

# Through the Bible - 1 Peter & 2 Peter

by Zac Poonen

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*The true grace of God is multifaceted and refers to God's sovereign choice of us according to His foreknowledge, which leads to our purification and growth in faith.*

**Duration:** 55:39

**Topics:** "Through The Bible"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. He highlights that the Holy Spirit sanctifies and empowers believers to obey Jesus Christ. The preacher also discusses the great inheritance reserved for believers in heaven, which should inspire them during their earthly battles. He encourages believers to be diligent in their Christian walk, adding virtues to their faith and increasing in knowledge of God. The preacher concludes by urging believers to live for the will of God, being hospitable and generous towards others.

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## Transcript

Let's turn this evening to the first letter of Peter. Peter writes to all those who live as foreigners in this world, and that's our calling. And the theme of this letter, he himself tells us what it is.

At the end of this letter in chapter 5 and verse 12, he says, through Silvanus, our faithful brothers, for so I regard him, I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it. So he is writing about the true grace of God.

We saw in James, in the previous book, that he spoke about the true faith, because there was a counterfeit faith, which did not produce works. And Peter speaks about the true grace, because there was a counterfeit grace in his time that was leading people astray. And so if we keep that in mind, that what Peter had in mind was to explain to God's people what the true grace of God was, we will see the many different facets and sides of that grace of God.

The grace of God is multifaceted, many different shades, many different aspects. It begins with chapter 1, verse 1 and 2, God choosing us according to his foreknowledge. That's one clear verse that tells us that God chose us not arbitrarily.

He didn't pick names out of a box or out of a tin or something like that. He chose us because he knows the end from the beginning. He knew the end.

He looks right into the future. He knows those who would respond to the message of the gospel and he chooses them. Chosen according to the foreknowledge of God.

It's important for us to remember that. It's very difficult for us as human beings to understand this, that God knows everything, but he does not influence anything. And the best way to describe it would be like, if you were to see a movie on a screen, you're watching it, but you're not influencing anybody in that movie.

Somebody may do something bad, you didn't make him do anything bad. Somebody may do something good, you didn't make him do anything good. You watch it.

But we can only watch a movie of something that has already happened. But God can watch a movie of the future and picture God seeing the future in a movie. He doesn't influence anything.

People do good and bad a thousand years from now, six thousand years from Adam. He sees what people are doing and he chooses according to his foreknowledge. He doesn't influence anything, just like you don't influence the actors on a movie screen.

So God watches, but he doesn't influence, but he chooses according to his foreknowledge. And the whole Trinity is there in verse two. The Holy Spirit thanked God the Father chose us, the Holy Spirit sanctifies us, and the whole purpose of it all is that we may obey the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

He goes on to speak about the great inheritance that we have reserved for us in heaven, verse four. And that's the thing that should inspire us during our battle on earth. And so he speaks about this trial, he speaks about various trials that we can go through during the short period that we are on this earth.

He says, for a short while, for a little while, this is a great phrase of the apostles. It's only for a little while, this whole lifetime on earth. They had this viewpoint of eternity.

And when you look at things from an eternal standpoint, everything looks very small. It's a short period of time. It's when we lose that concept of eternity and stop looking at things on earth from the eternal standpoint, everything looks as though it's for a very, very long period.

But the apostles always spoke about a very short period, a little while. James says your life is like a vapor. So for a little while, verse six, you have been distressed by various trials.

So remember, the subject is the true grace of God. And one who comes under the true grace of God will be distressed by various types of trials. That's perfectly normal.

And the purpose of these trials is to prove your faith. So that like James also says the same thing in trials, your faith is proven. And Peter uses another illustration here.

He says it's like gold being tested in the fire. You know, when people dig gold out of the depths of the earth, it's not pure. It's quite impure.

And the only way you can purify gold is by putting it in the fire. You can't purify gold by scrubbing it with soap and water. They do that in the beginning to remove all the dirt.

But there's a lot of other dirt in there which is melted. And together with the gold, you can't remove it except by putting it in the fire. And when you put it in the fire, the gold doesn't melt.

It's all the other things melt and go away and the gold comes out pure. And Peter uses this illustration to say that the trials you go through can be fiery. It hurts.

Fire hurts. And you feel as if you're in the fire. But the only purpose is to get rid of the things in your life that are impure.

For example, when persecution came and people's property was taken away or that things were stolen and they were left with very few things, what was the result of it? They became better pilgrims. They became less attached to their property now because they had no property. When there is no persecution, like in our situation today, without knowing it, even the best of believers can be very attached to property, cars, clothing, houses, so many things.

