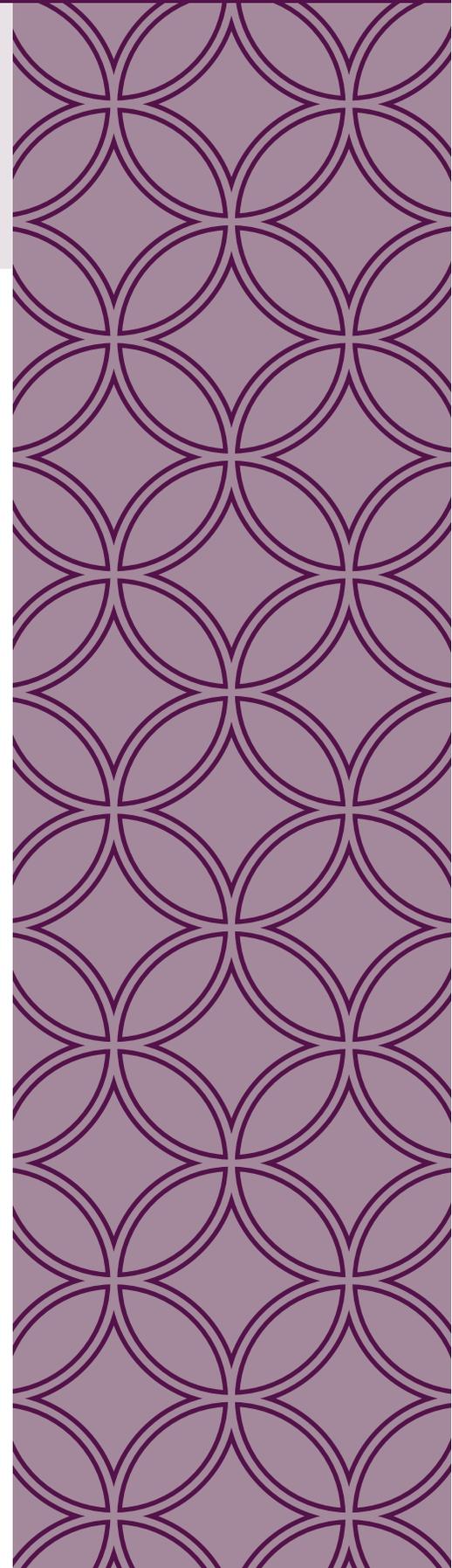
It’s kind of like that for Christians living on planet earth. We should never — not even for a moment — lose sight of the reality that as God’s chosen people we are truly aliens in a hostile world.

This is where the apostle Peter begins in his formulation of A Personal Mission Statement for the people to whom he wrote this epistle, as well as for us today. He reminds us all that we are people who are “out of our element” during our short sojourn on earth (See John 15:19).

HOW WE GOT TO BE PEOPLE OF GOD’S WORLD

1 PETER 1:1-3

In verse 2, Peter reminds us of the important truth of how we got to be “other-worldly” people. We “were chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood.”



In this short statement, Peter summarizes how it all happened. It began with the Father's "choosing" us. But there is a lot more to it than that. In the beginning, God's created people sinned and disobeyed Him. Then, early in the history of His chosen people of the Old Testament, God introduced ceremonies which clearly demonstrated that it would take shedding of someone's blood before people could again enjoy a good relationship with Him. Before the High Priest could enter God's presence in the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle and later the temple, animals were killed on the altar of sacrifice. Only after the High Priest had sprinkled some of the blood over the people and upon himself did he move toward the place of God's Presence. All of this pointed to the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on Calvary's Cross.

When Peter says here (v.2) that the Christians were "sprinkled" with the blood of Jesus Christ, he obviously doesn't mean this in a literal sense. They were sprinkled with His blood figuratively when they heard the Good News that God's Son had shed His sacred blood on the Cross on their behalf. The Holy Spirit then broke through the spiritual darkness in their hearts and led them to see that God had done all of this for them. They responded by opening their hearts to Him. The "bottom line" is that they had the Triune God to thank for their blessed relationship with Him. God had taken care of everything that needed to be done to make this possible. Basically, it was all His doing!

