

## Peter's Epistles #38

### The Primacy of the Word of God

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 1:1-21

(also available on-line at [ichthys.com](http://ichthys.com))

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#### Introduction:

To begin, despite the quibbling of various Philistines to the contrary, 2nd Peter was indeed written by the apostle Peter. The specious arguments thrown against the direct claims of the epistle are hollow reeds, circumstantial evidence which does not rate being put in the balance against these claims and the existence of the letter itself in the earliest copies of the Bible, placed right next to 1st Peter. All who raise doubts about the authorship put as their main objection supposed differences in style between the two epistles. However, for anyone who is well-versed in Greek, the amazing thing is actually the consonance of style between the two letters. Clearly, any two compositions are going to differ in some respects, vocabulary choices, specific idioms, structure, because of the differences in subject matter and in time of composition. But in the case of these two letters, they have more in common with each other when compared to any other New Testament book. Peter wrote this letter, just as he claims to have done (2Pet.3:1).

As to the date and the place of writing of this epistle, it was almost certainly written from Rome, at some point in the mid 60's A.D. During the first century, Asia minor, the location of the churches to whom this letter was addressed (cf. 1Pet.1:1), was, along with Greece proper, a focal point of much of the Church's growth. Paul and his companions were the ones who initially evangelized this area (most notably in the so-called three "missionary journeys"), as related in the book of Acts (chapters 13 through 20). All of the Pauline letters, with the exception of Hebrews, were sent to churches or individuals connected with churches in this area or in Greece proper. Paul was, in all likelihood, martyred for Jesus Christ in Rome at the conclusion of a second captivity sometime in the late 50's A.D.<sup>1</sup> In the book of Revelation and in Johanne epistles, we find the apostle John ministering to this same area of Asia minor toward the end of the decade of the 60's (John was probably also martyred shortly after completing the book of Revelation in A.D. 68). For the period in between the work of these other two apostles, Peter took on the responsibility of apostolic oversight for Asia minor, that is, the decade roughly between 55 and 65 A.D., and his two epistles are a testament to that fact.

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<sup>1</sup> *N.b.*, 2nd Peter 3:15ff., "as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written **to you**" (NKJV), does not mean Paul was still alive when Peter penned this verse, but it does show that Peter was aware that he was following Paul's work in this area. Use of this type of vivid epistolary tense, "has written", to refer to authors already deceased is common enough in scripture (cf. Rom.10:16; 10:20; etc.).

We know very much less about the lives and careers of the apostles and their associates than we should like to.<sup>2</sup> We can say from some internal evidence coming from the New Testament itself that Peter did travel in service to the Lord (e.g., his journeys through Palestine: Acts 9:32-43; his stay in Antioch: Gal.2:11ff.; etc.). In these two epistles he evinces a concern and relationship with the recipients which is almost certainly the result of personal contact. At some point during this decade, Peter traveled to Rome, and it was from here that he wrote both epistles, carrying out his duties as an apostle to the churches in Asia Minor from a distance, even as Paul had done before and John would do afterwards. This "second letter", as Peter himself calls it (2Pet.3:1), was written shortly before Peter was also likely martyred for Jesus Christ (2Pet.1:14; and compare Jn.21:18-19 with 2Pet.1:14; cf. 1Clem.5:4). As such then, 2nd Peter represents that great apostle's final testament to those to whose spiritual safety and growth he was fully committed – and to us who, like them, are blessed to be part of the Church of Jesus Christ. It should not be surprising then to discover that the theme of this second epistle is the refutation of false teaching, and what could be more pertinent for us today (1Tim.4:1ff.)?

### **Paragraph I (vv. 1-4)**

(1) Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have been allotted a faith of equal value to ours in the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. (2) May [God's] grace to you and [His] peace be multiplied by means of the full-knowledge (*epignosis*: truth believed) of God and Jesus our Lord, (3) inasmuch as His divine power has caused us to receive everything we need for life and to live in a godly way through this full-knowledge (*epignosis*) of Him who has called us for His own glory and renown. (4) [For it is] through these [divine blessings] that He has caused us [in turn] to receive promises [so] great and valuable, that through these we might become partakers in His divine nature, having escaped earthly corruption and its lust.

2nd Peter 1:1-4

### **Simon Peter (v.1):**

(1) *Simeon Peter*, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have been allotted a faith of equal value to ours in the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

2nd Peter 1:1

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<sup>2</sup> Beyond what is to be found of in the book of Acts (and some few references in the epistles), almost nothing is known for certain of the subsequent ministries of the apostles (some of whom are never mentioned again by name outside of the gospels). And while it is true that there are references in later literature and various church traditions, believers should be extremely cautious about placing any confidence in such materials. We cannot say for certain if any of the details subsequent writings and traditions provide about the apostles are true, but we can say with certainty that most of them are not, being contradictory to each other in many cases and inconsistent with scripture in more. It was a common thing in ancient literature to produce biographies of famous figures which amounted to no more than guesses based upon their writings or slivers of references about them, expanding these into sometimes lengthy works.

Peter is called by four names in scripture: 1) 'Peter', the name given to him by our Lord (Matt.16:18) and meaning "stone" (Gr. *petros*); 2) 'Cephas', the Aramaic equivalent of Peter and meaning the same thing; 3) 'Simeon', his given Hebrew name (*Shim'on*) transliterated into Greek, occurring in scripture only here and at Acts 15:14, and meaning "heard"; 4) 'Simon', a Greek name meaning flat-nosed, but used in place of the Hebrew name as a handy Greek equivalent (in terms of sound, not of meaning).

In this his last letter, Peter uses his given Hebrew name (transliterated into Greek in the traditional way; cf. Gen.29:33 in the LXX)<sup>3</sup>, followed by the name given to Him by our Master and his. Simeon became Peter through his faith in the truth and in Him who is the Truth. He who was heard in his desire to be saved became part of the foundation of the Church of Jesus Christ (Eph.2:20), not "the" Rock upon which it is built<sup>4</sup>, but one who proved himself a key building block in its structure (Eph.2:20; 1Pet.2:4-8), whose name will be emblazoned on one of the foundations of New Jerusalem forever as a result (Rev.21:14).

### **Servant and apostle (v.1):**

(1) Simeon Peter, *a servant* and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have been allotted a faith of equal value to ours in the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.  
2nd Peter 1:1

The word translated "servant" above is the Greek word *doulos* and literally means "slave". Conjoining this word with the phrase "apostle of Jesus Christ", the highest rank in the Church, is Peter's way of demonstrating that he knows full well that everything he has received comes from the Lord. In other words, this is a mark of true humility on Peter's part, inspired by the Holy Spirit. The lesson here for us all is that no matter what great things we may be achieving for Jesus Christ in this life (or imagine we are achieving), none of us is "apostle rank", and none of us will be nearly as great as Peter, one of the twelve "who have followed Me [and who] will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt.19:28; Rev.21:14; cf. Lk.22:28). If Peter was appropriately humble about the work Jesus Christ gave him to do, we should certainly be no less so. We are responsible to the Lord, just as Peter was, to do what the Lord has called us to do. That is our duty, as Paul also affirms.

(16) For if I proclaim the gospel (i.e., the whole realm of kingdom truth), that is no basis for boasting since the necessity of doing so lies upon me – and woe to me if I do not proclaim it! (17) Now if I do this willingly, I do have a reward [to look forward to], but [even] if unwillingly, I still have a duty which has been entrusted to me to dispense [the truth].

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<sup>3</sup> This name is identical to the name of the Hebrew tribe "Simeon" (Gen.29:33). The traditional English transliteration of the Greek spelling, "Simeon" has been adopted here (a more accurate transliteration would be "Symeon").

<sup>4</sup> See SR 5: The Seven Millennial Days of Human History, FN #28, and BB 4A: Christology, section I.4.b.25, "Rock".

All of us, therefore, should adopt this same attitude Peter demonstrates in our context. We are servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, and if we do anything of value for Him, we are, in the end, merely unworthy servants who are only doing our job (Lk.17:10). That was Peter's attitude. And that should be our attitude as well. Only by staying humble – truly humble in a godly Christian way (as opposed to manifesting false, outward signs of pseudo-humility in the hypocritical manner of the Pharisees), can we ever hope to complete the tasks the Lord has for us in the way He intends for us to carry them out. And in this approach, we have Jesus Christ as our prime example:

(6) Since He already existed in the very form of God, equality with God was [certainly] not something He thought He had to grasp for. (7) Yet in spite of this [co-equal divinity He already possessed], He deprived Himself of His status and took on the form of a slave, [and was] born in the likeness of men. (8) He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even [His] death on [the] cross [for us all].

Philippians 2:6-8

### **Apostle of Jesus Christ (v.1):**

(1) Simeon Peter, a servant and *apostle of Jesus Christ*, to those who have been allotted a faith of equal value to ours in the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

2nd Peter 1:1

As every Christian knows, although our Lord chose twelve apostles, one of them, Judas, was "a devil" (i.e., an unbeliever and follower of Satan: Jn.6:70). But this selection was necessary in order for the prophecies and the plan of God to be fulfilled (Jn.17:12; 18:9; cf. Matt.26:54-56; Lk.18:31; 22:37; 24:44).<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the "college" of twelve apostles of Jesus Christ is an eternal and unchangeable one, with Judas being replaced by the apostle Paul (1Cor.9:1; cf. Rom.1:1; 11:13; 1Cor.1:1; 9:1-2; 15:9; 2Cor.1:1; 12:12; Gal.1:1; 2:8; Eph.1:1; Col.1:1; 1Tim.1:1; 2:7; 2Tim.1:1; 1:11; Tit.1:1). That is why 1st Corinthians 15:5 calls them "the twelve" when as yet they were only eleven after the death of Judas, before the Lord had called Paul to replace him – and even before the wrongful human selection of a supposed twelfth (Matthias). Whereas Paul was called by Jesus Christ Himself (Acts 9:1-19; 22:3-16; 26:9-18), the "election" of Matthias by the dubious process of casting lots (never elsewhere legitimate in the New Testament) is not said by scripture to have been authorized by the Lord. It was not (*n.b.*, it took place before the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost).<sup>6</sup>

The word apostle means "one sent forth". While there are other "apostles" mentioned in the Bible (Acts 14:14; Rom.16:7; 2Cor.8:23; Gal.1:9; Phil.2:25), scripture distinguishes these twelve as special. After the manner of His own commissioning and being sent forth into the world by

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<sup>5</sup> See BB 6B: Ecclesiology, section II.C.1.a, "Apostles".

