

Study of 1 & 2 Peter

Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). [*Wiersbe's expository outlines on the New Testament*](#). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Introductory to 1 & 2 Peter

I. Author

The Apostle Peter is the author of the two letters that bear his name. In writing these letters, Peter was continuing to fulfill the commandment Christ gave him to “feed” the sheep and the lambs (John 21:15–17). The “Babylon” of 1 Peter 5:13 is probably Rome (see Rev. 17:5, 18), where Peter had gone shortly before his death to minister to the suffering churches (2 Peter 1:12–15). There is no scriptural or historical evidence that Peter founded the church at Rome and served as its “bishop” for twenty-five years, as tradition claims. There were several congregations in Rome when Paul wrote Romans (see especially Rom. 16, in which several “household groups” are mentioned). Paul himself would never have gone to Rome to minister had Peter been there first. Paul’s policy was to go places where no other apostles had gone (Rom. 15:20).

II. Situation

Nero began a terrible persecution of Christians in October, a.d. 64. It was most severe in Rome itself, where Nero even burned Christians alive to illuminate his gardens at night. Some students believe that Paul was released in the spring of 64 and traveled to Spain (Rom. 15:28), leaving Peter to minister to the believers in the city. Silas and Mark are mentioned with Peter (1 Peter 5:12–13), so Paul must have left them and journeyed to Spain with other companions. Nero burned Rome in July and started his persecution of the church in October.

Peter knew that the “fiery trial” (4:12ff) would spread from Rome to the Roman provinces, and he wanted to encourage the saints there. Paul was not on hand to do it, so Peter wrote these two letters, inspired by the Spirit, to the churches Paul had founded in Asia Minor (1 Peter 1:1 and 2 Peter 3:1). These believers had already been faced with local, personal persecutions (1 Peter 1:6–7; 3:13–17), but Peter wanted them to be ready for the severe trials now on the way (4:12ff; 5:9–10).

A careful reading of 1 Peter and Ephesians (which was also written to saints in Asia Minor) shows more than one hundred parallels in teaching and wording! It is as though the Spirit is telling us that Peter and Paul agree on spiritual truths; in fact, Peter himself points to the writings of Paul (2 Peter 3:15–16, which may refer to Hebrews). Compare the two doxologies (Eph. 1:3 and 1 Peter 1:3), for example. Here are some other parallels: 1 Peter 1:12 / Eph. 3:5, 10; 1 Peter 2:2 / Eph. 4:13, 15; 1 Peter 4:10 / Eph. 4:7, 11; 1 Peter 4:11 / Eph. 3:6, 21.

III. Theme

The major theme of 1 Peter is grace (5:12); in fact, the word “grace” is used in every chapter: 1:2, 10, 13; 2:19–20 (where “thankworthy” and “acceptable” can also be translated “grace” in the original Gk.); 3:7; 4:10; 5:5, 10, 12. Peter’s aim is to testify of the sufficiency of God’s grace. After writing the first letter, Peter was arrested and tried; and he wrote his second letter as he awaited execution (2 Peter 1:13–21). The theme of the second letter is assurance that comes from knowledge. Peter saw the danger of false doctrine in the church and warned the believers to beware (3:17). In other words, the two letters together emphasize the perils facing the church: Satan can come as a lion to devour with persecution (1 Peter) or as a serpent to deceive with false doctrine (2 Peter). Satan is a liar and a murderer (John 8:44–45). The Christian can depend on God’s grace to see him through the fiery trials; and his knowledge of the truth will conquer the false teachers that will arise in the church (2 Peter 2). These two words summarize the two letters: 1 Peter—grace; 2 Peter—knowledge. Peter urges us to grow both in grace and in knowledge (2 Peter 3:18).

1 Peter 1

The greeting in vv. 1–2 identifies the writer as Peter, an apostle (one sent with a commission). He claims no other title for himself, either here or in 5:1ff. His readers are “strangers,” that is, “resident aliens” in a foreign land. This was true politically, for they were Jews away from their fatherland; but it was also true spiritually, for their citizenship was in heaven (Phil. 3:20). “Scattered” means “dispersed” as a farmer scatters seed. Believers are God’s seed (Matt. 13:38), and He plants them where He will. Sometimes He uses persecution to scatter the seed (Acts 8:1; 11:19ff). Verse 2 outlines the plan of salvation: we are chosen by the Father, set apart unto faith by the Spirit, and cleansed by the blood of Christ. The Father chose you in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4); the Son saved you when He died for you; but it took your surrendering to the Spirit to seal the transaction.

Peter now describes the lives believers ought to live in this hostile world:

I. Live in Hope (1:3–12)

The unsaved person is “without hope” (Eph. 2:12); yet the believer has a living hope because he has a living Savior. Christ is our Hope (1 Tim. 1:1), and we look for His soon-expected return. The Christian does not work for this hope; it is a part of his spiritual birthright. We are born again (John 3:5) into this living hope.

This hope is not only a living hope; it is a lasting hope (vv. 4–5). It is reserved in heaven, where it cannot decay (“incorruptible”), be defiled, or lose its beauty and delight. But not only is the hope reserved; the believer too is kept (guarded as by a soldier) by the Lord! We are kept by God’s power because of the faith we have placed in Him. Eternal security is not based on the faith of men, but on the faithfulness of God. The believer is saved; he is being saved daily (through sanctification); and he will be

saved completely when Christ returns (Rom. 8:15–25). The end (completion, perfection) of our faith will be the complete salvation of the believer (v. 9), who will inherit a new body.

However, until Christ returns, the believer must go through testing. A faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted. Our suffering is but “for a season” as the Lord sees it (“if need be”—v. 6); but the glory will be forever. Verse 7 compares the trial of our faith to the testing of gold. The word “trial” means “approval.” The comparison suggested by Dr. Kenneth Wuest is that of a prospector bringing ore in to be tested. The assayer gives him a certificate stating that the ore contains gold. The certificate is the approval of the ore, and this paper is worth much more than the little sample of ore that was tested. In the same way our faith is tested, a “sample” at a time; and the approval of our faith means that there are more riches to follow. The suffering we endure here will result in more glory when Christ comes. Knowing this, we love Him the more.

In vv. 10–12, Peter reminds us that the OT prophets spoke of this salvation we enjoy. They did not, however, fully understand the time or circumstances in which it would appear. They saw the cross and the kingdom, but they did not anticipate the “valley” in between, this present age of the church.