In this letter, Peter followed the customary format for formal correspondence. In the first verse, he identified himself and gave

his credentials. Next, he identified the persons to whom the letter was addressed, including a brief complimentary statement about them. He evidently felt that referring to them as "God's Chosen People" was the highest honor he could mention.

Next would come the greeting. In those days, among the Greeks the greeting was "Xaire!" or "Joy!" Instead of using the customary word, Peter used a similar sounding word "Xaris" or "Grace!" To make the greeting even more meaningful, he added the Greek translation of "Shalom!" — the greeting, which was commonly used by members of God's Old Testament people. "Shalom" (Peace) points to the idea of perfect spiritual soundness.

Peter's wish for them then was that this grace and peace would "be multiplied" — would be theirs in abundant supply. It was his wish for them that they would experience more and more of the exciting power of God in their lives! Nice touch! Can you think of a more fitting way for one Christian pilgrim to greet other pilgrims than to wish them increased spiritual power and blessing?

As Peter reflected for a moment upon what he had just told Silvanus to write, and before he gets into the body of his message for them, he just has to say how excited he is about all this. He invites his readers to join him. He says "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v.3). If he were writing this today, he may have chosen to say "Let's hear it for the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ — three cheers to God for what He has done!"

First on his list of things for which to give God “three cheers” is the new life that they all have. “We have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” Peter is here referring to the new life which God in His great mercy gives to all who respond to the Gospel. Just as the life we receive from our parents comes to us without any action on our part, so this “new birth” is a result of what God has done — a gift from Him.

The birth puts us into a loving relationship with our heavenly Father, which is characterized by hope. In our time, people will often use the word hope interchangeably with the concept of “wishful thinking.” This is not what Peter means here by the word “hope.” He meant looking to the future with a well-founded expectation of great blessing.

This hope, Peter writes, gets its durability and dependability from the established fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It was the resurrection of Jesus that was responsible for Peter’s return from the hopelessness which overwhelmed him, after the crucifixion of Jesus. Here Peter seems to echo what his colleague Paul said in the great resurrection chapter of his correspondence to the Corinthians “If Christ has not been raised your faith is futile and you are still in your sins... But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead!” (1 Corinthians 15:17ff). In Jesus Christ and His resurrection from the dead, believers are given the forward look to something we can count on.

WE ARE GUARANTEED A FANTASTIC RETIREMENT

1 PETER 1:4-5

As members of God’s family we can look forward to a fantastic “retirement” when our short stay on this earth is over. Peter’s language here seems to allude to Israel’s hope as they were being led through the wilderness by Moses. It was their hope

of an inheritance in the Promised Land that kept them going.

However, Peter points up a great contrast between such an inheritance and the inheritance he is talking about. He piles up three negative compounds. First, he says this inheritance is “imperishable.” In contrast to Canaan, it cannot be ravaged or polluted. Secondly, it is “undefiled.” The Greek word for this (*amiantus*) refers to a certain mineral found among the rocks which can be made into a fire-resisting fabric (maybe like asbestos). The fabric turned into pure white when placed into a fire. The Romans paid dearly for it. They wanted it for wrapping the remains of their dead so that in cremation the precious ashes would be preserved in a fabric that remained unaffected by the consuming fire. Thirdly, Peter says that it was “unfading.” The Greek term for this seems to be a reference to something with which Peter’s readers would be familiar. In his *Lexicon of the Greek Language*, Dr. Thayer tells us that the word is the same as the amaranth, a flower that never fades. When plucked off, if it is moistened with water it revives. Back in those days, says Dr. Thayer, “the amaranth plant was a symbol of perpetuity and immortality.”

Furthermore, Peter reminds them, this inheritance “is kept in heaven for you.” The verb form for the word “kept” happens to be the perfect participle, which implies completed action. It strongly suggests the idea that this is a “done deal.” It’s like a treasure which God has placed into a “heavenly safety deposit box,” the key for which God will put in your hands one day. This inheritance is a sure thing!