<sup>6</sup> See BB 6B: Ecclesiology, section I.B.5.c, "The Nature of the Book of Acts", and Peter #2, "The 'apostle' Matthias".

the Father (Heb.3:1), the twelve alone are apostles *of Jesus Christ*, "sent forth" and commissioned directly and personally by Jesus Christ Himself. They are apostles "with a capital 'A' ", we may say (cf. "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God": 2Cor.1:1 NIV), as opposed to other apostles mentioned in the New Testament who are missionaries "sent forth" indirectly by the Lord through their commissioning local churches in order to spread the Word and for other matters in benefit of the Church (comparable to the 72 "sent forth" by the Lord at Lk.10:1). Only the twelve possessed the special privileges, powers, authority and responsibilities that the rank of "apostle of Jesus Christ" entailed for the building up of His Church, and only these were given to perform miraculous signs as a stamp of their special authority (e.g., Acts 2:43; 5:12-15; 8:18; 19:11-12).

I persevered in demonstrating among you the marks of a true apostle, including signs, wonders and miracles.  
2nd Corinthians 12:12 NIV

We can see from numerous instances, that while they were together before Christ's ascension, Peter usually took the lead among the other eleven before the day of Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit. But after this foundational development which begins the Church Age, each of the apostles was led by the Spirit to engage in his own particular ministry, just as the name "apostle" ("sent forth") suggests, and following the pattern of our Lord's prior empowerment of them for missions work (Matt.10:5-15; Mk.6:7-13; Lk.9:1-6). Whatever was the case before, from that point onward there was no hierarchy of the apostles. They were a college of equals who understood this key point as well and behaved accordingly for the good of the Church of Jesus Christ and not for personal aggrandizement.

(7) On the contrary, they recognized that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised. (8) For God, who was at work in Peter as an apostle to the circumcised, was also at work in me as an apostle to the Gentiles. (9) James, Cephas and John, those esteemed as pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.  
Galatians 2:7-9 NIV

### **Allotted Faith of Equal Value (v.1):**

(1) Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, *to those who have been allotted a faith of equal value to ours* in the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.  
2nd Peter 1:1

The word translated "allotted" here does indeed mean "to attain by lot", but there is nothing arbitrary about this allotment. God has allotted His image to all mankind. Every human being has received an equal share of the ability to believe or to refuse to do so. This is what we usually call free will and what is often called in this ministry "free will faith", because the ability to trust and believe is the essence of God's image: the ability to decide for ourselves our eternal future. Nothing is more valuable than this gift, a gift, moreover, which is empowered and made possible

by the Gift of Jesus Christ. Had not the Son of God died for our sins, our free will would be pointless, because it would have value only for the things of this short and temporary life. But because Jesus Christ provided redemption for our sins through His blood, His spiritual death for us in the darkness on Calvary's cross, we have attained the right, we have been allotted the opportunity, to use that image of God, that ability to trust and believe, that free will faith, to choose to belong to Him and so to be saved from death, darkness and damnation. Truly, nothing is of more value than this faith, because only through this faith can we be saved by grace.

(8) For you have been saved by [God's] grace through faith [in Christ]; and this did not come from you – it is God's gift. (9) Nor did it come from what you have done, lest anyone should boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9

Lotteries are legitimate in the Bible only when, as in this case, they are commissioned by God Himself. When Israel entered into the land of promise, everyone received an inheritance "of equal value" when that land was divided up by lot according to the Word of the Lord. Now those Israelites represented the people of God as all were supposed to be believers, and as such they set the pattern for all who would later believe. Like them, we who genuinely do believe today have been allotted a blessed inheritance to look forward to: resurrection and reward, and a place in New Jerusalem which will be ours forever. Whatever riches a person may acquire in this life are only dust in the end. But the eternal inheritance we have been allotted through faith by grace is better in its smallest part than the entire world.

(26) "What point is there for a man to come to possess the entire world, if he should then come to lose his life? Or what can a man pay to regain his life? (27) For the Son of Man is going to come with His angels in the glory of His Father, and then He will repay every man in his own coin."

Matthew 16:26-27

Worldly human beings today often play the lottery. They hope and yearn and strive to win that corruptible prize, while we who believe have set our hopes on an eternal and imperishable one (1Cor.9:25). If only they would realize that they have already won: the Father has already allotted them as He has to us all the portion of faith which gives us the right to become sons of the living God (Jn.1:12). Those who reject this right are like people who have won the lottery and yet refuse to collect their winnings. Such an attitude is incomprehensible when applied to mere temporary wealth. How much more so when the prize is eternal life! For all who deem themselves unworthy of eternal life and so despise their right to be saved (Acts 13:46), the free will faith they have been allotted has proven to be of no value to them in the end. But for we who have fled to the Lord for eternal safety under the shadow of His wings (Ps.57:1; Heb.6:18), this faith we have been allotted – and made use of to be born again, born from above – is more valuable than anything else on this temporary earth, equal in value to the same faith allotted to Peter, the other apostles, all the great believers who have ever lived – and to ourselves as well.

Through the grace which has been given to me I tell everyone among you not to over-think [his role] beyond what he ought to think, but to direct his thinking towards sober thoughts [in this regard], inasmuch as God has *allotted* each [and every] one of us a

measure of [our common] *faith* [in Jesus Christ] (cf. 2Pet.1:1).<sup>7</sup>  
Romans 12:3

### **The Righteousness of God (v.1):**

(1) Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have been allotted a faith of equal value to ours *in the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ*.  
2nd Peter 1:1

God is just and righteous in His perfect character. God could never be otherwise. Therefore everything He does is righteous and just. God's perfect nature and perfect character are so important for believers to understand.<sup>8</sup> They assure us always that the One with whom we have to do is a Creator of absolute integrity in every regard. He could never be anything but completely faithful to us; therefore we have every right, every duty, to have complete faith in Him.

He is the Rock, His work is perfect;  
For all His ways are justice,  
A God of truth and without injustice;  
Righteous and upright is He.  
Deuteronomy 32:4 NKJV

As believers in Jesus Christ, we have been saved from the wrath to come, the righteous condemnation which the justice of God demands of all that is sinful and evil (Matt.3:7; Jn.3:36; Rom.1:18; 2:5-8; 5:9; Eph.2:3; 5:6; Col.3:6; Rev.6:16-17).

For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.  
1st Thessalonians 5:9 NKJV

Yet we are sinners. Born in sin and guilty of committing sin our whole life long. God, however, is indeed just and righteous in His forgiveness of us.<sup>9</sup> In all justice and righteousness He has bestowed upon us the right through faith in His Son to escape the corruption of this world, the right to be born anew, born from above in the power of God to live a life eternal with Him – because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>7</sup> It is true that verb here is different from that of the one in our context. However, *lanchano* and *merizo* (used in Rom.12:3) are close synonyms in respect to allotment, with the former having a passive meaning focused on the receiver (meaning "to be allotted"), and the latter having an active meaning and focusing on the giver (meaning "to dispense, to disperse, to allot").

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed treatment of the essence of God, please see [BB 1: Theology](#).

<sup>9</sup> See [BB 4B: Soteriology](#), section I.2.d, "Justification".

(23) For all sin and fall short of God's glory, (24) [but we are all] justified without cost by His grace through the redemption (lit., "ransoming" from sin) which is in Christ Jesus. (25) God made Him a means of atonement [achieved] by His blood [and claimed] through faith, to give proof of His justice in leaving unpunished in divine forbearance [all] previously committed sins, (26) so as to prove His justice at this present time, namely, so that He would be [shown to be] just [in this] and [justified] in justifying the one who has faith in Jesus.

Romans 3:23-26

So it is precisely because of God's righteousness, His justice, that we have faith free will. Because Jesus died for our sins and took them out of the way as any sort of impediment to our salvation, the Father is just to forgive us and to proclaim us "righteous" as those who belong to His Son through faith in Him. Thus we who believe possess God's righteousness, not our own (which is no true righteousness whatsoever despite the self-delusion of some). Because of the cross, the Father is just to pronounce us righteous through our faith in Christ – and absolutely justified to condemn those who spurn that great sacrifice of all sacrifices.

[I desire to be] found in Him – not having a personal righteousness [developed] through [following] the [Mosaic] law – but having that righteousness [that comes] through faith in Christ, that righteousness [that comes] from God based on faith.

Philippians 3:9

Having God's own righteousness, being considered justified by Him on account of our faith in Jesus Christ, on account of our belonging to His Son, should we not therefore at all times endeavor to lead godly Christian lives which reflect that righteousness bought for us by Jesus Christ at such a price?

(1) So now that we have been justified by faith, let us take hold of the peace [we have] with God [the Father] through our Lord Jesus Christ, (2) through whom we have also obtained our access into this grace in which we stand, and let us boast in the hope of the glory of God (i.e., in anticipation of our resurrection).

Romans 5:1-2

### **Grace and Peace Multiplied (v.2):**

(2) May [God's] grace to you and [His] peace be multiplied by means of the full-knowledge (*epignosis*: truth believed) of God and Jesus our Lord.

2nd Peter 1:2

The Greek grammar here supports what most English translations suggest, namely, that Peter is wishing, praying for the "multiplication" or increase of grace and peace for those who read his inspired words. In other words, grace and peace can increase for every Christian – and so they should; for what is better than having God be pleased with us, and what is better than being at peace with Him (in our Church Age fulfillment of the fourth commandment)? Peter tells us here that indeed we can have ever greater favor from God and ever greater peace in our walk with the Lord. Grace and peace while ours by our position in Christ as those who belong to Him, are variable in terms of our actual lives here in the world. God's favor to us and the peace we have in



Him are not fixed at some absolute level – not in terms of what we are experiencing as we walk through the devil's world. What Christian would not wish for God's favor, God's grace to be expanding, increasing, multiplying in their lives (Rom.16:20; 16:24; 2Cor.12:9; Heb.4:16; 12:28; Jas.4:6; 2Pet.3:18; Rev.22:21)? What Christian would not want to experience the "perfect peace" that scripture promises for those who truly stayed on Him in faith (Is.26:3; Rom.5:1; 15:13; 15:33; Eph.1:2; Phil.4:7; Col.3:15; 2Thes.3:16)? This is Peter's heartfelt prayer, his wish for us all. But that prayer, that wish cannot be fulfilled without our godly participation, and that is why Peter frames this sentiment as he does instead of expressing it as an absolute: to experience increasing grace and peace requires spiritual growth.