And we think we are all detached, but we are quite attached. And God may allow a time to come when we are put in the fire and these things go away from us. When communism was ruling in Russia, I've heard Christians could not find proper jobs.

They were not allowed college education. Today we think of college education as a very good thing. It's a right for us.

But God may allow persecution where there are no seminaries, there are no Bible colleges, there's no even a secular college a Christian can't go through. And the only job they could get in those situations was like a sweeper on the streets. Then you really become detached from all these honorable titles and positions and degrees because you don't have any.

And also these big jobs which give us a certain sense of importance, it all disappears. You see the scum disappears from the gold and you become really pure. And that's why in places where there's been persecution, you've got some of the finest Christians in the world.

And that's why personally I never prayed that there should never be persecution in India. I don't think it's a good prayer to pray. I personally never prayed it, to tell you honestly, because I would be praying against the purification of the church.

I say, Lord, as long as you feel that things should be peaceful and comfortable, that's up to you. But maybe a time should come when you should put the church into the fire and get rid of all the scum and get rid of all the worldliness and the love of worldly things and worldly honor. And when it comes, praise the Lord.

You're going to. That's the true grace of God. That's not something to be afraid of.

No. And so when that happens, he says, finally, it will result in praise and glory of the revelation of Jesus Christ. And in the midst of this trial, even though you don't see Jesus, though you have not seen him, you love him.

And though you do not see him now, you believe in him and you have tremendous joy. Peter saw Jesus personally, but Jesus said, blessed are those who have not seen and yet believed. I don't know how many of you believe that verse.

Jesus told that to Thomas. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. Do you believe that you are more blessed than Peter because you never saw Jesus? Peter saw him, but it says we are

more blessed if we haven't seen and still believed.

That's what it says here in verse eight. You haven't seen him. You don't see him now, but you rejoice with inexpressible joy.

And as a result of this, you obtain as the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. The apostle Peter and all the other apostles spoke more than just salvation from hell. They spoke about the salvation of our soul.

My soul and your soul has got a corruption from Adam. It's got the shape of Adam. Selfish, proud, defiled.

And I need to be saved from that. I need to be saved from everything I've inherited from Adam. And one way in which I'm saved, for example, my attachment to material things has come from Adam.

My love for honor, position and comfort has all come from Adam. I need to be saved from that. And fiery trials and persecution have a tremendous value in being able to deliver me from such things.

We become more detached. I've often thought, for example, you know, some people think it's a great misfortune when a family has got a retarded child. I think in a family that has one retarded child, you know, a mongoloid or something that cannot go to school and has got no mentally retarded, physically retarded.

I think in that family, they'll come a great tenderness in the people, a great sense of sacrifice and service, which is not found in families which have all got smart children. You know, unconsciously, a certain pride comes into the hearts of parents where all the children are very smart and capable. And pride is not doesn't belong to heaven.

Pride belongs to hell. But that can be found even in the even in the families of believers. God allows certain trials.

He knows in his great wisdom where to send it and when to send it. But I believe that when we stand before the Lord, we'll discover he never made a single mistake. Every single thing he allowed in your life was to purify the gold.

And when you look at it like that, you praise the Lord. You have inexpressible joy in the midst of trial. And that results in the salvation of your soul.

This is a salvation that the prophets in the past sought to understand, but they couldn't understand. People in the Old Testament couldn't understand. But now this gospel, even the angels, it says long, verse 12, last part to look into this and they can't experience it.

But now the Holy Spirit sent from heaven has anointed people who have preached this gospel. So in view of the fact that we've got such a wonderful gospel and the fact that we are going through this only for a short period, he says, don't get taken up with this, the trials and difficulties and the poverty and the struggle and the pain and different different things, but good up your minds for action and look forward to the coming of Jesus Christ, verse 13. And he goes on to speak about our calling.

You see, this is the whole purpose of purification of the gold, because the Lord has said that we are to be like him. Verse 15. The one who called us is holy and we are to be holy.

You know, like the little kittens that a mother cat has. They are to be clean like the mother cat. The little piglets are to be filthy like the mother pig.

And the little cats are to be clean like the mother cat. In the same way, once upon a time, our father was the devil. That's true.

Children of the devil means father was the devil. And so we were like our father. We told lies.

We fought. We accused. We gossiped.

We were interested in filthy, sinful things like unclean spirits are. And then one day God became our father. It's like the difference between the piglet and the kitten.