II. Live in Holiness (1:13–21)

The blessed hope ought to make us live holy lives (1 John 3:1–3). We must “gather our thoughts” and not let them fly loose (see Ex. 12:11). Another motive for separated living is the commandment of the Word (Lev. 11:44; 19:2; 20:7). “Holy” does not mean sinless perfection, which is a condition impossible in this life anyway (1 John 1:8–10). It means set apart, separated unto God. If we are God’s children, then we ought to be like our Father.

A third motive for holy living is the judgment of God (v. 17). God chastens His children today and tests their works at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:1ff). He has no “favorites” but treats all of His children alike.

Verses 18–21 give a fourth motive for dedicated living: the price Christ paid on the cross. Before we were saved, our lives were empty and meaningless (“vain”—v. 18); but now they are full and happy through Him. Our salvation was not purchased with money; it took the blood of Jesus Christ, the spotless Lamb of God (John 1:29). His death was planned by God ages before we ever were born; yet, God in His grace included us in that plan! How grateful we should be, and what better way is there for us to show our gratitude than to surrender our all to Him (1 Cor. 6:15–20).

III. Live in Harmony (1:22–25)

Salvation gives us a living hope, a desire for a holy life, and a wonderful fellowship with the people of God. The Spirit of God loved us and brought us to Christ; this same Spirit has planted within us a love for the people of God (Rom. 5:5, and see 1 John 3:16ff). Peter uses two words for “love” in v. 22: one means brotherly love and the other divine love (*agape*). The Christian possesses brotherly love; but he needs to exert spiritual energy and love others the way God loves him. Even unsaved people can show brotherly love; it takes a Christian, controlled by the Spirit, to show *agape* love.

Peter likes this phrase “born again”; he uses it in 1:3 and 1:23. We are born again through God’s mercy unto a living hope, and we are born again by the Word of God unto love for the people of God. He compares the Word to seed, as Jesus does in the Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13:1–9, 18–23). Like a seed, the Word is small and seemingly insignificant, but it has life and power within. The Word must be planted to do any good; but when it is planted in the heart, it produces fruit. God’s Word is eternal, and the fruit it produces is eternal; but the things of the flesh do not last. Peter refers in vv. 24–25 to Isa. 40:6–8. Whatever we do in obedience to the Word of God will last forever! But whatever we do in the energy of the flesh will look beautiful for a time, but will then die.

Christian harmony is a blessing to the Lord, the church, and the believers themselves (Ps. 133). If every believer is obeying the Word and practicing love, there will be harmony.

1 Peter 2

The “wherefore” of v. 1 connects this section with the theme of 1:23, “being born again.” The key thought of 2:1–3:7 is submission (2:13, 18; 3:1, 5).

I. Our Heavenly Privileges (2:1–10)

A. *Children in God’s family (vv. 1–3).*

The phrase “newborn babes” is the same as that used for the infant Jesus in Luke 2:16. The new believer is a babe in need of milk (1 Cor. 3:1–3; Heb. 5:13–14). In fact, one of the evidences of spiritual life is a hunger for spiritual food, the Word of God. We must not remain babes in Christ. But just as the baby has a great appetite, so we should have a similar desire for God’s Word. As we grow in the Lord, we include meat and bread in our spiritual diet (Matt. 4:4). We become “young men” and “fathers” in the family (1 John 2:12–14). Our food must be the unadulterated Word, not one mixed with human philosophies or doctrines (2 Cor. 2:17). Once we have tasted the Lord’s blessing (Ps. 34:8), we want to put away the old sins of the flesh—malice, deceit, hypocrisies, envies, etc.—and cultivate an appetite for God’s truth.

B. *Stones in God’s temple (vv. 4–8).*

Peter never claimed to be “the rock” on which the church is built (Matt. 16:18); he states clearly that Christ is the Stone (v. 4). Christ was rejected of men, but chosen of God. Read carefully Matt. 21:33–46, Isa. 28:16, Acts 4:11, and Ps. 118:22–23. Believers are living stones built on the Living Stone (1:3), comprising a spiritual temple for God’s glory (Eph. 2:19–22). We are also priests in this temple, offering up spiritual sacrifices through Christ (see Heb. 13:15–16). Christ, the Stone, is rejected of men; but whoever believes on Him will not be ashamed. Unbelievers stumble over this Stone and will one day be crushed by it; but to us, He is precious.

C. Citizens in the new nation (vv. 9–10).

The church is “the people of God,” His holy nation, His “Israel” (see Ex. 19:6; Gal. 6:16). This fact does not mean that the OT promises will not be literally fulfilled for the Jews in the kingdom, but rather that the church today is to God what Israel was to Him under the Old Covenant, in a spiritual sense. Since Christ is our King-Priest, we are a royal priesthood. “Peculiar” (v. 9) means “for one’s own possession” (Eph. 1:14). What a privilege it is to be a child of God and have citizenship in heaven (Phil. 3:10).

II. Our Earthly Responsibilities (2:11–25)

A. Submission to ordinances (vv. 11–17).

As pilgrims and strangers (aliens and exiles), we might not think we have any responsibilities toward human government, but Peter tells us we have an even greater obligation to obey the laws. The unsaved world watches the Christian; therefore, we must abstain from sins by the power of the Spirit. Our behavior (“conversation”—v. 12) must be honest (seemly, suitable), for this is the only way to silence their evil talk. Verse 12 teaches that our good works can help lead the lost to Christ, and they will praise God on the day that He visits and saves them. Though we may not respect the men and women who hold office, we must respect the offices and obey the laws. Yes, the Christian is free, but his freedom is not license (Gal. 5:18). Read Rom. 13 for Paul’s counsel on this matter.

B. Servants and masters (vv. 18–25).

Peter speaks here to household slaves who were saved and members of local assemblies. See Eph. 6:5–8 and Col. 3:22. It is interesting that neither Peter nor Paul attacked slavery as an institution. Rather, they encouraged slaves to be devoted Christians and to obtain their liberty if they could.