(15) So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "**Feed My lambs.**" (16) He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "**Tend My sheep.**" (17) He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "**Feed My sheep.**"  
John 21:15-17 NKJV

All good teaching requires repetition, and our Lord certainly made the point stick with Peter by repeating three times that for a teacher of the truth, feeding the sheep entrusted to him is the true mark of his love for the Lord. Beginning with our passage and throughout this chapter in particular, Peter continually presses home the point that the Christian life is founded upon hearing and receiving the truth of the Word of God (see in particular 2Pet.1:3; 1:5; 1:13; 1:15; 1:19-21).

By writing this epistle, Peter is doing his job of "feeding the sheep", but the sheep must eat the food provided in order to benefit. This means, of course, that his charges must listen to what he has to say in the Spirit, take pains to understand it through that same ministry of the Spirit, and commit it to their hearts by believing it, thereafter striving to remember the truth we have been taught and believed and to apply it to our lives going forward. This is why Peter makes a point of saying in this verse that it is "**by means** of the full-knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord" that our grace and peace must increase, and in no other way. "Full-knowledge" is the Greek *epignosis* which, as we have seen many times in the past, is Bible truth which has been believed and made part of the believer's heart through that faith by the Spirit. This truth comes from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, and belongs to them, for God alone *is* the truth, and only by believing what He tells us can we grow spiritually and come to abound in the grace and peace He has for us and wants us to have (2Pet.3:18).

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.  
Philippians 1:2 NIV

### **Everything We Need (v.3):**

(3) inasmuch as His divine power caused us to receive *everything we need for life and to*

*live in a godly way* through this full-knowledge (*epignosis*) of Him who has called us for His own glory and renown.

2nd Peter 1:3

Everything we have, we have from the Lord.

(24) "The God who made the world and everything in it, He is Lord of heaven and earth. He does not dwell in man-made temples, (25) nor is he waited on by human hands, as if He needed anything from us. He is the One who gives us all life and breath and everything else."

Acts 17:24-25

In order to be able to live our lives in a godly way, we need the material necessities, but we also need spiritual provision: the truth and the means to accept it. God gives us food and clothing and many other things as well (Matt.6:11; Lk.11:3; 1Tim.6:8), but without the image of God which allows us to respond to the truth, and without provision of the truth itself illuminated by the Spirit, we would not have the means to be saved nor to grow spiritually thereafter. We are saved by grace through faith (Eph.2:8-9), the expression of the free will faith we have as those who bear God's own image, faith in the truth, truth rendered into "full knowledge", *epignosis*, when we believe it and take it into our hearts in the Holy Spirit.

When we hear the gospel and respond to its truth, we are saved, born again, born from above, and enter in the family of God as those who belong now to Jesus Christ and His assembly, His Church. From that point forward, we are responsible to continue with this process, to keep advancing in the same way in which we first believed (Phil.3:16; Col.2:6), growing up and progressing spiritually through attention to the truth of the Word of God. Just as the Lord has provided for our physical needs, so also He always provides for our spiritual needs. And just as we may have to strive and struggle to support ourselves in this world, yet we recognize that no success would be possible without His help (Deut.8:18; 30:9-10), so also the provision of spiritual necessities may require us to seek them out and to make sacrifices in order to obtain and exploit the precious ore of the Word of God through whatever ministry He leads us to.

(9) "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. (10) For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened."

Luke 11:9-10 NIV

### **Called for His Glory and Renown (v.3):**

(3) inasmuch as His divine power caused us to receive everything we need for life and to live in a godly way through this full-knowledge (*epignosis*) of Him who has *called us for His own glory and renown*.

2nd Peter 1:3

God's glory is the motive He gives us for all the wonderful things He has done in creating us and in working out salvation for us. It is for this purpose, His own glory and renown, that He called us to be His.

"For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will not yield my glory to another."

Isaiah 48:11 NIV

Everyone who is *called* by my Name, *for My glory I have created him*, I have formed him, indeed, I have made him.

Isaiah 43:7

"He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him."

John 7:18 NASB95

(5) Having predestined (i.e., foreordained) us in [His] love for adoption to Himself through Jesus Christ according to the good pleasure of His will, (6) *for the purpose of producing praise for the glory* (at salvation) of His grace which He has graciously bestowed on us in the Beloved [One].

Ephesians 1:5-6

(11) In whom we also have an inheritance, having been ordained according to the design of Him who is working everything out according to the desire of His will, (12) that we who have previously placed our hope in Christ might serve *the purpose of generating praise for His glory* (in the Christian life).

Ephesians 1:11-12

[The Spirit] who is a pledge of our inheritance for redeeming its preservation (i.e., safeguarding our resurrection and reward in every way), *for the purpose of the praise of His glory* (in eternity).

Ephesians 1:14

The glory God gains through carrying out His plan is, as the last three verses above make clear, manifest when we are saved, when we respond in this life, and when we are glorified with Him at the resurrection. By calling us out of this world through the gospel, calling us out of sin and death and darkness and into sanctity, life and light God is glorified – for who else could do such things? Jesus Christ who created everything had to wed Himself to this creation irreversibly and pledge Himself to die for the sins of the world in order to bring these wonders about. Truly, nothing is worthy of greater glory than the cross! And it is through the cross that our Lord has been glorified with a glory beyond anything else in this world.

(17) [My prayer for you is] that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the *glorious* Father, may give to you a spirit of wisdom (i.e., the ability to apply truth) and revelation (i.e., the unveiling of truth made clear by the Spirit) by means of the full-knowledge (*epignosis*) of Him (i.e., through believing that testimony), (18) so that, with the eyes of your heart thus enlightened, you may understand what the hope of your calling [truly] is, what the riches of your *glorious* inheritance [truly are] in company with [all] the [other] saints, (19) and what the surpassing greatness of His power unto us who believe [truly is] – according to the very exercise of this powerful might of His (20) which He (i.e., the Father) exercised in Christ by having raised Him from the dead and having seated Him at His right hand in

the heavenly [places] (21) far above every other rulership or authority or power or lordship and [far above] every other name which may be mentioned not only in this age but also in the age to come. (22) And He (i.e., the Father) subordinated all things under [Christ's] feet and gave Him [as] Head over all things in the Church (23) which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills up all things in all ways.  
Ephesians 1:18-23

In addition to glory, the second word in our context which Peter uses to explain the purpose, the motivation behind God's doing what He has done for us, translated here as "renown", is the Greek word *arete*.<sup>10</sup> This word has a storied past and means both the excellence a person possesses and demonstrates in doing remarkable things as well as also the reputation gained in so doing. It is an amazing thing to contemplate that God esteems His reputation so highly and that we are the beneficiaries of that divine desire to have His creatures see and appreciate and respond to His glory and to the glorious salvation He has rendered on our behalf at such an ineffable cost. Let us resolve never to stint in our praise and our glorification of Him who created us and who saved us through the blood of Jesus Christ, for to this we have been called (1Thes.2:12). To Him be the glory forever and ever! Amen (Rom.11:36; 16:27; Gal.1:5; Eph.3:21; Phil.4:20; 2Tim.4:18; Heb.13:21; Rev.1:6; cf. Ps.8:1; 19:1; 29:9; 71:8; 96:3; 115:1; Is.42:8; Jer.9:23-24; 13:16)!

(7) Lift up your heads, you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. (8) Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. (9) Lift up your heads, you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. (10) Who is he, this King of glory? The Lord Almighty – He is the King of glory.  
Psalm 24:7-10

(28) Ascribe to the Lord, all you families of nations, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. (29) Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come before him. Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness.  
1st Chronicles 16:28-29 NIV

To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.  
2nd Peter 3:18 NASB20

To the One who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb [be] the blessing and the honor and the glory and the power for ever and ever!  
Revelation 5:13b

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<sup>10</sup> The two words are functionally synonymous here, with the second one, *arete*, not adding some completely new idea so much as underlining the importance of this concept of God's esteem for His reputation. Compare Peter's similar use of this device of two words to express one idea (called traditionally "hendiadys") at Acts 3:12: "as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk" (NKJV).

## Great and Valuable Promises (v.4):

(4) [For it is] through these [divine blessings] that He has caused us [in turn] to receive *promises [so] great and valuable*, that through these we might become partakers in His divine nature, having escaped earthly corruption and its lust.

2nd Peter 1:4

When God makes a promise, it is irrevocable (cf. Gen.9:16; Rom.11:29; Heb.6:13; 6:18). When God makes a covenant of promise, it is unbreakable. In grace, God gives to us who are unworthy; we then receive the benefit when we are willing to receive what He has promised us through faith and faithful obedience to Him. The ultimate promise, the promise which is the greatest and most valuable, the promise upon which all others depend, is the promise of life eternal, of resurrection and reward and a place in New Jerusalem with all of our brothers and sisters in the presence of our dear Savior forever, Jesus Christ, the ultimate Guarantor of that promise of resurrection and life eternal, the One on whom all the other wonderful promises God has made to us depends (Acts 13:30-39; 26:6-8).

Therefore, the promise [of salvation] comes through faith, so that it may rest on the basis of grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring – not only to those who are of the Law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham who is the father of us all.

Romans 4:16

For every one of God's promises is "Yes" in him. Therefore, through him we also say "Amen" to the glory of God.

2nd Corinthians 1:20 CSB

But the fact is that the ministry which [Jesus] has received is a more excellent one to the same degree that the [New] Covenant of which He is the mediator is better [than the Old]. For this [New Covenant] has been instituted on the basis of better promises.

Hebrews 8:6

God has provided everything for us. All of our material needs, and all of our spiritual ones as well, to the end that we might respond to the hope of resurrection in Jesus Christ and have eternal life. The Father has offered everyone His New Covenant of salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ, His atonement for all sin on the cross. This promise of eternal life along with all the other wonderful promises which that entails is available to all, given entirely on the basis of grace – but accepted through faith. God's part has never been in doubt. God is absolutely faithful and entirely reliable. Being who He is, He could never break His promises to us. But we are responsible to respond to Him and to His truth in Jesus Christ, accepting His promises – and to take hold of them in faith as we make our way through this dark world, believing them with all of our hearts until with our own eyes we see them fulfilled in absolute completeness.

Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.

Hebrews 4:1 NKJV

(13) These all died [while still walking] in faith, though they had not received the

[fulfillment of their] promises. But [while they lived] they did catch sight of [these promises] from a distance and salute them, [so to speak], thus making it plain [to all the world] that they were [in effect] strangers and sojourners on the earth. (14) For people who express [their faith] in this way make it quite evident that they are eagerly in search of a homeland [other than the place they now occupy]. (15) Indeed, if these [believers'] hearts had yearned for the [land] from which they had departed, they would have had [ample] opportunity to turn back. (16) But they were zealous for a better place, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God. He has, in fact, prepared a city for them (i.e., the New Jerusalem).

Hebrews 11:13-16

#### **Partakers in His Divine Nature (v.4):**

(4) [For it is] through these [divine blessings] that He has caused us [in turn] to receive promises [so] great and valuable, that through these we might become *partakers in His divine nature*, having escaped earthly corruption and its lust.

2nd Peter 1:4

As Paul tells us, though we presently bear the image of the man of this earth and dwell in natural bodies, we who believe will at the resurrection take on the image of the Man of heaven, dwelling thereafter in "spiritual bodies", resurrection bodies, in the manner of our Lord, the first to be resurrected (1Cor.15:42-49). Peter addresses the same distinction here. Although we believers are still "in the flesh", still living in bodies infested by sin, we have escaped the eternal consequences of this earthly corruption and the lust which characterizes it. That is God's purpose for us, namely, that we who have positionally escaped this world as those who belong to Jesus Christ, sealed by the Holy Spirit against the day of our resurrection (2Cor.1:22; Eph.1:13; 4:30), may receive that ultimate deliverance on the day of our Lord's return.

(3) May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ be praised, who has in His great mercy caused us to be reborn to a hope which lives through Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead, (4) and to an inheritance which will never be destroyed, defiled, or dimmed, but which is being guarded in heaven for us, (5) who are ourselves also being kept safe by God's power and through our faith in Him to an ultimate deliverance ready to be unveiled at the end of time.

1st Peter 1:3-5

This is what becoming a "partaker in His divine nature" means, namely, being liberated from the natural world, the world of evil, darkness and corruption, and being instead united to Jesus Christ, one with Him as part of His Bride forever.<sup>11</sup> This is God's wish for all and His promise to us who believe – if we stand firm in our faith all the way to the end (Heb.3:6; 3:14; 6:11; 1Pet.1:9).

For if anyone is in Christ, that person is a new creation. Prior things have passed away. Look! New things have come.

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<sup>11</sup> See BB 4B: Soteriology, section III.2.j, "Union with Christ".

**Paragraph II (vv. 5-11)**

(5) And to this end, along with your faith zealously develop moral excellence, and along with moral excellence, knowledge, (6) and along with knowledge, self-control, and along with self-control, perseverance, and along with perseverance, godliness, (7) and along with godliness, love of the brethren, and along with love of the brethren, love. (8) For if these things are in your possession and increasing, they will render you neither idle nor fruitless in your confession of our Lord Jesus Christ. (9) But whoever does not possess these [virtues] is near-sighted or even blind, having forgotten the cleansing of his previous sins. (10) Strive all that much more then, brothers, to make your calling and election secure through [genuine] good works. By devoting yourselves to this [growth and progress resulting in production] you shall never stumble. (11) For it is by such means that your entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be generously provided for.

2nd Peter 1:5-11

**Faith, Moral Excellence and Knowledge (v.5):**

And to this end, along with your faith zealously develop moral excellence, and along with moral excellence, knowledge.

2nd Peter 1:5

In the next three verses, Peter gives us a list of Christian virtues. His list of eight is longer than Paul's famous "faith, hope and love" (1Cor.13:13), but starts in the same place, with faith, and ends in the same place, namely, with love as the last virtue mentioned – and therefore at the top of the list in terms of importance. Lists of virtues were not uncommon in ancient literature; these are sometimes called aretologies, based on the very first virtue Peter mentions after faith (which is assumed to be present for all believers who have saving faith and therefore functions as the introduction to the list of the other seven).

Since Peter's first virtue mentioned in the list of additions to faith is the Greek *arete*, we can say with confidence that he was well aware that his readers would recognize this as a deliberate appropriation of a standard cultural practice (since aretology is derived from *arete*). In Greek literature, however, an aretology was usually deployed for singing the praises of some god or hero. In this case, we have a list of virtues which we as believers do not automatically possess, and certainly not without much spiritual growth and deliberate progress in our Christian walks. That is to say, a traditional aretology lists virtues a god or hero possesses purely on account of who they are; this list to the contrary shows us who we ought to be. It is aspirational, rather than being necessarily descriptive of believers in Jesus Christ.

I said, "You are gods, And all of you are children of the Most High."

Psalms 82:6 NKJV

(34) Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, "You are gods"?' (35) "If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be

broken), (36) do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?"

John 10:34-36 KJV

As we have often noted in the past, the Hebrew word for God, *'Elohiym*, is technically a plural of the word *'el*, meaning "mighty one". God's might is so far beyond anything in this world that pluralizing the word is used to demonstrate that He is "mighty" on an entirely different level of magnitude (beyond our understanding). But human beings are *'el* in that we have been given the image of God: even though we are small and weak and temporary, we have been given the God-like power to decide whether or not to accept the truth; we have been given free will, the right to decide our own eternal futures.

(11) He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. (12) Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – (13) children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

John 1:11-13 NIV

For us who have used the God-given image of God to accept the gracious gift of life in Jesus Christ, our lives in this world after salvation constitute a wonderful opportunity to continue to respond to the truth (Phil.3:16; Col.2:6-7). Peter's list of virtues challenges us to "up our game", so to speak, and to bring our Christian application into harmony with our position in Christ, to walk the walk we have been commanded to walk. These virtues *should* be manifest in us all and in our daily lives as we live them for our Savior. Giving careful consideration to this list will demonstrate that we all fall short in various places, and that should provide motivation for us to try to do better.

However, none of these virtues can really be achieved directly. That is to say, it is not really possible to "get better" at faith by focusing on faith: growth in any virtue or aspect of the Christian life always comes organically to those who are doing the essential things we have been called to do, namely, to keep growing spiritually through diligent attention to the truth, to continue to progress spiritually through applying the truth we have learned and believed in the Spirit in our daily walk in this world, especially when it comes to the tests and trials and challenges all believers face, and to engage in ministry with the purpose of helping others achieve their own spiritual growth, progress and production, according to the gifts we have been given and the opportunities for service the Lord presents us with. This list, therefore, is not so much a catalog of specific objectives as it is a collection of sign-posts, markers laid down for us to help us see how we are doing, where our deficiencies may lie, and to encourage us to do better. And we can all always do better.

But [until that future time of our Lord's return] there now remains faith, hope and love, these three [cardinal virtues] – and the greatest of these is love.

1st Corinthians 13:13

**Faith:** The first virtue Peter mentions here is the bedrock of all virtues in that saving faith in Jesus Christ is essential to everything else: only believers have the obligation and the



opportunity to live their lives to the glory of God. Faith, implicit trust in God and His Son, Jesus Christ, is the foundation upon which all spiritual growth is based. We must first believe in Him, in His Son and His Son's saving work, in the veracity of His words and the reality of His promises to us of resurrection and reward, in order to make spiritual progress (Heb.11:6).

**Moral Excellence:** This is the first virtue in the list per se of behavioral traits which advancing believers should exhibit in our Christian walk. The seven are all to some degree progressive, based on faith and ending in the ultimate Christian virtue of love. This first virtue, *arete*, which we are translating here as "moral excellence", is used by Peter as a deliberate counterpart to the "renown" (*arete*) for the sake of which the Father has called us for His glory (2Pet.1:3). This storied Greek word, meaning, as we have seen, excellence possessed and manifest, must be translated differently when speaking of God – His intrinsic excellence manifests His glory and renown – than when speaking of us: for us, *arete* is something we strive to produce.

"Morality" would also be an appropriate translation for the *arete* here, as it often has the meaning of "doing what is right and proper" in a given situation. And "doing the right thing" is the sort of moral excellence or virtue Peter has in mind here: upright, moral conduct in all areas of life. There are many positive things Christians should do, but if we are still ensnared in immorality of any sort, our witness will be sullied and our production necessarily compromised as a result.

(3) But among you there must not even be a hint of sexual immorality, or any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. (4) Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse jesting – things that have no place [among you]. Thanksgiving [is what ought to be heard coming from you] instead. (5) For of this you can be sure: no immoral, impure, or greedy person – such a man is an idolater – has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. (6) Don't let anyone deceive you about this with empty words, for it is because of just such things that God's wrath comes upon those who refuse to obey and believe. (7) So don't enter into partnership with them.  
Ephesians 5:3-7

**Knowledge:** Next on Peter's list is the virtue of knowledge, meaning biblical truth. Once we have learned to trust in God and Christ, and have "cleaned up our act", the next step is to expand our understanding and knowledge of the teachings and principles of God's Word. This is not to suggest, however, that we should not have been seeking knowledge from the beginning, but rather to impress upon us the importance of establishing a certain rectitude of life immediately after believing in Christ: we should not "wait for information" before making basic corrections in our behavior that even common sense will tell us are not compatible with Christian conduct. Continued spiritual growth, however, does require knowledge, and lots of it, being fed by the source, the truth of the Word of God.

Now grow up through the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.  
2nd Peter 3:18

### **Self-Control, Perseverance and Godliness (v.6):**

. . .and along with knowledge, self-control, and along with self-control, perseverance, and

along with perseverance, godliness.  
2nd Peter 1:6

**Self-Control:** Self-control is such an important element in the development of a proper Christian walk, that the apostle Paul made it one of his key points in giving the gospel to Felix (along with righteousness and the judgment to come: Acts 24:25). Self-control is the Greek word *engkrateia* (literally, the capacity to "hold in" or "hold on" to the reins when it comes to one's impulses), and in the New Testament refers to all aspects of controlling the sin nature with its diverse lusts and desires. The word covers a large amount of territory, including everything from sins of the tongue and mind to more overt and gross behavior. Although saved, we are not separated from the sin nature inhabiting our flesh during this life, and so only with strong and consistent self-control of this ready source of embarrassment and trouble can we hope to make progress in virtue and spiritual growth.