Not only is it secure, Peter says, there is also this neat feature: You can count on getting to heaven to claim it. As you and I remain in a faith relationship with God, we can enjoy it throughout eternity. You can count on Him.

WE CAN LIVE JOYFULLY, NO MATTER WHAT

1 PETER 1:6-9

Since we have so much “going for us,” Peter tells us, the overriding characteristic of our life is bound to be one of steady joy. He adds that this will be true, “though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials.” The language used here does not seem to point to any organized persecution. Peter is simply laying before them the difficulties they can expect to experience on a day-to-day basis, simply because they are Christians. Their unique outlook for the future as well as their set of values is going to put them “at odds” with the people around them. There will be open and sometimes subtle antagonism toward them and their way of life simply because they are different. It is inevitable. It comes with the territory. Nevertheless, Peter assures them, this is only for a “little while.”

Peter then goes on to instruct them how to put a “positive spin” on the difficulties they might encounter. He alludes to the way in which impurities are removed from gold by the heat of a fire. What remains after this process is a more beautiful genuine nugget of gold. Here, Peter encourages the believer to consider hardships they may experience as the occasions which will help to bring out the true wonder and beauty of their faith. It will not only survive the testing, but become even stronger and more beautiful. That purified faith will call forth the words of admiration and commendation from the Lord at His Second Coming.

Peter interrupts his train of thought to focus briefly on another facet of truth about the faith, which they already had. “Think of it,” he says, “You have never seen Him and yet you love Him; you don’t see Him now and yet you believe in Him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy.” He wanted them to recognize how much more valuable than gold is their faith. Gold can bring some blessings. But it’s nothing compared to blessings that faith can bring them. Their faith in the Lord Jesus brings present joy that you cannot find words adequate to describe. Peter also says that it is “exalted” joy, very likely intending for them to think of their joy as a hint of the glories to come.

Peter is on a roll. Not only does faith bring hope, love, and joy, ultimately it brings the best gift of all “the salvation of your souls.” The word “soul” is used here in the Semitic sense of “person” or “self.”

With all of the exuberance he can muster, Peter reminds them that they are special and privileged people. As people of faith, they have hope, they have joy, and they can begin to experience the blessedness of their future salvation already during their earthly sojourn.

BELIEVERS ARE MOST PRIVILEGED

1 PETER 1:10-12

In his effort to show them how special and unique they really were, Peter suggests that they take a look at the past. Think about the great prophets of the Old Testament, he says. They had the privilege of foretelling the details of God's plan of salvation and describing in detail various aspects of the Messiah's work of redemption. Yet it was all in the future for them. They hunted in vain for hints as to when and where all of this would take place. Somehow, they came to accept the fact that they were just the advance guard. What they had the privilege of knowing about and announcing would not happen in their time.

You are much more privileged, he told them. What these great servants of God could only dream about and write about, you are experiencing personally! The same Holy Spirit, who spoke to these men, saw to it that the "Good News" of Jesus was announced to you, and the same Holy Spirit opened your ears to accept — the promised Messiah — as your Lord and Savior.

If that were not enough to convince them how special they were, Peter takes it a step higher reminding them that in their faith they had something that not even the angels in heaven

can experience. These are "things into which angels long to look." The present tense suggests that they are continuing to try to see what the Christians are experiencing. Peter may have had in mind the reality that the angels of heaven are perfect beings. They know nothing of the agony and anguish of sin. So, they can't experience the wonderful Gospel of forgiveness and the hope of eternal life. They are limited to rejoicing over a lost sinner returning to God.

This wonderful section lays the foundation for everything else that Peter says later in this epistle.

As we go about our task of formulating our own "Personal Mission Statement," this is the place to begin. We start by affirming who we are and how we got this way. We are a most privileged people. We are members of God's Holy People — not because we are so good, but because He is so gracious. This is the basis for a radically different view of life, which might not always be understood or appreciated by unbelieving people with whom we share a comparatively short ride on planet earth.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1 PETER 1:13-2:3

As I study Your Word today, Lord, help me to see clearly that You have not only called me by the Gospel and led me by the Holy Spirit to accept the salvation which Jesus has won for me with His sacrificial death, but You have also called me to a life of holiness and obedience. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

1 Peter 1:13-16

1. Take a few minutes to formulate for yourself a clearly stated "Personal Mission Statement" with two or three specific goals:

1.