Servants must show submission and reverence to their masters, even if these masters are unreasonable and hard to get along with. This same principle applies to workers today. Unsaved supervisors often try to “lord it over” Christian employees or persecute them in different ways. The easiest thing to do is to fight back, but this is the wrong approach. Peter explains that anybody, saved or lost, can and should bear it if he is being punished for his faults. Only a Christian can do good and “take it” if he suffers wrongfully. Note that important word “wrongfully,” for Peter is not telling us to look for excuses to suffer. He is talking about suffering for the name of Christ (see Matt. 5:9–12), suffering when we have done no wrong but have let our lights shine. The Gk. word for “thankworthy” and “acceptable” in vv. 19–20 is actually the same one used for “grace.” What grace is shown if we endure suffering for our faults? It takes real grace to endure when you do good but are treated badly anyway. See Luke 6:32–36.

Peter gives “conscience toward God” (v. 19) as one reason why Christians suffer wrongfully. In v. 21 he gives a second reason: Christians have been called to suffer. We should not expect our lives to be a bed of roses, nor should we be surprised when trials come (4:12ff). Jesus promised that His followers would be persecuted for His name’s sake.

Peter then points to Christ as our example in suffering. He is not teaching that we are saved by following Christ. The sinner is dead, and a dead person cannot follow

anybody! In His sufferings on earth, Christ is our example of how to endure and glorify God. Peter was a witness of Christ's sufferings (5:1); he knew that his Lord had done no sin and that He was condemned wrongfully. In word, attitude, and deed, our Lord set a perfect example for us to follow. He did not argue; He did not fight back; He did not revile His accusers after they had reviled Him. He simply committed Himself to His Father and left the outcome with Him. Since He lives in us (Gal. 2:20), He can enable us to act as He acted when the world persecutes us.

Again, Peter takes us to the cross (vv. 24–25), reminding us that Christ died for us and that we died with Him (Rom. 6). Our identification with Christ in death (2:24) and resurrection (1:3) makes it possible for us to live a righteous life. We have been healed of the malady of sin by His sacrifice on the cross. Verse 24 refers to the healing of the soul in the forgiveness of sins.

The picture of the shepherd and sheep (v. 25) would mean much to Peter, since he had heard Jesus teach about the Good Shepherd (John 10) and since Christ had commanded him to tend His sheep (John 21). The lost sinner is a straying sheep (Isa. 53:6; Luke 15:3–7); but Christ, the Shepherd, seeks him out and saves him. The word “bishop” (v. 25) means “overseer”; Christ saves us, then watches over us to guard us from evil.

Peter has filled this chapter with striking images of the believer. We are babes feeding on His Word; stones in the temple; priests at the altar; a chosen generation; a purchased people; a holy nation; the people of God; strangers and pilgrims; disciples following the example of the Lord; and sheep cared for by the shepherd. The Christian life is so rich and full that it takes these comparisons and many more to show how wonderful it is.

1 Peter 3

Peter continues the theme of submission (3:1, 5, 22) and shows that Christians must be subject in three areas of life.

I. Submission in the Home (3:1–7)

A. *The unsaved husband.*

Peter here refers to a divided home. Since being married, the wife has come to trust Christ but the husband is not a believer. Peter describes how the wife can win her unsaved husband to the Lord.

B. *The Christian wife.*

She must be subject to her husband and show him honor and respect (Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18). She must not nag or preach but live such a devoted life that her husband may be won to Christ “without a word,” that is, apart from preaching and pleading. Unsaved loved ones watch our lives; if we point to Christ, we can win them.

Her behavior must be pure (chaste), and her attention must be drawn to the inner person and not to outward appearance. Peter is not forbidding women from wearing jewelry; what he is forbidding is going to worldly extremes just to be “fashionable.” See 1 Tim. 2:9–12. “Plaiting the hair” (v. 3) means weaving the hair into conspicuous fashions, intertwining gold decorations, and so on. “Apparel” (v. 3) refers to decorative clothes in particular, those “extravagant extras” that call attention to themselves. Christian women can be attractive without being worldly. In fact, the outlandish fashions sported by much of the world would embarrass the devoted Christian woman and make it difficult for her to witness.

True beauty comes from within (v. 4). Peter used Sarah, Abraham’s wife, as his example. She was a beautiful woman, for several kings tried to take her from her husband; yet she was devoted to the Lord and to her husband in the Lord. Gen. 18:12 states that she even called Abraham my “lord-master.” She was not a slave, of course; rather, she was expressing her submission based on love. When a Christian is devoted to the Lord and to her husband, she need never fear what might happen, for God will rule and overrule. (The word “amazement” in v. 6 means “terror.”) Of course, a Christian woman must never marry a man who is not worthy of her love and respect.

C. Living as a Christian husband.

“Likewise” (v. 7) indicates a similar attitude of love and respect on the part of the husband. Marriage is a partnership. Husbands must not remain ignorant but should grow in knowledge of the Lord and of the other partner. The husband must give honor to the wife. They are heirs together of the grace of life, suggesting that children are an inheritance of the Lord. If there is something wrong between Christian mates, their prayers will be hindered; trouble in the home will result. Peter assumes that they do not simply live together; they also pray together!

II. Submission under Suffering (3:8–14)

Verse 8 describes the mutual love of Christians in the church; contrast it with the turmoil found in James 4. In vv. 9–14, Peter deals with the Christian who suffers in the world. This is the day-by-day suffering that we endure, not the “fiery trial” of special suffering that appears later (4:12ff). How should Christians act when persecuted by the world?

A. They must be a blessing (v. 9).

Read Luke 6:22–28. We conquer hate by showing love. The best way to meet the slanderer and persecutor is with patience and grace. Let God do the rest!

B. They must keep clean (vv. 10–11).

He refers to Ps. 34:12–16. “He who wills to love life” is the best translation of v. 10. “Eschew” means “avoid,” and “ensue” means “strive after.”

C. They must remember that God is watching (vv. 12–14).

God sees the problems and He hears our cries. He knows how to deal with those who persecute us for His sake. Rather than complain, we should rejoice that we are suffering for His sake (Matt. 5:11–12; Acts 5:41).

III. Subjection to Christ (3:15–22)

“Sanctify Christ as Lord” is the best translation of v. 15. Put Him on the throne of your heart. If He controls our lives, then we will always have an answer when people ask about the hope we have in Him (Mark 13:11). A surrendered heart and a good conscience will together give peace when people accuse us falsely.

Sinners may accuse us, but God knows the heart; and we fear God, not men (Isa. 8:12–13). Again, Peter reminds them of the sufferings of Christ, that He was falsely accused yet left the matter with His Father.