And now he says, God is your father. Then like the holy one who called you, be holy in everything because he says you shall be holy because I am holy. And if you call this person as your father, verse 17, who is totally impartial in judging everybody's work, then you must conduct yourself in fear throughout your earthly lifetime.

And recognize, he says, that you were purchased not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, which is more valuable than silver and gold. And as we obey the truth that God reveals to us day by day, it says in verse 22, our souls are purified. God reveals his truth to us from his word.

And as we obey it, our souls are purified in the midst of the fires. As we obey God's word, the muck goes away from our souls and gradually we become Christlike. If you see a man of God, if you see a man, a believer who's never been through trial, you'll find there's a hardness in him.

I feel sorry for such people. I've seen such believers. They had never been through sorrow in their life.

They've never been through pain. They've never been through difficulty. Their children are all smart and clever.

They've never had financial difficulty. They live comfortably in their homes and they travel about in comfort. They believe the gospel.

Maybe they are even in so-called separated churches. But there is no gentleness about them because they have never been through sorrow. But you see another brother or sister who's been through deep sorrow and trials, there is not an arrogance about them.

They believe the same doctrines, but there's a difference. Something in the gold has been purified. You know, if you give impure gold and pure gold, for people like us, it may look the same.

But to a goldsmith, he can immediately make out, this is impure, this is pure. And that's how it is. When God has taken you through trials and you obey the truth, your soul is purified and you have no problem loving other people.

A person who's been through trials finds it very easy to love his fellow believers. He doesn't find it difficult. The people who find it difficult to love their fellow believers are the people who've never been through trials, never been through any sorrows.

Whenever somebody has a trial, they judge him like Job's friends judge Job. But if you are one of those who's been through deep trials in your life, I believe you're a blessed person. So that's what it says here.

This is the true grace of God. And in chapter two, Peter speaks about the necessity of, you know, growing spiritually. It's not only through trials that we grow.

He said we must have a longing for the milk of the word of God, just like a newborn baby. You know, when a baby is born, the first thing it does, and that's what the doctors look for, is it must cry. If it doesn't cry, something is wrong.

All newborn babies cry. And pretty soon they cry for milk. Nobody teaches that baby that it needs milk.

It's automatic. And to me, that's one of the tests of being born again. If you were really born again, like it says in chapter one, verse 23, born again, not with perishable, but with imperishable seed.

See, we were born with a perishable seed from our fathers. But when we are born again, it's with an imperishable seed. And if we are really born again, we are like babes.

We will cry for the milk of the word. And one of the tests of whether we are born again is, do we cry for milk? If a baby doesn't cry for milk, it's probably dead. Normal babies everywhere, even little kittens, cry for milk.

Little piglets cry for milk. Little human babies cry for milk. It's normal.

But when people say they are born again, and they don't have a cry for the milk of the word, I question what type of born again that is. See, I grew up in a church which didn't place much emphasis on God's word. But when I was born again, I found such a cry in my heart for God's word.

Nobody had to tell me. And I believe that's the experience of anyone who's really born again. Like newborn babes, long were chapter two, for the pure milk of the word, because that's how you'll grow in respect to the salvation of your soul.

And as we grow, the Lord brings us along in fellowship with other people, and we are built together with them. It says in chapter two, verse five, into a spiritual house. This is another thing we see all through the episodes.

The true grace of God will not allow you to live an individual Christian life. You are compelled to be built along with others, like stones put together next to each other. The true grace of God brings people into fellowship, to be built together as God's house.

And he goes on to say, as you're not only a house, you're also, verse nine, a chosen race, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession. And the purpose is that in this evil world, verse nine, you may show forth the excellencies of God, who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. And then he goes on to say, in a number of verses following that, how we are to show forth this light.

He says in verse 12, keep your behavior excellent among the heathen. And then there's a long passage on submission. A man who has experienced the true grace of God will always submit to authority.

I believe a man who has experienced God's grace will look for authority wherever he goes. He will have no problem with submission. The great controversy that began way back before Adam was created was the

controversy of rebellion.

Satan rebelled against God's authority. Jesus overcame Satan by doing the opposite. He came down and submitted.

He humbled himself. He submitted, first of all, to Joseph and Mary, and he submitted to his father in every area. And even to the human authorities the father had placed over him, which was Joseph and Mary, for 30 years.

And one who has experienced the true grace of God, he would have experienced a salvation in his soul from the spirit of rebellion. And he has no problem submitting. If you have a problem submitting to authority, you need to be saved in your soul.