**Perseverance:** Perseverance is a quality we will find ourselves in need of when testing comes our way (Jas.1:3-4; Heb.12:1). And just as soon as we have established a good Christian life, making progress in learning about God and His will while exercising good control over our behavior, we can definitely expect to be tested. Perseverance and hope are closely linked by the apostle Paul (Rom.8:25), and in perseverance (literally, "abiding under" the pressure of testing), we have the closest thing to hope on Peter's list. Perseverance is sticking to our beliefs and applications (such as consistently taking in God's Word) even when the pressure and testing mounts. Hope is the flip-side of perseverance. Our confident expectation that after death we shall be with the Lord forever, that we shall experience a glorious resurrection of this present, fragile body, and that we shall be rewarded for our faithful service to the Lord here in this life, all contribute to a perspective that transcends the present moment and instead fixes our gaze on the eternal realities which so out-shine the difficulties of the present. This is the hope that gives us the will to endure and persevere.

**Godliness:** Godliness is another virtue with a specialized meaning in this context. The word *eusebeia* is based on the same root (*seb-*) which the Greeks chose to translate Octavian's honorary title given to him as emperor, "Augustus", and is connected with the ideas of awe, reverence, and worship. There is, therefore, strictly speaking no mention of God in the word commonly translated "godliness", but it does convey the meaning of acting in a pious, reverent or "godly" way. It is the notion of piety which counts heaviest here. In Roman terms, to be *pious*, one had to fulfill one's duties to the gods, one's family and one's country. The fulfillment of duty, specifically of ministry based on one's individual spiritual gift, is a large part of what Peter means to convey in this part of his progression of virtues. Once we have built a Christian life characterized by faith, uprightness, study of the Bible, control of our sin nature, and have developed the ability to withstand the testing of life, then it is high time for us to start to "give back" to our fellows in the Church by putting our faith into action; that is, by fulfilling whatever ministry God has given us to do. This is our proper and godly application of virtue once we reach this stage of growth.

**Love of the Brethren and Love (v.7):**

. . . and along with godliness, love of the brethren, and along with love of the brethren,

love.  
2nd Peter 1:7

**Love of the Brethren:** Love of the brethren (Greek *philadelphia*, that is, love of our fellow Christians) and love (*agape*, that is, Christian love directed towards all people) are the two crowning virtues on this list. It is quite interesting that Peter splits these two. What this means is that while we owe love to all, our first priority as believers is to other believers. This in no way suggests that we should be stingy or selfish with our love and Christian ministrations towards unbelievers, but rather that we must take care of our "Christian family" first.

**Love:** As the premier virtue, when *agape*-love truly characterizes our lives, it is a sure sign that the other virtues are present and functioning as well. All Christian virtue can be resolved into love, *agape*. This love is patterned on God's love for us manifest in Jesus Christ and constitutes our love response to Him and to those He has created (cf. Jn.13:34-35; 14:15; 14:21; 14:23-24; 15:9-13; 15:17; 17:26; 1Jn.2:5; 2:15; 3:1; 3:10-11; 3:14; 3:16; 3:23; 4:7-12; 4:16-21; 5:2-3). *Agape* is the exercise of love by Christians towards all human beings. That is to say, this is the sort of love that tolerates and seeks what is best, even for perfect strangers, even for unbelievers; this is the "love even your enemies" type of love, the "love even those who spitefully use you" type of love. In other words, this type and exercise of love is the highest of the Christian virtues in great part because it is the most difficult to consistently deploy. If we are obeying God and appreciating Him while reflecting His love to others, we are fulfilling the standard of walking in love (1Jn.2:5; *et passim* in 1Jn.). As this practice of loving God and those He has made should dominate, characterize and suffuse our entire Christian experience, the whole Bible can rightly be seen as a training manual for our expression of that most essential Christian virtue, love.

(36) "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" (37) Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' (38) This is the first and greatest commandment. (39) And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' (40) All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."  
Matthew 22:36-40 NIV

(1) If I speak in [a variety of] human and angelic languages but I do not have love, I have become [in my words as nothing more than unintelligible] sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. (2) And if I possess the gift of prophecy and know all the mysteries [of God] and all [His] knowledge, and if I possess a complete faith [sufficient] to move mountains but I do not have love, then I am nothing. (3) And if I sell off everything I own and hand myself over into slavery so that I may boast [of my good works] but do not have love, then I profit nothing by it. (4) Love exercises patience. Love does what is honorable. Love is not envious. It does not go about boasting vainly. It does not swell with pride. (5) It does not behave in a shameful way. It does not seek after its own advantage. It is not easily provoked. It does not bear grudges. (6) It does not rejoice over wickedness, but it rejoices together with the truth. (7) It protects everything [which ought to be protected]. It believes everything [which ought to be believed]. It hopes everything [which ought to be hoped for]. It endures everything [which ought to be endured].

1st Corinthians 13:1-7

### **Neither Idle nor Fruitless (v.8):**

For if these things are in your possession and increasing, they will render you neither idle nor fruitless in your confession of our Lord Jesus Christ  
2nd Peter 1:8

The "confession" described here is the Greek word *epi-gnosis*, generally translated "**full**-knowledge", by which we mean more than informational knowledge (*gnosis*) as on the list of virtues above. *Epignosis* connotes a full, effective, directed knowledge, a recognition, an allegiance, a complete understanding of the truth in question, upon which one follows through with faith. In other words, *epignosis* is the virtuous application of the knowledge of the truth we possess in our hearts solid and secure because we have believed it in the Holy Spirit. Only such "knowledge" has any true value in the Christian walk. We have translated the *epignosis* in this verse as "confession", because Peter is using it in this context to express the entire complement of biblical truth to which we have given our allegiance, namely, everything we have believed about the gospel, and, ideally, every bit of truth the gospel contains. This truth, the totality of biblical truth found in scripture, is what we have believed and what directs our steps – it is the truth we have believed, confess and profess in this dark world.

When such "full-knowledge" is married up with the virtues on Peter's list, we have a Christian life which accords with what our Lord intends for us all – not a mere understanding of what it is right for us to do in every respect, but an actual follow-through in the way we are living our lives. This, as we have seen above, does not exclude upright behavior, but importantly also includes commitment to all aspects of spiritual growth, progress in our walk and bearing up under testing, and production for the benefit of the Church of Jesus Christ. For if we possess these virtues, it will only be because we are making headway in our growth, progress and production. And if we are doing so in fact, then we will be neither idle (i.e., as those who are "always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth": 2Tim.3:7), nor unproductive (i.e., as those who say they have faith but have nothing to show for it: Jas.2:14:26). Peter breaks this wrong approach down into its two component parts to remind us that activity alone (i.e., lack of "idleness") is not necessarily indicative of true production: only what is genuinely done for Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit will count as genuine production before the Judgment Seat of Christ – everything else will be burnt up (1Cor.3:11-15).

### **Near-sighted or Blind (v.9):**

But whoever does not possess these [virtues] is near-sighted or even blind, having forgotten the cleansing of his previous sins.  
2nd Peter 1:9

A believer could do worse than to make it a personal habit to keep the cross always in the back of his/her mind – or, even better, in the forefront of their thinking as far as is possible as we make our way through the shot and shell of each day here in the devil's world. Through the cross we have been delivered from our sins, delivered from the grave, delivered from darkness and condemnation – delivered from death.

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.  
Philippians 1:21

Since we have nothing left to fear in truth (although admittedly it takes a strong measure of maturity to operate on this level), we believers have a right and indeed a moral obligation to stay focused on God's unchanging faithfulness, responding daily with an ever greater measure of faith in Him. With this verse, Peter points out that if we do *not* possess and manifest the virtues he has just listed, that is a sure indication that we are most likely *not* doing our job as Christians, namely, that we are failing to engage in the process of growth, progress and production which constitutes the essential mandate for our lives as those redeemed by Jesus Christ, as those who belong to Him and who have been left in this world to serve and glorify Him.

I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become wealthy, and white clothing so that you may be clothed and so that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed, and salve to rub on your eyes, so that you may see.  
Revelation 3:18

Seeing and responding to these truths foggily and only occasionally may constitute spiritual myopia, the characteristic malady of our current era of lukewarm Laodicea. Being blind to them altogether, however, suggests spiritual sclerosis, a very dangerous condition for a believer at any time, and especially during the soon to come Tribulation when the faith of all will be seriously challenged.

"But when the Son of Man returns, will He find faith [still existing] on the earth?"  
Luke 18:8b

### **Your Calling and Election (v.10):**

Strive all that much more than, brothers, to make your calling and election secure through [genuine] good works.  
2nd Peter 1:10a

Calling and election, while different, are closely related terms in the teaching of salvation.<sup>12</sup> Both words relate to the plan of God, that is, the divine decrees which establish history and guarantee the salvation of all who are willing to accept Christ's sacrifice and thus be saved.

(28) And we know that, for those who love God, He works everything together for good – [that is to say,] for those who have been called according to His plan. (29) For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined (i.e., foreordained) to share the likeness of His Son, so that He might be the Firstborn over many brothers [and sisters]. (30) And those whom He predestined (i.e., foreordained), these He also called [to salvation], and those whom He called, He also justified (i.e., made righteous through faith in Christ), and those whom He justified, these He also glorified (i.e., our future resurrection and eternal life).  
Romans 8:28-30

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<sup>12</sup> See BB 4B: Soteriology, section I.2.b, "Predestination, Calling and Election".

"Calling" refers to the invitation to salvation given to those who will accept it; "election" refers to the enrollment of those called into His Church (His *ekklesia*, or assembly "called out", literally), when they place their faith in Jesus Christ. Peter once again, as he has done a number of times already in this epistle, breaks down the process into component parts, focusing on these two key aspects of God's plan to save us (cf. Rom.8:28-30). This serves both to emphasize the importance of responding to his command here ("strive!"), while reminding us that as those who belong to Jesus Christ we have not only been called but have also responded to that call so as to be among the elect, those "chosen" unto life eternal.

"For many are called, but few are chosen."  
Matthew 22:14 NKJV (cf. Matt.20:16)

The security we have as believers, moreover, is already solid, because it rests on God's own integrity. But it is not absolute, because while we are in this world, we continue to possess free will, which, sadly, some have used to apostatize (as many will do during the Tribulation).