The mystery of the “spirits in prison” (vv. 19–20) has perplexed students for years and not all interpreters agree on its meaning. Just keep in mind the main lesson of this passage: Christ suffered wrongly, but God honored Him and gave Him glory (v. 22). The rest of this passage describes mainly the good conscience of the believer toward God. As for the problems raised by other parts of the passage, several explanations have been given. Some suggest that Christ gave the dead in hell a second chance to be saved, but this is contrary to what is taught in the rest of the Bible. Others suggest that Peter is only saying that the same Holy Spirit who raised Christ from the dead (v. 18) preached through Noah, and that Christ, between His death and resurrection, visited the spirits of these lost people in prison (the world of the dead) and announced His victory. Why Jesus visited these men and not others is not explained.

One good explanation, however, is that the “spirits in prison” are the fallen angels of Gen. 6 who consorted with the daughters of men, “going after strange flesh” as Jude 6–7 explains it. The word “prison” in 3:19 refers to the place of judgment mentioned in 2 Peter 2:4, “chains of darkness.” It was this violation of God’s order that helped bring on the Flood, which explains why Peter mentions Noah. Note too that Peter’s theme is the subjection of angels to Christ (v. 22). These fallen angels were not subject to Him, and therefore they were judged.

Between His death and resurrection, Christ visited these angels in prison and announced His victory over Satan. The word “preached” in 3:19 means “to announce” and not “to preach the Gospel.” Jesus announced their doom and His victory over all angels and authorities. It is likely that at this time Christ “led captivity captive” (Eph. 4:8), rescued godly souls dwelling in Hades (see Luke 16:19–31), and took them to heaven. There is not one hint here of anybody having a second chance to be saved after death.

Peter then ties Noah to the subject of baptism. The flood was actually a global baptism of water; the world is now being reserved for a global baptism of fire (2 Peter 3:5–7). Peter does not say that baptism saves us or that water washes away sins. In fact, he makes it clear that baptism cannot put away the filth of the flesh. Submission to the Lord in baptism is an inward matter, the answer of a good conscience toward God. Baptism is a picture of death, burial, and resurrection. Christ’s baptism in water by John the Baptist was a symbol of His baptism of suffering on the cross (Luke 3:21–22; 12:50). Christ Himself pointed to Jonah as the sign of His death, burial, and resurrection. The water that buried the wicked world bore Noah to safety. The water did not save him; the ark did. In this way Noah anticipates Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. Note too that Noah sent out a dove; and when Christ was baptized, a dove lit upon Him.

This is a complex passage, so keep the main lessons in mind: (1) Christ is Lord of all, and we must submit to Him; (2) a good conscience makes us strong in testing; (3)

Christian baptism, pictured by the flood, illustrates death, burial, and resurrection but does not save the soul. Baptism is important because it indicates our submission to the Lord.

1 Peter 4

Chapters 4 and 5 deal with God's grace in suffering. Peter has already touched upon the everyday suffering that the Christian faces (e.g., reproach, accusations); but now he tells his readers that a "fiery trial" of official persecution is about to come upon them. In this chapter, he gives three wonderful and blessed benefits that can come to Christians when they go through suffering in the will of God.

I. Suffering Purifies the Saint (4:1–6)

When life is easy, we drift into carelessness and sin; but suffering changes our values and goals. The "fiery trial" is a furnace that purifies the gold and allows God to remove the dross (Ps. 66:10). Here is what suffering does for us:

A. *It identifies us with Christ (v. 1).*

He suffered for us that He might save us from sin. As we suffer for Him—and with Him—we learn to hate sin and love Him more. Peter encourages them to have "the mind of Christ" and to realize that their identification with Christ means victory over sin. This is Peter's version of Romans 6.

B. *It reminds us that life is short (vv. 2–3).*

We take life for granted until we have to suffer, and then our values change. How foolish for the Christian to waste "the rest of the time" by running with the world and sinning! There is a better way. Rather than live in the will of sinful men, we must live in the will of God.

C. *It points ahead to God's judgment (vv. 4–6).*

A Christian lives either according to the judgment of men or by the judgment of God. The world thinks it is strange that we no longer join them in sin, and they speak evil of us. But their evil-speaking does not upset us; God will judge them someday. They will give account to Him! Verse 6 may be paraphrased this way: "There are people now dead physically, but alive with God in the spirit, who were judged by the world. But they heard the Gospel before they died and they believed. They suffered and died because of their faith—but they are living with God! It is better to suffer for Christ and go to be with God than to follow the world and be lost." There is no connection between 4:6 and 3:19–20, nor is there any suggestion of a second chance for the lost after death.

It is important that Christians "arm themselves" with the same attitude toward the world, sin, and suffering that Jesus had while on earth. If we face suffering without a spiritual attitude, suffering will embitter us rather than purify us.

II. Suffering Unifies the Church (4:7–11)

Peter repeats the exhortation, “Be sober—serious-minded!” (See 1:13 and 5:8.) He reminds them that Christ is coming soon (5:4) and that, in the midst of suffering, saints have responsibilities to one another. Prayer is one of them; so is fervent love; the word “fervent” here means “stretched out.” Christian love never reaches a breaking point! It is bad enough when the world accuses the saints; the saints ought not to accuse one another. Love will help cover the sins of the saints. Love does not cleanse sin, but it does cover sin in that we do not go around talking about other people’s sins.

Peter exhorts these Christians to open their homes as well as their hearts. Christian hospitality is a forgotten blessing in the modern church, and we need to restore it.

Finally, Christians need to serve the Lord in spite of persecution, ministering their gifts as good stewards of God’s many-sided (manifold) grace. “Manifold” also means “many-colored, variegated.” God’s grace can meet any need or match any “color” that might come to life! God gives us the gifts and the strength to use all things for His glory.

III. Suffering Glorifies the Lord (4:12–19)

A. *Expect trials (v. 12).*

Trials are not strangers to the Christian life; they are to be expected. Trials that are part of the will of God are not warnings that we are disobeying Him; they are God’s tools for perfecting His own.