So he says in verse 13, first of all, submit to human authorities, to the king, to governors. That's the calling of a Christian. And remember, at this particular time, the king in Rome was Nero, one of the wickedest kings that Rome ever had.

Peter says, submit. God has appointed a wicked king. Okay, submit to him.

That will be for your sanctification. And then he says, don't use your freedom to do evil. Honor all men, verse 17.

In the old testament, the law was, honor older people. When an older man comes, you must stand up. That's the way you show respect for older people.

But in the new testament, it says, don't just honor older people, honor all people. Just like in the old testament, you had to give one tenth. In the new testament, you give everything.

In the old testament, you kept one day faith for God. In the new testament, you give seven days for God. In the old testament, you honored older people.

In the new testament, you honor everybody. And a man who has experienced the grace of God has no problem honoring other people. That's a mark of his submission.

God has made him a servant. And he is very happy to honor everybody, honor all men, unbelievers, everybody. Love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

And then he speaks specifically to servants. And he says, servants, you got to be submissive too. This whole theme is submission now.

Submit to human authorities. Submit to your masters. You notice how all the apostles speak about this business of submitting to your masters.

A Christian who's got a spirit of rebellion or against authority in an office or a factory is a very poor witness for Christ. A Christian who's got a spirit of rebellion against his teachers in a school is a very poor witness for Christ. He has not understood the true grace of God.

He has not understood God's ways. He hasn't understood that Jesus came and submitted. He never rebelled against anyone.

Now this is a lesson I believe that we all need to learn. Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect. If you work in an office, you work in a factory, you work in any place, a school or a hospital or anything, you must show respect to those who are above you in that place.

If you're in a school, we must teach our children to respect their teachers, not to gang up with the other children to make fun of the teachers. To show respect not only to those masters and teachers who are good and gentle, but also to those masters who are unreasonable. It's easy to submit to a good master, but a Christian, verse 18, who has experienced the true grace of God, will submit to unreasonable masters.

To submit to a good master proves nothing about your character. But when you can submit to an unreasonable master, there you can show that you are a Christian. That's where the light shines.

You know, if a light is burning outside in the daytime, you don't even know whether that bulb is on or not. But at night, you really see it burning. And so a Christian's light is seen most in the midst of darkness, where you have unreasonable masters, and this man believes, God has allowed me to be here, so I submit to him, no problem.

And he says, if you suffer as a result of that, because you did what was right, God will bless you for it. There's no value in submitting patiently just because you did something wrong, and you're punished for it, verse 20. But when you do what is right, and then you suffer, this is one of the great themes of Peter, suffering when you have done what is right, and you endure.

And he said, this is exactly how it was with Jesus. He suffered unjustly, verse 21, and he has left us an example to follow in his steps. He never sinned, he never did any deceit, there was no deceit in his mouth, he never reviled.

When he was threatened, he did not utter threats back and saying, wait till one day God smites you. No, he just kept entrusting his case to God and the Father who judges righteously. This is what a man who has understood the true grace of God does, when he suffers unrighteously, he doesn't threaten, saying God will judge you for the way you're treating me.

No, Jesus didn't do that. He kept entrusting his soul and says, Father, you know the truth. All these false witnesses telling all types of things against me, I'm not going to respond to them, you know the truth.

And the Father vindicated Jesus. Now here it says that Jesus has left us an example to follow in his steps. Now that's a very common expression that's found in many Christians, to follow in Jesus' steps.

But the context here, if you read it, is talking about when you are suffering unjustly, that is the time to follow in Jesus' steps. When you're suffering and you don't deserve that suffering, you're misunderstood, you're punished for something you never did, and you suffer patiently. You're following in Jesus' steps, who was punished for something he never did, and he never threatened people.

I wonder how many Christians have really experienced the true grace of God. The true grace of God is not just forgiveness of sins, it's all this. And the main theme of Peter, right through, is suffering unjustly.

Servants, in chapter 3 verse 1, wives. What about wives who suffer unjustly? He started with servants. He pointed out the example of Christ who suffered unjustly.

And then he says, wives, chapter 3 verse 1, do you have a husband who is unreasonable? Do you have a husband who does not obey God's word? Submit to that husband. Just like Jesus. Because it says, in the same way.

What does it mean when it says in chapter 3 verse 1, in the same way? That means, in the previous verses, chapter 2 verse 21, in the same way as Jesus submitted. Wives who've got unreasonable husbands have got a tremendous opportunity to follow Jesus, to follow in his steps. In the same way as Jesus submitted to injustice, you submit to that husband.