2.

3.

2. What is the significance of the word "Therefore" with which Peter begins this section (v.13)?

Summarize in a personal way the main truths which Peter stated as the basis of his "Therefore." In v.1-13, Peter reminded me that...

3. In the light of what Peter's "Therefore" referred to, what is the first thing he challenged his readers to do?

Why this emphasis on using their minds?

4. What does Peter say can give us inspiration as we struggle to live a life of obedience to God?

Is Peter suggesting that our motive for obedience is our hope of getting to heaven when we die?

What would be wrong with that?

How can the sure hope of salvation help us?

5. Suppose you heard a Televangelist proclaim “Believe in Jesus and you will go to heaven. That’s all there is to it!” In the light of verse 14, is that all there is to being a Christian?

What else does God expect?

Tell how membership in a Christian congregation helps you grow in personal “holiness.”

Who is the model that we should seek to emulate in our “quest for holiness?”

1 Peter 1:17–21

6. What “attitude” does Peter say should dominate our lives as we seek to live for God, according to verse 17?

How can we reconcile this advice with what the Apostle John writes in 1 John 4:18?

If you are familiar with Luther’s Small Catechism, how does Martin Luther begin the explanation of each of the Ten Commandments?

7. With whose religious experience does Peter try to get his readers (and us) to identify in verses 18 & 19?

What event in the history of God’s Chosen People of the Old Testament does he want them to think about?

8. How does Peter (v.20) further seek to show his readers, of that time and now, the absolutely unbelievable magnitude of God’s love?

What does he say (v.21) that this thought should do for us?

1 Peter 1:22–25

9. In what area of our lives (v.22) will God be looking for us to come through with God-like behavior?

How does God’s example help us to clarify our understanding of what He means by love? (Romans 5:8)

In singling out the importance of love for brothers and sisters in Christ, was Peter implying that we are not expected to show love to non-Christians? How might you explain the absence of an all inclusive directive to love all people?

1 Peter 2:1-3

10. What does Peter recommend as an antidote or vaccine against attitudes and behaviors (2:1) that stifle and thwart our growth in holiness (v.2)?

What does Peter (v.3) point to as a way for us to nurture within our hearts a healthy and strong appetite for the Word?



FIRST PETER

1 PETER 1:13–2:3

THE PRICE HE PAID IS OUR MOTIVE FOR REVERENT FEAR 1 PETER 1:17–21	17
ALL THIS SHOULD MOVE US TO A LIFE OF LOVE 1 PETER 1:22–25	19
THE WORD WILL HELP US TO GROW IN LOVE 1 PETER 2:1–3	20
PERSONAL APPLICATION – 1 PETER 2:4–10	21

We will use the brains God has given us to evaluate our lifestyle and get rid of anything and everything which is not “godly.” And we will seek with God’s help to pattern our lives after Him — especially His love!