(11) Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with Him, we will also live with Him; (12) If we persevere, we will also reign with Him. If we disown Him, He will also disown us; (13) If we are faithless, He will remain faithful, for He cannot disown Himself.  
2nd Timothy 2:11-13

The Greek word for "secure" in our context is *bebaios*, a perfective form of the verb "to walk", with the connotation of having entered solidly into a fixed position. Indeed, our salvation should be solidly fixed and more and more so every day as we draw closer to Jesus Christ, not farther away. Persevering in spiritual growth, progress and production is the best way to achieve and increase such solidity of faith in fact, as well as to give us ever greater confidence in the final blessed outcome.

(18) Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. (19) In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.  
1st Timothy 6:18-19 NIV

Striving to make secure our call to salvation and the choice God made of us because we chose for His Son involves good works in our passage, just as in the passage quoted directly above. But it is important to remember that, biblically speaking, a "work" is anything we think, say or do, and often quite different from what many works-salvation groups would imagine, including glorifying the Lord by being faithful under the pressure of exceptional tests (as in James' examples of "works": Abraham offering up Isaac and Rahab hiding the Israelite spies: Jas.2:21-26). The "good works" believers need to busy themselves with, while they may encompass traditional acts of charity, are largely made up of prayer, giving attention to the truth of the Word of God, endeavoring to walk through this world by faith, regardless of the pressures we may face, and, by willingly engaging in the personal ministries to which God calls us, helping our fellow believers grow up to spiritual maturity and endure testing themselves. Everything done in the power of the Holy Spirit is "good"; nothing done outside of His power and direction could ever be so (1Cor.12:3). For unbelievers, all such pointless "works" will be used at the last judgment

to demonstrate that nothing they did could possibly take the place of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ; for believers, anything done outside of the will of God and the power of the Spirit, will be burnt up at the judgment seat of Christ, no matter how "good" the world may consider it (1Cor.3:8-15).

### **You Shall Never Stumble (v.10):**

By devoting yourselves to this [growth and progress resulting in production] you shall never stumble.

2nd Peter 1:10b

Stumbling can refer to momentary lapses of the sort every believer manifests now and again (Jas.3:2; cf. Prov.24:16; Jas.2:10), to more serious spiritual failing which brings on serious divine discipline (Gal.5:7; Heb.12:1; 12:12-13; Rev.2:5) or even to the ultimate stumble – so as to fall, namely, into apostasy (Rom.9:33; 11:22; 1Cor.10:12; 1Pet.2:8).

"These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling."

John 16:1 NASB95

"All this I have told you so that you will not fall away."

John 16:1 NIV

Peter reassures us here that if we are indeed willing to persevere in sticking to the strait and narrow path, there is no need for us ever to stumble in any serious way. The principle is one we have mentioned repeatedly in the past. If we are doing the good things we should be doing, we will find that it is far easier for us to avoid the bad things we should not be doing. In other words, the best defense against spiritual failure is a continuing good offense whereby we persevere in the spiritual growth, progress and production which should characterize our Christian lives. Doing so in a habitual way, is the best way to prevent being tripped up or falling down and makes complete falling away practically impossible. On the other hand, it is not really possible to ward off the things that make us stumble merely by trying to avoid them (while that is certainly prudent and good to do). Just as it is virtually impossible to stay up on a bicycle without moving forward, so without spiritual momentum, eventually believers tend to get tripped up one way or another, even if they are men and women of the highest morality.

(23) The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him; (24) though he may stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand.

Psalms 37:23-24 NIV

### **Your Entrance into the Eternal Kingdom (v.11):**

For it is by such means that your entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be generously provided for.

2nd Peter 1:11

Peter concludes this paragraph of exhortation by reminding us of the end result of all of our godly striving here on earth. We are not looking for fame, riches, power, possessions and the pleasures of this life – or at least we should not be. We are looking forward to that city "whose architect

and builder is God" (Heb.11:10), namely, to our inheritance in New Jerusalem, to the crowns of reward that our Lord promises to all who persevere in doing what is right and good in this life.<sup>13</sup>

(6) [God], who will give to each person according to his works, (7) to those who by persevering in the good course are seeking glory, honor and immortality, [He will give] eternal life.

Romans 2:6-7 (cf. Rom.2:10; 3:23; 15:7)

"Generously" in our context in 2nd Peter here is, literally, "richly" (from the Greek *plousios*, cf. plutocrat). Believers can never afford to forget that the smallest amount of "well done!" from our Lord Jesus Christ when we appear before Him on that great day to come is of inestimably more value than possessing the present world in its entirety – and it will be so for all eternity, whereas this present world is mere dust destined for complete destruction (Jas.1:9-11; 2:5-13; 5:1-6; cf. also 1Tim.6:6-10; 6:17-19). As those who have been granted eternal life in Jesus Christ, we should never let it slip from our hearts that we are looking forward to eternal rewards which put everything down here into the shade. If we do hang onto that eternal perspective, desirous of pleasing our Lord first and foremost and acting accordingly so as to receive a good report and a commensurate reward before His Judgment Seat, then the road to New Jerusalem will indeed be "richly paved", and on the other side we will never regret one single solitary thing that we did for Jesus Christ and His Church.

### **Paragraph III (vv. 12-15)**

(12) Therefore, I will always make it my practice to be reminding you about these matters, even though you know them and are standing fast in the truth you have received; (13) and I consider it right, as long as I am still in this [physical] body (lit., "tent"), to continue to be awakening your remembrance of them, (14) [especially] knowing as I do that [the time of] the putting off of my [physical] body (lit., "tent") is swift[ly approaching] – just as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me; (15) and [that is why] I am also eager for you to be able at all times after my departure to bring these matters to remembrance.

2nd Peter 1:12-15

Peter's third paragraph will be covered here as a single piece since it has a simple, unified theme. This section is all about repetition and is, fittingly, repetitive. That is not a criticism. The Holy Spirit saw fit to include these self-reinforcing statements for a reason: all good teaching is based on the principle of repetition. Few individuals are of such a genius or prodigy status that they only need to hear something once in order to retain it and master it, and that is especially true of Christians (1Cor.1:26-29). In terms of learning the truth, repetition in teaching is of even greater importance: in order to retain the truth, we need to be paying attention in the Spirit to what is taught, understand it, and *believe* it. Furthermore, since many biblical truths can only really make sense to us once we have a frame of reference into which to fit them (i.e., we may have to come to understand and accept doctrines ABC first in order to fully appreciate and understand

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<sup>13</sup> See in Coming Tribulation part 6, section I.7, "The Judgment and Reward of the Church".



teachings XYZ), it may take a good long time before certain teachings fall into place in our hearts. Add to that the fact that every human being has kinks in the heart, certain ticks and areas of personal resistance to one teaching or another. Sanding down these rough edges will only occur over time and with much repetition of the truth. As with growing up physically, growing to spiritual maturity is never accomplished without some bumps and scrapes along the way. But just as we all grew up to physical adulthood, nourished by the food we received, so also we can all "reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph.4:13 NIV) – provided that we continue to seek out and receive spiritual nutrition in an analogous way.

Like newborn babes, desire the milk of the Word which is without deceit, that by it you may grow in regard to your salvation.

1st Peter 2:2

With the word "therefore" with which he begins this third paragraph, Peter makes it clear that the reason for his insistence upon repeating the truth in his teaching is the ultimate goal of coming safely to heaven home with a "treasury" stocked full through proper growth, progress and production in this life (Matt.6:19-21; Lk.12:34). To achieve this goal, even believers who are truly solid in their faith and understanding of biblical truth still need such reminding. The world is a very distracting place. It is very easy to slip in one's application of the truth, in one's focus on the cross and on Jesus Christ, even during the heat and turmoil of a single day. How much more is that not the case if a believer makes the incredibly foolish mistake of imagining that he or she has "arrived" and no longer has any need of Bible teaching, scripture reading, prayer and deliberate focusing on the truth in one's daily walk? Just as we are not relieved of our need to eat once we become adults, so also in spiritual terms we need to refuel, recharge, re-orient ourselves to what is truly important every day – and the more so the better. Omitting biblical sustenance for any length of time is always a mistake; going without it for a very long time is to court spiritual disaster. Understanding this principle only too well, Peter makes no apologies for hammering it home in this paragraph: warning those who were willing to listen was an act of pastoral love, responding in Peter's case to the direct command of the Great Shepherd of the sheep Himself to "feed My sheep" (Jn.21:15-17).

(28) "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. (29) I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. (30) Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them."

Acts 20:28-30 NIV

In the physical world, entropy, the principle of gradual disintegration and decline, is a known constant. Likewise in spiritual matters, it takes alertness and effort to ward off atrophy and regression, both personally and in terms of any Christian group or church. As a good pastor-teacher, Peter loved his flock, and he knew that after his departure things were likely to degenerate – as they always seem to do after the first generation of the faithful yields to the second. While he was present, Peter could do something about it . . . but not once he had departed. With his return to the Lord close at hand, that great apostle here pulls out all the stops

to do everything within his power to motivate his readers, leaders and lay alike, to make it their top priority going forward to be recalling, remembering and rejoicing over the truth they had learned and committed to their hearts by faith. To avoid a precipitous decline in the spiritual level of the church militant of his day would take a concerted effort on the part of pastors and members alike.

"For I know how rebellious and stiff-necked you are. If you have been rebellious against the Lord while I am still alive and with you, how much more will you rebel after I die!"  
Deuteronomy 31:27 NIV

Scripture does not tell us precisely how he died, but before He ascended, the Lord Himself had told Peter that he would face martyrdom for His sake (Jn.21:18-19).<sup>14</sup> Moreover, prior to penning this epistle, Peter received confirmation, also from the Lord Himself (whether through vision or dream or prophecy we are not told), that his departure was close at hand. Few of us will ever receive such a definitive warning of imminent death as Peter did. Indications from our general, physical health are one thing, but no doubt few of us would be able to handle a particular warning of this sort with as much sang-froid as Peter evinces here (cf. Is.38:1-3). For most of us, not knowing ahead of time the specific troubles, tests and challenges we would have to face in this life has actually been a great boon.

By calling his body a tent in our paragraph (twice), and by comparing his death to an "exodus" (i.e., the word translated above "departure" is, literally, *exodos* in the Greek), Peter demonstrates for us the proper attitude towards our inevitable death: these bodies are merely temporary tents; we are looking forward to the blessed hope of a resurrection wherein we shall receive an eternal home for our spirits which is inestimably better (Tit.2:13). By making the best possible use of the time remaining to him, namely, striving to do all he can to ensure that those who depended upon his provision of spiritual food were as well-prepared as possible to continue walking closely with the Lord after his demise, Peter shows us his true bona fides as a godly pastor who loved Jesus Christ and His Church with all his heart, and who did so "to the end" in emulation of His Master and ours (Jn.13:1).