B. *Rejoice in trials (vv. 13–14).*

When trials come, we are suffering for His sake and sharing suffering with Him. See Phil. 1:29 and 3:10. The suffering we endure now is but a prelude to the glory that we will share at His coming. Furthermore, the Spirit of God “rests with refreshing power” (literal translation of v. 14) upon the suffering believer. When the three Hebrew children went into the fiery furnace, they had faith that God could deliver them (Dan. 3:19–30). He not only delivered them, but He walked with them.

C. *Do not be ashamed in trials (vv. 15–16).*

Roman law required each citizen to pledge his loyalty to the emperor. Once a year, the citizen would put a pinch of incense on the proper altar and say, “Caesar is Lord!” But the Christian confesses that “Jesus Christ is Lord!” (See 3:15.) Believers refused to bow before Caesar. Sometimes the Roman official would write the name of Christ on the ground or on a wall and ask the Christian to spit on it. If the Christian refused, he or she would be arrested, tried, and perhaps killed. By bearing the name of Christ (Christian), they were put to shame before their friends. But what a glorious name to bear! It is a name higher than any other.

D. *Witness in trials (vv. 17–18).*

If God sends trials to the church now, this is evidence that He will someday judge the lost. We have our trials now and our glory later; the lost have their glory now and their suffering later. The only heaven the lost sinner will know is on earth today! God begins His judgment at His house (the church); see Ezek. 9:6. If persecution for the name of Christ is but the beginning of trials, then what will happen when it comes time for the

lost to be judged? The righteous (believers) are saved “with difficulty” (v. 18); what hope is there for the ungodly? See Prov. 11:31.

E. Commit yourself to God (v. 19).

The word for “commit” used here is a banking term; it refers to the act of leaving an amount on deposit for safekeeping. It ties in beautifully with the “gold” illustration in 1:7. God sends the fiery trial to burn away the dross, and we commit ourselves to Him for safekeeping, knowing that He cannot fail us. We can be sure that God will “pay interest” on our deposit. But note that we commit ourselves in doing good; that is, we commit ourselves to God as we obey His Word. This is a daily and hourly surrender, living to please Him and serving others.

Christians will go through fiery trials before Christ returns. The world situation will not get better. Attitudes toward Christians will not improve. The world has always hated the name of Christ and will continue to hate it. If we identify ourselves with the name of Christ, the world will hate us (John 15:18–21). If we compromise, we will escape persecution, but we will also miss the blessing and glory of sharing Christ’s sufferings.

1 Peter 5

As he closes this letter of encouragement, Peter gives three exhortations to the saints. We see in this chapter several references to Peter’s experiences in the Gospels as he walked with Christ. Peter witnessed Christ’s sufferings (v. 1); he was commissioned to care for the sheep (v. 2, and see John 21:15–17); he saw Christ clothe Himself as a servant and humbly wash the disciples’ feet (v. 5, and see John 13); and Peter knew what it was to be unprepared when Satan was on the prowl (v. 8, and see Mark 14:37). It is as though the Spirit of God searched Peter’s memory and used these past experiences to testify to the saints (see v. 12). Peter discovered that God’s grace was adequate for him, and he wanted the church to know that God’s grace would sustain them as well.

I. Be Faithful (5:1–4)

The exhortation is addressed primarily to the pastors. The words “pastor” (shepherd), “bishop” (overseer), and “elder” (mature leader) all refer to the same office (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:5–7). Peter did not put himself above others; rather, he called himself a “fellow elder” and deliberately included himself among the church leaders he was exhorting. There was a time when Peter would have worried about his position in the kingdom, but that time was past. Peter knew that the pastors would go through greater suffering as leaders of the people, so he encouraged them in two ways: (1) he reminded them that Christ had suffered for them and would sustain them; and (2) he reminded them that glory always follows suffering if we submit to the Lord. The two themes of suffering and glory are interwoven in 1 Peter.

A. Their ministry: "Shepherd the flock!"

Pastors' duties included feeding, leading, encouraging, discipling, guarding. The shepherd is to take the oversight and be the leader. Where would the flock be if the sheep led the shepherd or if every sheep were given his or her own way?

B. Their motive: "Not constraint, but consent."

The shepherd must serve the Lord with a willing heart because he loves Christ and the flock, and not simply because he has a job to do. He must never serve for "shameful gain" (v. 2), whether it be money, prestige, power, or promotion. He must be eager to work (of a ready mind), not listless or lazy.

C. Their manner: Leadership does not mean dictatorship.

Pastors are overseers, not overlords! "God's heritage" literally means "the portion assigned to you." All believers in a given locality are part of the church, but there are little flocks here and there under the direction of different elders. Nowhere is it suggested in the NT that all the churches in a town unite to form one church. There can be spiritual unity without organizational uniformity. Pastors should be examples, for, after all, the best way to get people to follow is to set the pace yourself! The pastor does not demand respect; he commands it by the godly life he lives and by his sacrificial service.

D. Their reward: In the future, not today.

There would be glory in heaven. Each undershepherd must submit to the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. It is more important to please and glorify Him than anyone else.

II. Be Humble (5:5–7)

Verse 5 refers literally to the young people of the church, but we may apply it to all members as they follow their spiritual leaders (Heb. 13:17). Peter refers here to that evening in the Upper Room when Jesus washed the disciples' feet. To be "clothed with humility" (v. 5) means to be controlled by a humble spirit, to be a servant. God resists arrogant, self-seeking persons but gives grace to the humble (Prov. 3:34; James 4:6). "Be humbled under the mighty hand of God!" he exhorts. "Allow this time of suffering to bring you low before Him, and then He will exalt you when He sees you are ready." The wonderful promise "He cares for you" (NKJV) reminds us of the night in the boat when the disciples asked Jesus, "Do You not care that we are perishing?" (see Mark 4:38, NKJV) Of course, Jesus cares! Satan would have these Christians believe that their "fiery trial" was an evidence of God's indifference; but Peter reminds them that they may "cast the whole of their care" (v. 7) once and for all upon Christ.

III. Be Watchful (5:8–11)

Who better than Peter would know about the prowlings of Satan! Several times Jesus warned Peter that Satan was after him, but he failed to heed the warning. Too many Christians have "gone to sleep," opening the way for Satan to work (Matt. 13:25, 39).

Satan is an "adversary," which means "one who accuses at court." The word "devil" means "a slanderer." Satan accuses us before God (Job 1–2; Zech. 3:1–5; Rev. 12:10),

and he uses the lips of unsaved people to accuse us falsely (1 Peter 2:12; 3:16; 4:4, 14). Satan comes either as a serpent to deceive (Gen. 3) or as a lion to devour. He is a liar and a murderer (John 8:44).