OUR PRIMARY MISSION IN LIFE

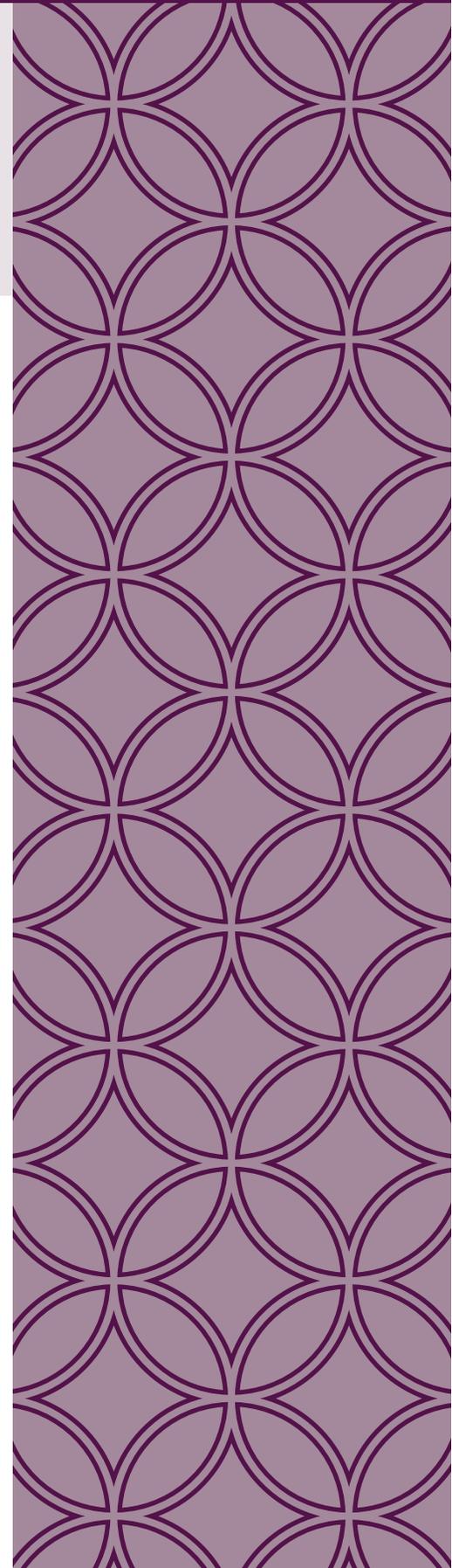
In the “preamble” (Lesson 2), Peter’s letter helped us to establish a solid base on which to develop our Personal Mission Statement. It helped us to clarify who we are and how we got to be who we are. Lesson 3 takes it a step forward to consider what should take place in our daily lives, in the light of what God has done for us.

OUR LIFESTYLE SHOWS WE REALLY ARE GOD’S PEOPLE

1 PETER 1:13–16

The word “therefore,” at the beginning of this section, hooks up the coming exhortation for holiness of living to everything that Peter has stated so far. “Therefore” is a “call to arms” for the sincere follower of Jesus. The great salvation, which God in His grace has provided for us, is designed not only to free us from eternal condemnation; it is also designed to free us up to be God’s people during our temporary stay on earth.

Without any hesitation, Peter calls his readers to “gird up your minds and be sober” (v.13). This figure of speech has its origin in the style of clothing for that day (Cp. Luke 12:35–37; Ephesians 6:14). Men and women wore loose-flowing robes. When they had manual work to do, they would take up the folds of their garments and tuck them under their belts so that movement of arms and legs would not be impaired. Today’s equivalent would be “Take off your coat, roll up your sleeves, and get to work!”



Peter's exhortation for us today is "Getting your minds in gear!" Living the Christian life is not a "no-brainer." It is not something we will simply drift into. It will require serious mental effort on our part. He informs us right "up front" that if we hope to live as God intends us to live we should expect a good mental workout.

And that will, quite naturally, require that you "be sober," Peter adds. This doesn't refer specifically to alcoholic excesses. It is used metaphorically to describe moral and spiritual alertness and sensitivity. Like a football coach giving his players a pep talk, Peter gives his "team" something to remember as they go out on the playing field of life to meet some tough challenges: "Set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." For those who take seriously the challenges of living the holy life, it will be very demanding. They can take heart. They know that when the game of life is over, they will experience the glory of Christ's victory when He comes again.

First of all, "as obedient children" (v.14) we will need to "roll up the sleeves" of our minds to carefully analyze and evaluate attitudes and behaviors that have become a part of ourselves over the years. In this process of evaluation we will be aware that many things, which were part and parcel of our personality, will have to be eliminated. Incidentally, the order of the words in Greek for "as obedient children" seems to suggest that we get closer to the meaning of this Hebraism by reading "as children of obedience." It would highlight the important concept that Peter wants to put across — that we are not just children of God who feel a strong obligation to be obedient; rather we are children who have inherited obedience. Thus it is our very nature to want to please our Heavenly Father. It's like we have received a whole new set of spiritual genes!

As "children of obedience," we have the right attitude to accept Peter's call to holiness (v.15). "As he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct." This echoes God's call to Israel in Leviticus, "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2).