(1) To the angel of the church in Ephesus, write: "This is what the One who has the mastery over the seven stars in His right hand says, the One who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands. (2) I know your works and your toil and your perseverance, and that you cannot endure evil people. And you have put to the test those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them out to be false. (3) And you possess perseverance, and you have endured every sort of tribulation because of My Name, and you have not faltered. (4) But I have against you [the fact] that you have abandoned [that] love you had at first. (5) So remember where you have fallen from, and repent, and do the works you did at first. And if you do not, I am going to come to you and move your lampstand out of its place, if you do not repent."  
Revelation 2:1-5

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<sup>14</sup> Church tradition has it that Peter was also crucified (e.g., Tertullian, *De Praescriptionibus adversus Haereticos*, XXXVII).

Anyone paying the least attention to Peter's paragraph on repetition will not fail to understand on the one hand the importance for believers of making the time they devote to the Bible the foundation of their daily walk, and on the other hand that continuing to study and teach the truth of the Word of God, "in season and out of season" (2Tim.4:2), is the first priority for any pastor-teacher – directly encouraged and commanded here by Peter. But how successful was this appeal? As the passage quoted immediately above shows, the Church era which directly followed that of the apostles, that of Ephesus, was characterized by the loss of its "first love", namely, the Word of God, its study, teaching, and application in all areas of life. Peter did his part, but we all are responsible for our own actions; we can receive good advice, but is up to us to heed it. Just as Moses gave the second generation of Israelites on the cusp of entering the land of promise a special song (Deut.32:1-47) to remind them not to forget the Lord and His truth ("They are not just idle words for you – they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess"; v.47 NIV), but they quickly let that good advice slip from their hearts, so also did things transpire in the early history of the Church Age. As long as the apostles lived, the truth was abundantly provided, but those who followed them proved themselves slack. While there were no doubt exceptions, for the most part that next generation of believers neglected to seek the Word, and those into whose charge they were placed neglected to teach the Word. Had there been godly interest, the teachings of the apostles would no doubt have been preserved – the truth is all right there in scripture, after all. As it is, these teachings were largely lost almost immediately upon the departure of the apostles, and it has taken the better part of two millennia for the church militant to recover them – and even so the interest in learning these doctrines on the part of Laodicea is decidedly lukewarm.

#### **Paragraph IV (vv. 16-21)**

(16) For I did not follow concocted tales in making known to you the power and the coming return of our Lord, Jesus Christ, but was an eyewitness to His majesty. (17) For when He had received honor and glory from God the Father, these words sounded forth to Him from God's majestic glory: "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased." (18) And these words I myself heard as they were delivered from heaven, for I was with Him on the holy mountain (cf. Matt.17:1-8). (19) Yet I consider the prophetically inspired Word (i.e. the Bible) even more reliable (i.e., than what I saw with my own eyes). You too would do well to pay the closest attention to this [prophetically inspired Word], just as to a lamp shining in a dark place (cf. Ps.119:105), until the day dawns, and the Morning Star rises (i.e. the Living Word, Jesus Christ, returns), (20) pondering in your hearts this principle of prime importance: no single verse of prophetically inspired scripture has ever come into being as a result of personal reflection. (21) For true prophecy has never occurred by human will, but only when holy men of God have spoken under the direction and agency of the Holy Spirit.

2nd Peter 1:16-21

#### **Concocted Tales (v.16):**

For I did not follow concocted tales in making known to you the power and the coming return of our Lord, Jesus Christ, but was an eyewitness to His majesty.

2nd Peter 1:16

It is enlightening to see and consider in giving his charges his spiritual "last will and testament" that of prime concern to Peter was the stirring defense of the Word of God we find in this last paragraph of chapter one. There is no clearer statement of the primacy of the Word, and no sharper definition to be found anywhere in the entire Bible of the distinction between scripture and everything else.

In our present verse, Peter first distinguishes in the starkest terms between what he is doing in writing this epistle under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and all manner of other "literature" making the rounds during his day which falsely claimed to be on the same level. Peter lumps all such writings together under the rubric of "concocted tales", which may be more literally translated as "cleverly devised [or "sophistic"] myths", with the adjectival element being a participle from the verb *sophizo* (cf. our "sophist" and "sophistry") and the noun being the word *mythos*, the origin of our English word "myth". Peter leaves no doubt about the fact that his epistle is in no way dependent upon such materials which, while entirely fictitious, often laid claim to divine inspiration.

We know from Paul's epistles and from Revelation (e.g., Col.2:8-10; 16-19; cf. Gal.4:3; Eph.1:23; 3:19; 4:10; Col.1:19; 1:25ff.; 2:2; 2:20-23; 1Tim.6:20-21; 2Pet.2:10; Jude 1:8; Rev.2:14-15; 2:24; and *passim* in the book of Hebrews) that the most virulent and prevalent form of such fraudulent material in Peter's day came from the Gnostic movement, a disparate and loosely connected but highly popular collection of groups and teachers who often combined a smattering of scripture, Jewish and pagan mythology, and "new age" type teaching which sought to entice followers by promising insights into all manner of "universal mysteries". We need not try to identify and differentiate the various strains of the incipient Gnosticism which Peter refers to indirectly here – because in the Spirit he saw it as adequate to dispatch all such un-truth with this simple generalization: what they were doing was not at all what he was doing, and that distinction is profound.

For one thing, Peter had actually seen the second advent (*parousia*) with his own eyes on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt.17:1-8; Mk.9:2-13; Lk.9:28-36). He was himself an eyewitness to the "power and coming return" – a hendiadys meaning "powerful return" – of the Messiah. No mere oral report informed Peter of this monumental future event, the "blessed hope" for which all believers yearn (Tit.2:13); he had witnessed that "majestic" return of Christ, that "coming" or *parousia* which will occur at the end of the Tribulation, personally, through the divine vision he was given to observe along with James and John. Therefore, even by human standards, Peter's report about this – and, we may rightly infer, about all other things he tells us – stands upon absolutely solid ground, in the greatest possible contrast to the lies that he and the other apostles were daily having to refute.

(20) O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge (*gnosis*) – (21) by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace be with you. Amen.  
1st Timothy 6:20-21 NKJV

**These Words (v.17):**

For when He had received honor and glory from God the Father, these words sounded forth to Him from God's majestic glory: "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased."

2nd Peter 1:17

In addition to the overpowering vision of the glorified Christ which Peter and his companions were given to see, God the Father chose to emphasize this demonstration of Christ's true glory and authority with a resounding declaration of the Messiah's divine status ("This is My beloved Son") and validation of His successful mission in completing the plan of God through His life and sacrifice ("with whom I am well-pleased"). The glorious pronouncement by the Father applied then and there, but it also fulfilled the prophecy of the Messiah (Is.42:1-4), and was also prophetic in its own right, looking forward to our Lord's return and His taking up of His millennial Kingship to reign for a thousand years – for He alone is worthy.

(6) "But as for Me, I have anointed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain." (7) I shall relate the Lord's decree. He said to Me, "You are My Son. Today I have begotten You. (8) Ask of Me and I shall give [You] the nations as your inheritance, and as Your possession the ends of the earth. (9) You shall shepherd them with a rod of iron, and You shall shatter them like a potter's vessel"

Psalms 2:6-9

(4) And I began to cry much, because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look inside of it. (5) And one of the elders was saying to me, "Don't cry! Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, He has won the victory [so as to be worthy] to open the scroll and to undo its seals."

Revelation 5:4-5

We should note that this is not the only occasion during the first advent where the Father verbally affirmed our Lord as the Son of God. In addition to the transfiguration referred to by Peter here (Matt.17:5; Mk.9:7; Lk.9:35), we also have the Father's very similar words at our Lord's baptism by John (Matt.3:17; Mk.1:11; Lk.3:22), and once also shortly before the cross:

(27) "Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour?' But for this purpose I came to this hour. (28) Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." (29) Therefore the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to Him." (30) Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake."

John 12:27-30 NKJV

For our sake, the Father in three instances made our Lord's status as the very Son of God who was carrying out perfectly the perfect plan of God crystal clear. All of these statements are affirmations by the Father of the Son, telling us that there is one plan, one purpose, One God, One Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

(4) There is one body and One Spirit – just as when you were called it was in one hope that you were called. (5) There is One Lord (i.e., Jesus Christ), one faith, one baptism.

(6) There is One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.  
Ephesians 4:4-6

### **I myself heard (v.18):**

And these words I myself heard as they were delivered from heaven, for I was with Him on the holy mountain (cf. Matt.17:1-8).  
2nd Peter 1:18

In addition to being an eyewitness (v.16), Peter, who assures us that he was "with Jesus on the holy mountain" at the time of the transfiguration, was also an "ear witness". He not only saw these events with his own eyes but also heard them with his own ears. Therefore we may be sure that what Peter relates about the events of that day – and what we know also from the accounts in the three synoptic gospels – is absolutely true. Our Lord's glorious transformation into the appearance He will have at the second advent, His communing with Moses and Elijah, and the majestic declaration of the Father are not a matter of any second-hand report, or oral tradition, or, far less, something concocted by the mind of man (as was indeed the case with the Gnostic fictions Peter denigrates above). Rather, these things happened just as we have been told they did – and Peter affirms that he saw them and also heard them himself with his own eyes and with his own ears.

### **The Prophetically Inspired Word (v.19):**

Yet I consider the prophetically inspired Word (i.e. the Bible) even more reliable (i.e., than what I saw with my own eyes).  
2nd Peter 1:19a

By the "prophetically inspired Word" (Gr. *prophetikos logos*) Peter means **the** Word (*logos*) of God (cf. Jn.1:1-2). The *prophe*- word group in the New Testament always refers to the foretelling and forth-telling of God's truth through the inspiration by the Holy Spirit of His prophets, that is to say, the "special revelation" which can only come *directly* from God (as opposed to the natural revelation which indirectly reveals His glory: Ps.19:1-6; Rom.1:18-20).<sup>15</sup>

During the apostolic era and also previously during Old Testament times, God occasionally sent forth prophets to proclaim a spoken message which may not have been meant for preservation by writing. But we believers are blessed beyond measure to have the holy scriptures, *prophetic* writings, i.e., writings produced by men with the gift of prophecy specifically commissioned by God and inspired by the Holy Spirit to record their message for all time as part of the Bible. Peter uses this term, "the prophetically inspired Word", to refer to scripture here in order to emphasize the divine origin and authority of the Bible: it comes from God Himself by means of a gift given by God Himself through the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit bearing the message of the Word who is God Himself, our Savior Jesus Christ. Nothing in this world is more important or more wonderful than the Bible. Peter does his best here to remind us not to take it for granted.