What can Christians do to defeat Satan? (1) Be alert! We must keep our eyes open and not relax our guard. When David relaxed and left the battle, he fell into sin (2 Sam. 11). When Peter felt self-confident, he went to sleep and fell into Satan's trap. (2) Resist! This word calls to mind an army, standing together to oppose the enemy. Christians must be united against Satan (Phil. 1:27–30). If there is a break in the ranks, Satan has an opportunity to attack. (3) Believe! We resist him in the faith, that is, trusting in the victory of Christ. Satan uses lies as his chief weapon, and the believer must counteract Satan's lies with God's truth. Jesus used the sword of the Spirit in the wilderness (Matt. 4). (4) Remember! Remember that other Christians are going through the same trials and that you are not alone. If Satan can get us to feel that we are alone, that God has singled us out, then he will discourage and defeat us.

Peter's theme has been grace (5:12), so he closes by reminding the saints that their God is the God of all grace! The Christian goes "from grace to grace" (John 1:16). The Christian life begins with saving grace (Eph. 2:8–10). It continues with serving grace (1 Cor. 15:9–10); then sanctifying grace (Rom. 5:17; 6:17). God also gives sacrificing grace (2 Cor. 8:1–9), singing grace (Col. 3:16), speaking grace (Col. 4:6), strengthening grace (2 Tim. 2:1), and suffering grace (2 Cor. 12:9). "He gives more grace" (James 4:6, NKJV).

Verse 10 indicates that grace is provided through the disciplines of life. God allows us to suffer that He might be able to shed His grace upon us. When we suffer, we come to the end of ourselves and learn to lean on Him. Grace is supplied only to those who sense their need for Him. First we suffer; then, as we suffer, He equips us, confirms us, and puts a foundation under us. The words "make you perfect" (v. 10) are used in Matt. 4:21 and carry the image of mending a net. The Gk. word means "to equip for service." Suffering not only helps the believer grow, but it also equips him for future service. Sometimes the best way God has of "mending our nets" is to put us through suffering.

In his conclusion (5:12–14), Peter indicates that Silas and Mark are with him. Silas was one of Paul's associates (Acts 15:22ff); but if, as we have surmised, Paul was not in Rome, it would be expected that Peter and Silas would work together. John Mark's presence indicates that the "old disagreement" involving Barnabas, Mark, and Silas was forgiven and forgotten. "Babylon" (v. 13) probably is a code name for Rome; although, some students think that Peter was writing from ancient Babylon.

2 Peter 1

The key word in 2 Peter is “knowledge,” and the danger Peter writes about is false teaching. In 1 Peter, Satan is described as a roaring lion, for Peter’s theme is the fiery persecution that was about to come to the saints. But in 2 Peter, Satan is a serpent seeking to deceive (see John 8:44–45). False teaching from within the church is far more dangerous than persecution from without (see Acts 20:28–32). Persecution has always cleansed and strengthened the church; false teaching weakens the church and ruins its testimony. The only weapon to fight false teaching and the devil’s lies is the Word of God, which is why Peter emphasizes spiritual knowledge.

I. The Gift of Knowledge (1:1–4)

Salvation is a personal experience; one comes to know Jesus Christ through faith. Note Christ’s definition of salvation in John 17:3. It is not enough simply to know about Christ; we must know Him personally (Phil. 3:10). When we put our faith in Him, He gives us His righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21), and He becomes our Savior. It is a personal experience.

Peter emphasizes the Word of God in this letter. God has given us His Word, this “precious faith” and the “precious promises” of God, that we might live godly lives. As he penned these words, Peter must have thought of his testimony in John 6:68—“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life!” (NKJV) In the Bible, we have all that we need for life and godliness. While the writings of teachers and preachers can help us better understand the Bible, only the Bible can impart life to our souls.

Note the definition of a Christian in v. 4—“partaker of the divine nature.” The Christian has been born into God’s family and has God’s nature within. People who try to live “like Christ” on the outside, but lack this divine nature on the inside, are deceived and defeated. Contrast 2 Peter 2:20–22, where we find a description of false Christians: (1) They have escaped the pollutions of the world, not the corruptions; that is, they have been washed on the outside, and have not been changed on the inside. (2) They have a “head knowledge” of Christ and not a heart faith. (3) They are not truly saved, for they go back to the old life after professing faith for awhile. These false Christians are “dogs” and “pigs” that have been washed (reformed), but they have never received the new nature.

II. The Growth in Knowledge (1:5–11)

“And beside this” (v. 5) indicates that there is something beyond the new birth; there is growth. It is not enough to be born into God’s family; we must also grow spiritually. This demands diligence and earnestness; a lazy, careless Christian does not grow. Peter then lists the spiritual characteristics that ought to be seen in the believer’s life. He is not suggesting that we “add” these virtues the way we add beads to a string. Rather, each virtue helps us develop the next one. They are like the sections of a telescope: one leads into the other.

We add to faith (saving faith) virtue, or praise. We have been saved to advertise God's virtues (1 Peter 2:9). The only way to prove our faith is by living a life of virtue. We add to virtue knowledge, or moral discernment. Christians must be able to discern right from wrong. After knowledge comes temperance, or self-control. Self-control leads to patience, or endurance. This is the "staying power" of the Christian in times of trial. We add to patience godliness; see v. 3. This word means "right worship" or a dependence on God that reveals itself in a devoted life. Brotherly kindness is the next virtue, meaning a love for the people of God. The final virtue Peter names is charity, or love, which "wraps" all the virtues together into one.

You can usually tell when Christians are not growing, for they have these three characteristics: (1) They are barren, or idle; that is, they will not work for Christ. (2) They are unfruitful; that is, their meager knowledge of Christ does not produce fruit in their lives. (3) They are blind, lacking spiritual insight, spiritually "near-sighted." Behind this lack of spiritual development is a poor memory, forgetting what God has done for them through Christ. Yet Peter himself had once been forgetful; "And Peter remembered the word of the Lord" (Luke 22:61). So, for the second time, Peter says, "Be diligent!" Be sure you are saved! The Christian does not save himself or keep himself saved; but it is his responsibility to be sure he has the marks of a true believer (1 Thes. 1:4–5). This will assure us a "richly supplied entrance" (v. 11) into God's kingdom; this is far better than being saved "so as by fire" (1 Cor. 3:15).