Some commentators point out that the Greek word for "holy" (*hagios*), as it refers to God here, may be a "virtual noun" to identify God Himself as "The Holy One." Translated this way it would read "Since it is The Holy One who has called you, you should be holy..." This makes God Himself the One we are to imitate. He is the model for our holiness (Matthew 5:48; Colossians 3:10; & Ephesians 5:1).

As with Judaism, Christianity is also a summons to holy living. Therefore, this makes it our #1 goal in life as God's people. It is the heart of our Personal Mission Statement.

THE PRICE HE PAID IS OUR MOTIVE FOR REVERENT FEAR

1 PETER 1:17-21

As an additional incentive to strive for holiness, Peter holds up the concept of the new and very personal relationship they have with God (v.17). It is a great privilege for them now to be able to think of the God of the universe as their loving "Father." This was very special for the early church. History tells us, it was the custom in those days to ask the catechumens not to join in praying the Lord's Prayer until they completed their instruction and had been baptized. In fact, catechumens were usually dismissed from the worship service before the Lord's Supper and the praying of the Lord's Prayer. So it may very well have been only recently that the recipients of this letter had begun to use the term "Father" in their worship.

The concept of “Father” implied not only that special relationship, it also played into the role of the Father as one who “judges each one impartially according to his deeds.” God is the loving, caring, comforting Father. But a father also has a big responsibility to show approval or disapproval of the behavior of his children and to do this in a fair and impartial manner. Peter urges them to remember this side of God’s “fatherhood,” recognizing the truth that God, their Heavenly Father — not just looks the other way when He notices unholy behavior on the part of His sons and daughters. His love for them wouldn’t allow it. In the light of this truth, Peter says to them, “conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile.”

At first glance, it might seem that Peter is introducing a motive that really doesn’t fit with the basic idea of the Gospel. Doesn’t John tell us “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18). What Peter means here by “fear” is a healthy respect and reverential awe, which grows out of mature love for God. It is not a servile fear, but a sensitivity to the reality that disobedience to His divine will is going to grieve our Heavenly Father. There is no real contradiction here.

As Peter strives to motivate his readers to take seriously the challenge to live holy lives, he lifts up the truth of what it took on the part of God to bring them into a saving relationship with Himself. They should never forget that God had paid a great price to ransom them (v.18). The Greek word for ransom usually had to do with the transaction, which freed someone from slavery. Incidentally, this involved a formal ritual, which was regularly accompanied by a sacrifice of one kind or another. Peter had heard Jesus use the same idea when He proclaimed that He had come to give His life as “a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

If you “read between the lines,” you sense Peter’s “hidden agenda” coming to the surface. He really

wants these new Christians to think of themselves not only as children of their Heavenly Father; but also, and especially, as “the New Israel!” The Israelites became the “People of God” when God called them out of Egypt. On the night of their deliverance, each family had been directed to pick out a lamb for sacrifice — not just any lamb. It had to be a lamb without spot or blemish. The blood of the lamb smeared on the doorposts of their homes would spare them from death. The meat of the roasted lamb would give them energy to start their journey to a new land and a new life. Peter wanted to get them to identify mentally with what happened for the Jews in Egypt. He wanted them to recognize that the bondage in which they were when God found them was really much worse than being slaves to an earthly tyrant. At that time they were literally slaves to “the futile ways inherited from their fathers” (v.18). Their lives then were just as pointless and meaningless as it was for the Israelites making bricks for the Pharaohs.

Peter didn’t want them ever to forget what it had cost God. The ransom price was not silver or gold. Rather, it was at great personal cost to Him. His “only begotten Son” fulfilled the symbolism of the lambs that were butchered by the Israelites on the night of the original Passover, as well as the hundreds of thousands that shed their blood in the annual Passovers.

Peter goes on to describe the amazing greatness of that love. He tells us in verse 20 that it wasn’t just an impromptu or impulsive burst of love on God’s part. It had deep roots which went way back before time began. Already in eternity, God could see ahead to what would happen to His creation. Because He is love, God determined already then that He would do whatever it took to reclaim the world of people for Himself. What had been determined “before the foundation of the world... was made manifest at the end of time for your sake!” Peter wants them (and us) to be on the receiving end of such deep and abiding love.