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<sup>15</sup> See BB 7: Bibliology, section 2.b, "Special Revelation".

What is often missed in treatments and even some translations of this passage is the amazing (to some) fact that Peter places the authority of the Bible above what he personally saw with his own eyes and heard with his own ears! Although in no doubt whatsoever about his experience, he emphatically affirms here that the scriptures, the written and inspired records of the events of that preview of the second advent he was given to see along with James and John (Matt.17:1-8; Mk.9:2-13; Lk.9:28-36), are to be preferred to that personal experience – not only by us, but also by him. No stronger declaration of the primacy and importance of scripture is possible: regardless of what we see or hear or think or feel, we should believe what the Bible says, even if every sense and sensibility disagree. The Bible must be our practical object of faith here in this world, even if the day should come when we are given to see or hear astounding things: if they contradict scripture, we believe scripture nevertheless.

And He said: "Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time has drawn near.' Therefore do not go after them."  
Luke 21:8 NKJV

(13) And [the beast's false prophet] [will] perform great miracles (lit., "signs"), even making fire come down from heaven to the earth in front of everyone. (14) And he [will] deceive those who dwell upon the earth on account of the miracles (lit., "signs") which have been given to him to perform in the presence of the beast, even commanding the inhabitants of the earth to make an image of the beast, [that is] of him who received the [deadly] stroke of the sword and [yet] came [back] to life.  
Revelation 13:13-14

After all, at present, we can only see our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with the eyes of faith, and all we know of Him has come to us from the holy scriptures which are, after all, all about Him who is the very Word of God.

The Word [Jesus Christ] existed at the very beginning, and there was reciprocity (i.e., "face to face" co-divinity) between the Word and God [the Father]. And the Word was God. This One both existed and enjoyed reciprocity (i.e., was "face to face") with God from the very beginning (i.e., from before the beginning of creation).  
John 1:1-2

And the Word became flesh and tented among us. And we beheld His glory, a glory like that of a one and only Son from [the] Father, full of grace and truth.  
John 1:14

And He was clothed in a cloak splattered with blood, and His Name stands [forever]:  
"The Word of God".  
Revelation 19:13

### **Pay Close Attention (v.19b):**

You too would do well to pay the closest attention to this [prophetically inspired Word], just as to a lamp shining in a dark place (cf. Ps.119:105).  
2nd Peter 1:19b

Life is busy. Life is complicated. Modern life in particular places all manner of demands on our time and energy. It is easy, far too easy, to make attention to the truth of the Word of God, Bible study and Bible reading, one's disposable priority. It is very easy to stop "paying attention" to the Word of God, even after being red hot for the truth – gradually at first, but then slipping into a deceptively comfortable pattern of lukewarmness. Sooner or later, however, this sort of approach always catches up with us. Just like the military unit which got into the habit of failing to post guards, if we develop a lackadaisical attitude to the Bible and Bible study, we may find ourselves surprised by unforeseen events for which we are subsequently not prepared (Eccl.9:12; Is.47:11; Jer.6:26; 1Thes.5:3). This is the fate likely to overtake most residents of Laodicea who are ignoring the times through the false comfort of a non-existent pre-Tribulation "rapture".

But "even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are convinced of better things in your case – things that have to do with salvation" (Heb.6:9 NIV). We "are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness" (1Thes.5:5 NIV). So let us remain alert (1Thes.5:6-11), not stumbling for lack of light but rather sticking close to the light of the Word – that is the "lamp unto our feet" whereby we may persevere forward without danger of falling, no matter how dark this valley of death darkness we must pass through to get to our promised reward may become (Ps.23:4).

*Nun:* Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.  
Psalm 119:105 NIV

(35) Then Jesus said to them, "A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. (36) While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them.

John 12:35-36 NKJV

### **The Morning Star (v.19c):**

. . . until the day dawns, and the Morning Star rises (i.e. the Living Word, Jesus Christ, returns).

2nd Peter 1:19

"Morning Star" is a title for our Lord Jesus Christ who, as the Father's replacement for the devil (who traded light for darkness: Is.14:12), restores light to the world as *the* Light of the world (Is.9:1-2; 42:6; 49:6; Matt.4:16; Jn.1:4-5; 8:12; 9:5; Heb.1:3). Just as the star that led the wise men to Bethlehem was a prophecy of Christ (Num.24:17; cf. Matt.2:2; 2:9; 4:16; Lk.2:30-32), so we too are told to follow the only sure light in this world, the living Word of God, Jesus Christ, through His Bible, the written Word of God.

"I, Jesus, sent My angel to testify these things to you concerning the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the bright Morning Star."

Revelation 22:16

The symbolism of this title is twofold. On the one hand, at His return, in the midst of a



supernatural day which is "neither light nor darkness" (Zech.14:6-7; cf. Is.13:9-13; 34:4; 60:1-2; Ezek.32:7-10; Joel 2:2, 2:10, 2:31; 3:15; Zeph.1:15-18; Matt.24:29; Mk.13:24-25; Acts 2:17-21; Rev.6:12-13), our Lord Jesus Christ will blaze forth like the light of the brightest star (Is.60:1-3; Matt.24:29-30; Rev.1:7), a true harbinger of the blessed morning to come after the long dark night of the Tribulation (cf. Heb.1:3). On the other hand, Jesus in His humanity also replaces the previous chief of the created world, "Lucifer" (meaning "light bearer": Is.14:12), who was designed to reflect the light of God, but chose darkness instead, that is, to go his own way in rebelling against God (Eph.6:12; Col.1:13; Jude 1:6; 1:13).

Thus, as the harbinger of the dawn, the title "Morning star" for our Lord focuses our attention on the blessed moment of Christ's return for us, the second advent when the darkness will finally give way for us forever to the light of Him who is the light.

In Him was life, and this life was the light of men. And this light is shining in the darkness, and the darkness has not quenched it.  
John 1:4-5

"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."  
John 8:12b

"I have come into the world as a light, in order that everyone who believes in Me may not abide in darkness."  
John 12:46

Until that glorious day of the fulfillment of our blessed hope (Tit.2:13; cf. 1Thes.4:13-18), until the dawning of that day of eternity, until the Morning Star rises and we rise with Him in resurrection (1Thes.4:13-18), as long as we are in this dark world, the Bible, the truth of Him who is the Truth, must be the light which guides our path: only by attention to the scriptures will we be sure of our steps and be able to keep from stumbling as we carry our crosses forward in emulation of Him.

(4) "As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. (5) While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."  
John 9:4-5 NIV

### **No Single Verse (v.20):**

. . . pondering in your hearts this principle of prime importance: no single verse of prophetically inspired scripture has ever come into being as a result of personal reflection.  
2nd Peter 1:20

Thinking about the truths we have learned and believed, "pondering them in our hearts", is a fine way to occupy our minds, and far superior to letting our thinking drift when we are not intensely concentrating on some necessary task – as our unoccupied minds have a tendency to wander under the influence of the sin nature into all manner of pointless and even sinful thinking (if we are not being good about policing our hearts: Jer.17:9; Matt.15:18-19 Mk.7:20-22; Rom.8:5-9).

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.

Philippians 4:8 NIV

(1) Therefore since you have been resurrected [positionally] with Christ, keep seeking after the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. (2) Keep thinking on the things above, and not the things on the earth.

Colossians 3:1-2

Even though he has already make it clear that the truth recorded in scripture is not a mere human report and is superior even to what one may have seen and heard personally – because it is inspired by the Holy Spirit – Peter feels the need to double-down here on this principle, and for good reason. The Bible is our one standard of faith and practice in this world. If we doubt it, if we allow our faith in the truth of it to be undermined by skeptics – of which the world is replete, goaded on by the devil and his forces (who, ironically enough, know very well that it *is* true), then this lack of faith, this doubt, will become a cancer which, while it may start small, will eventually eat away at all we know to be truth through faith. But the *truth* is that the Holy Spirit is the author of every verse of scripture, so that "no single verse of prophetically inspired scripture has ever come into being as a result of personal reflection", but instead *every* verse of the Bible comes from God. Amen! Which means, as we remember, "I believe it".

### **The Direction and Agency of the Holy Spirit (v.21):**

For true prophecy has never occurred by human will, but only when holy men of God have spoken under the direction and agency of the Holy Spirit.

2nd Peter 1:21

Scripture is the very Word of God. Scripture comes from God. The Bible is a book entirely inspired by God, the very words of it containing the truth He alone meant for mankind to have in this world of evil. We only know about Jesus Christ through the Bible. And through the Bible we know – or can know – everything we need to know to negotiate this short life of carrying our crosses and following Him. Never did any human being decide to write a single verse of the Bible through his own initiative. That direction in every case, in every book, in every verse, came right from the Holy Spirit, and it was His direction, His guidance, that inspired the prophet to write and guided him as to what to write, in a perfect way, not waiving the individual prophet's mentality or will or skill, but directing him in such a way that God's precise message was preserved for us as it was decreed to be in eternity past. This is the book with which we have to do. This is the God with whom we have to do. Gracious, loving, kind, merciful, providing for our every need, the forgiveness of ours sins through the blood of the Son of God, the empowerment of our lives through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the direction of our path through the truth of the very Word of God – until we rise to meet our Lord on that glorious day.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> For more about the nature of Bible, see [BB 7: Bibliology](#); for more about the Holy Spirit's ministry, see [BB 5: Pneumatology](#).

(14) "I have given them Your word, and the world hated them, because they are not of the world just as I am not of the world. (15) I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one. (16) For they are not of the world just as I am not of the world. (17) So make them holy (i.e., "sanctified") by means of Your truth – Your word is truth. (18) And just as you sent Me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. (19) I am consecrating Myself for their sake, so that they too may be made holy (i.e., "be sanctified") ***through truth.***"

John 17:14-19