III. The Ground of Knowledge (1:12–21)

"But how can we be sure that this message is the true Word of God?" Peter answers this question by referring to his experience with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1–13; Luke 9:27–36). Peter knew that he would not be in the body (his tabernacle) very long; see John 21:18. The word "decease" (v. 15) is actually "exodus"; it is the same word used of Christ's death (Luke 9:31). When Christians die, it is not the end; rather, it is a triumphant exodus from this world into the next.

The Gospel message is not a fable that men devised to deceive others. It is based on the historical truth of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Peter refers to the return of Christ in glory, an event that was foreshadowed in the Transfiguration. On the mountain, Christ revealed His glory, as He will when He returns to earth. Moses and Elijah were there, representing believers who died (Moses) and believers who were caught away at the rapture without dying (Elijah). See 1 Thes. 4:13–18. The disciples represent the believing Jews who will see Christ's glory when He returns.

Keep in mind that Peter's ministry had been primarily to Israel (Gal. 2:7–8), while Paul's had been to the Gentiles. The question had been raised, "What about God's promises to the Jews of a glorious kingdom on earth?" The Word of prophecy has not been abandoned; instead, it has been made more sure. Peter is saying, "We have Christ's Transfiguration to assure us that the kingdom will come; but we also have the sure Word of prophecy that has been verified by the Transfiguration." Christians are not to "spiritualize" the OT prophecies and apply them to the church. We must interpret them literally, just as we do the NT Word, because God will fulfill them one day.

Peter compares the prophetic Word to a light shining in a dark (squalid) place. The world, to him, is a dark and murky dungeon. The Word of God is the only dependable

light we have in this world. We must heed this Word and not lean on the ideas of men. One day soon, Christ, the Day Star, will arise and take His people home. To the church, Christ is the Day Star that appears when things are the darkest, just before the dawn. To Israel, Christ is the Sun of Righteousness who comes with judgment and healing (Mal. 4).

Verses 20–21 do not teach that it is wrong for Christians to read and interpret the Bible; the Word was given to us to be read, obeyed, and passed on to others. “Private” (v. 20) means “by itself.” No passage of Scripture is to be interpreted “by itself,” that is, apart from the rest of the Word of God or apart from the Holy Spirit who gave it. Prophecy did not come by the will of men, so it cannot be interpreted by the natural mind. The Spirit gave the Word, and the Spirit must teach us the Word (1 Cor. 2:9–16; John 14:26; 16:13–14).

We thank God that our Bible is sure! We can trust it because God gave it to us.

2 Peter 2

This is a complex chapter, and we should compare it to Jude’s epistle where some of these same phrases are used. The danger of false teachers is so great that the Holy Spirit used both Peter and Jude to warn us, so we had better pay attention.

Please keep in mind that a false teacher is not a person who teaches false doctrine out of ignorance. In Acts 18:24–28, Apollos taught mistakenly the message and the baptism of John, but he was not a false teacher. Many of the great leaders of the church in centuries past have held interpretations of minor matters that we may not believe are biblical; still, we cannot call them false teachers. False teachers are professed believers who know the truth but who deliberately teach lies in the hope of promoting themselves and getting financial gain from their followers (2:3, 14). They are able to live in sin to please themselves (2:10, 13–14, 18–19). They use deceptive means (2:1, 3) and twist the Word of God to suit their fancies.

I. Their Condemnation (2:1–9)

Peter opens this section by declaring that false teachers are bound to appear but will ultimately be condemned by God. Verse 1 summarizes the methods of the false teachers: (1) they appear among the people as members of the church; (2) they work secretly, under cover of hypocrisy, pretending to be what they are not; (3) they bring in their false teachings alongside the true doctrine, and then replace the truth with their lies; (4) their lives deny what their lips teach. In other words, “heresy” is not simply false doctrine; it is false living based on false doctrine. “Wolves in sheep’s clothing” is the way our Lord pictured them (Matt. 7:15; and see 2 Cor. 4:1–2; 11:13). Unfortunately, the false teaching will be more popular than the true way (v. 2); but then, Jesus said that the leaven of false doctrine would permeate the whole lump (Matt. 13:33). People will choose to follow the false teachers because they exalt themselves rather than Christ,

and many people love to worship popular and successful people. Also, the false way makes it easy to live in sin while pretending to practice a religious life.

“Feigned words” in 2:3 means “counterfeit words” or “manufactured, fabricated words.” The Gk. word is *plastos*, from which we get the English word “plastic.” These false teachers depart from the Spirit-given words of the Bible (1 Cor. 2:9–16) and manufacture their own words to fit their own doctrines. They take familiar Bible words and manufacture new meanings for them. They use our vocabulary but empty these words of spiritual meaning. It is not what a teacher says, but what he or she means, that counts.

These false teachers will be destroyed, and Peter cites three OT examples to prove it: the angels that sinned and are now imprisoned in Tartarus (which is the meaning of the word translated “hell”); the world before the flood; and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. In each of these cases, the persons involved had a form of religion but not the true faith that empowers the life (2 Tim. 3:5). Before Christ comes back, there will be a great deal of “religion” in the world, but it will not be true faith in Him. Peter also points out that God is able to preserve and deliver His true saints, as He did with Noah and his family, and Lot. Noah is a symbol of the believing Jews who will be preserved through the Tribulation; Lot stands for the church saints who will be “caught away” before the destruction begins. These false teachers may seem to be successful and protected, but one of these days God will destroy them.

II. Their Character (2:10–16)

A. Pride (vv. 10–11).

They despise any kind of dominion or authority. God has established the “dominions” in this world—human government, headship in the home, leadership in the church, and so on. But false teachers want to run things their own way and reject God’s order. Even the angels do not despise God-given authorities; see Jude 8–9.

B. Ignorance (v. 12).

The false teachers are willfully blind to what the Bible teaches (see 2 Peter 3:5). They call evangelical Christians “uneducated” and biblical theology “old-fashioned”!

C. Lust (vv. 13–14).

Wrong doctrine and wrong living go together. False teachers live in luxury and “beguile” (catch with bait) unstable people who are enticed into their teachings. It is tragic the way the name of Christ has been disgraced (v. 2) by “religious leaders” who live in sin while attempting to help others find the Lord.