*The “seed” for the new life comes from
God and the life that develops from
it has the stamp of eternity on it.*



ALL THIS SHOULD MOVE US TO A LIFE OF LOVE

1 PETER 1:22–25

Having issued the challenge to holiness, and having put forth several truths to motivate them, Peter brings this section to a conclusion by reminding them of what God considers His highest expectations for them. Above all, God expects them to “love one another earnestly from the heart” (v.22). The word for “love” is “agape.” It describes a kind of love which is an act of the will, (not a feeling), which expresses itself in a strong determination never to think about nor do anything which will result in harm of any kind to a fellow human being — especially our brothers and sisters in the faith. The word “earnestly” suggests that it’s to be aggressive and “pro-active,” as opposed to “reactive.” The emphasis upon loving people who are fellow believers is not meant to exclude the importance of loving all people. The topic here just happens to be love toward brothers and sisters in the household of faith. Sincere love for fellow believers is at the top of the list in our call to holiness.

In verses 23–25, Peter once again alludes to the idea that they will live lives of love for one another, not because it is expected of them, but rather because it is their very nature to do so. Christians ought to love one another not “as if” they were brothers and sisters, but because they truly are brothers and sisters in Christ. They have the capacity to do this, Peter says, because they have “been born anew.” Like Jesus, he pulls an analogy from nature. They all knew that everything a plant is going to be is predetermined by the seed, which is planted. Applied to them, it meant that they had their new life because of the miraculous power of the Word of God, specifically the “Good News” which was preached to them and had found a place in their hearts (v.25). The “seed” for the new life comes from God and the life that develops from it has the stamp of eternity on it.

THE WORD WILL HELP US TO GROW IN LOVE

1 PETER 2:1-3

Peter had been writing in figurative terms. In verse one of chapter 2, he speaks in very down-to-earth language. He writes “So put away all malice and all guile and insincerity and envy and all slander.” Again, Peter seems to be referring to their Baptism experience for an illustration. As in the ceremony of Baptism they took off their ordinary “street clothes” and put on the “pure white baptismal garment,” so now, they will “put off” all ungodly behavior and “put on” appropriate behavior.

Incidentally, in the Greek, the phrase “So put away” (RSV) is the aorist participle, indicating a “point action.” It is not an imperative. Peter assumes that they had already made a clean break with these sins, and in effect cleared the way for their growth in holiness. At the same time, Peter recognizes their “newness” in the faith. He knew how daunting it would be for them to follow through on their baptismal vow to “renounce the devil and all his wicked works.” His advice to them is “Like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation.” The word translated “spiritual” (logikon) would be better translated “of the word,” as the King James version has it. That would make it “the milk of the word.”

Peter’s reference to “newborn babes” may have hinted at their newness in the faith. But the point he wants to make is not this

so much as it is to encourage their devotion to the Word. The word that is used here for “long for” (epipotheesate) is the same word that is used in the Greek Septuagint translation of Psalm 42:1, “as the hart panteth after the waterbrook.” As an infant has an intense yearning for its mother’s milk, so should they (and we) have an intense interest and longing for the Word of God, so we may be nourished and strengthened in our faith to a life of holiness.

Probably without stopping to take a breath, Peter adds (v.3): “For you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.” Without saying it in so many words, Peter gives us a special incentive to be “people of the Word.” It is in the “milk of the Word” that we have our contact with God Himself. They had already had a “taste of God” in the Gospel. In essence, it is the Word that enables us to “feed” upon God Himself and thus to receive for ourselves the spiritual strength we need to be empowered for holiness of living.

In summary, this section of 1 Peter teaches us that our reason for living is to be holy as God is holy, and gives us “the basics” for being able to grow in that direction. We will use the brains God has given us to evaluate our life-style and get rid of anything and everything which is not “godly.” And we will seek with God’s help to pattern our lives after Him — especially His love!