D. Covetousness (vv. 15–16).

Verse 3 points out that false teachers use counterfeit words to exploit the people; and v. 18 says they use “great swelling words.” Unfortunately, there are many unstable people who delight in following these religious “windbags,” not realizing that these teachers are picking their pockets while they poison their lives. Peter cites Balaam as an example (Num. 22–25). He was a prophet who used his gifts to make money and lead Israel into sin.

III. Their Claims (2:17–22)

They promise their followers satisfaction but do not quench their spiritual thirst. How useless are wells without water! These teachers, with their great swelling words (religious propaganda), give the appearance of being truthful and helpful, but they turn out to be clouds driven by the wind—beautiful, but of no help to thirsty people. Millions today are following false religions that promise help but can give none.

False teachers promise liberty but lead people into bondage. Peter uses a bit of sarcasm here; how can people who are slaves of sin themselves ever set anybody else free! In v. 12, he called these teachers “brute beasts”; and now he clearly names them as pigs and dogs! Please keep in mind that Peter in vv. 20–21 is not talking about somebody “losing salvation,” for that would contradict what he wrote in 1 Peter 1:3–5. In 1 Peter 2:25, Peter compares Christians to sheep, not to dogs or pigs. The Christian has received the new nature (2 Peter 1:4) and has been set free from the corruption of the world. You do not have to worry about a sheep eating vomit or wallowing in filth, because a sheep is a clean animal.

Peter is describing false Christians, people who merely wash off the pollutants on the outside (this is “religious” reformation), but never receive the new nature on the inside. You can wash a dog or a pig, but the animal does not change its basic nature. These people knew the way of righteousness and had a knowledge of Christ’s work, but they did not personally receive Him into their hearts. Their outward pollution was washed away, but the inward corruption was still there. These “professors but not possessors” seemed to experience salvation, but in due time they drifted back to the life that suited their nature. Dogs go back to the vomit; pigs go back to the mire. See Prov. 26:11.

We live in a day of false teachers. We may detect them by their exaltation of themselves instead of Christ; their counterfeit talk and “great swelling words”; their emphasis on making money; their great claims that they can change people; and their hidden lives of lust and sin. For the time being we cannot stop them except by teaching the Word sincerely, but one day God will expose them and judge them.

2 Peter 3

This chapter reveals Peter as the loving pastor, caring for his lambs and sheep. He uses the word “beloved” four times and each time gives a solemn admonition.

I. Beloved ... Be Mindful! (3:1–7)

“Remembrance” has been a key theme in this letter (see 1:12–15). Peter himself had been guilty of forgetting (Luke 22:61), so his admonition was meaningful. He wanted them to have “sincere” minds; that is, minds not confused by the false doctrines named in chapter 2. He points them back to the OT prophets and the NT apostles—the entire Word of God. See 1:19–21.

The doctrine Peter is defending is the return of Christ to the earth to set up His kingdom, and then, after 1,000 years, to usher in the new heavens and earth. Peter is not referring to the rapture of the church, that is, the secret return of Christ in the air (1 Thes. 4:13–18). Of course, the world scoffs at the idea of the return of Christ (Jude 18) and cannot see that all of history is moving in that direction. “All things continue as they were” is the argument we hear from the world’s thinkers. “God is not going to break into history and interrupt the progress of time!”

But Peter cites OT examples to prove that God does break into history. He begins with the created world in Gen. 1 (v. 5), made by the Word of God. He then introduces the Flood (Gen. 6) and the world that was judged by God (v. 6). Verse 7 indicates that the world now “is stored with fire” and already prepared for judgment. This may suggest the release of atomic power. If we relate v. 6 to the Flood, we have the same argument: God does judge sin at a time when men are confident that nothing is going to happen.

II. Beloved ... Be Not Ignorant! (3:8–11)

People view history in terms of days and years, but to God, time is always present tense. A thousand years are but a day to Him (Ps. 90:4). But God will not be tardy (slack); when the right time arrives, He will act and fulfill His Word. Why is He delaying His judgment, the awful Day of the Lord? Because He wants sinners to come to Christ and be saved from the coming wrath.

“The Day of the Lord” is that period of judgment also known as the Great Tribulation. It will come upon the whole earth after the church has been raptured to heaven (Rev. 3:10; 1 Thes. 5:8–9). A thief comes suddenly, when he is least expected (Matt. 24:43; Luke 12:39; 1 Thes. 5:2; Rev. 3:3; 16:15). When the world says “peace and safety,” then judgment will fall (1 Thes. 5:3). God’s people will not be caught unprepared when Christ comes to take them to heaven, but the world will be surprised by the judgments that follow.

III. Beloved ... Be Diligent! (3:11–14)

This is the third time Peter has mentioned diligence (1:5, 10). In these last days, believers must be on guard. In view of what God has planned for this world, how should Christians live?

We are not looking for peace or hope in this world. We are looking for the new heavens and the new earth that God creates and over which Jesus Christ will reign (Rev. 21:1ff). This blessed assurance helps us to keep clean and to be faithful to do our work until Jesus comes.

IV. Beloved ... Beware! (3:15–18)

Peter explains the seeming delay in God’s program and refers us to Paul’s letters for the details. Note that Peter calls Paul’s letters “Scripture.” Why has Jesus not returned to establish His kingdom? Because He is today building His church, a thing not mentioned in the OT Scripture prophecies. This delay means salvation for believing Jews and

Gentiles. Those who do not understand God's program twist the Scriptures and mix OT prophecy with church truth, ending up with confusion.

How do we keep from falling? By growing and building ourselves up in the Lord (Jude 24–25). “Baby Christians” who will not feed on the Word (1 Peter 2:2) and grow in the Lord are unstable. In this wicked world, Christians must take time to feed on the Word, pray, and exercise their spiritual muscles.

The theme of 1 Peter was grace; the theme of 2 Peter was knowledge; Peter sums up both books by admonishing us to grow in grace and in knowledge. This knowledge is not merely that of the Bible; it is knowledge of Christ through the Bible. We must come to know Him better (Phil. 3:10). It is possible, unfortunately, to grow in knowledge (have Bible truth in our heads) and never grow in grace (show Bible truth in our lives). Peter wants us to have balanced lives: we should learn *and* live the Word.