And when Jesus suffered unjustly on the cross, what was the result? There was a Roman centurion there, who said, I've never seen anything like this. I've crucified so many people, but I've never seen a man like this. This must be the son of God.

He got converted. There was a thief hanging there next to him. He said, I've never seen anything like this.

This must be the son of God. Lord, remember me. He got converted.

And when your husband sees you like that, he'll get converted. That's what it says. You'll be able to win him without preaching one word to him.

Many wives try to convert their husbands by preaching and preaching and preaching. And the more they preach, the more the husbands run away from the Lord. No, it's not like that.

It's by submission that we're going to win our husbands. Wives, as they observe your pure behavior. And it says to the wives, you want to adorn yourself.

You want to really make yourself beautiful. Don't you think women should be beautiful? I believe that. I believe with all my heart, Christian women should be beautiful.

But what type of beauty? Not the beauty of, verse 3, hairstyles and gold jewelry and fancy dresses. No, but the beauty, verse 4, of a gentle, quiet spirit. And that beauty, it says, will never fade away, never perish.

Here is this godly sister, 25 years old, gentle, quiet spirit. 50 years later, 75 years old, much more beautiful than when she was 25. A gentle, quiet spirit.

It says that is the beauty, the hidden beauty which God looks for. And it says it is very precious in the sight of God. Men may not admire that.

That's because men are foolish. But God is not foolish. And if you're a wise man, you know, when young men come to me and say, what type of sister should I marry? I said, do you want to marry a sister who's precious in God's eyes? They say, yeah, I want to marry a sister who's precious in God's eyes.

Then I point them to this verse. I say, that sister must have the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit. Don't marry a sister who's always talking, talking, talking, talking, talking, talking, all the time.

You won't get a chance to open your mouth in your home. No, but a gentle quiet spirit. I'm not saying they shouldn't talk.

What I'm saying is, There's a way of conversation. Okay. And he says, this is how the old godly sisters were, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him Lord.

What is the subject? The true grace of God. How do you know whether a sister has received the true grace of God? She has got a gentle, quiet spirit. Wonderful.

I believe in our churches we need more sisters like that. And husbands. Hang on.

Now it's for you. It's not only for sisters. How do you know whether a husband has experienced the true grace of God? He will know how to live in an understanding way with his wife.

He will respect his wife as a weaker vessel. He will never put burdens on his wife, which he should carry himself. For example, if you and your wife are traveling and there's a big suitcase and a small suitcase, which one will you give your wife? That depends on whether you have experienced the true grace of God or not.

You will, if you recognize her as a weaker vessel, you give her the small thing. Okay. When it comes to suitcases, we know.

What about other burdens in the home? There are a lot of burdens women carry in a home, which are much heavier than suitcases. And husbands don't even lift a finger to help them. They sit in the morning, having their quiet time with their Bible.

And the wife is struggling, trying to make breakfast and the children are screaming and they've got to get them ready to school. And the Maharaja is sitting reading the Bible. He's a holy man.

He's a holy man. And he's saying, Oh God, speak to me. And God says, close your Bible and go and help your wife.

Do you hear God speaking? Or are you studying sanctification and justification here? A wife is a weaker vessel. Don't just carry the heavy suitcase when you travel. There are burdens in the home.

That is a husband who has recognized the true grace of God. Yeah, that's right. And then it says here, if you do, if you live like that, both of you will be kings and queens together, joint heirs of the grace of life.

Think if you have a Christian home like that, what a fantastic testimony in the world. And then he says, to sum up verse nine, let everything be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kind hearted, never return evil for evil, verse nine, never return insult for insult. Keep your lips, verse 10, from speaking guile.

The true grace of God means a control over our tongue. James said that, Peter says that in verse 10. Verse 13 is a wonderful verse.

If you live like this, zealous for what is good, who can harm you? This is like Romans 8, 28, 1 Peter 3, 13. It's another wonderful verse like Romans 8, 28. You must remember who can harm you if you are zealous to do what is good.

Nobody can harm you. You can have a testimony all through my life. Nobody can harm me.

Okay. And it says in verse 15, if anyone asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you, reply to them with gentleness. Now even brothers need this gentleness and respect.

Don't ever speak rudely to somebody who asks, why do you believe in Jesus? Even if they ask rudely, you reply with gentleness and respect. Gentleness in men and women, Jesus said, learn from me, I am gentle and humble in heart, is the mark of people who have understood the true grace of God. When a person is harsh, we are all harsh when we begin.

We haven't understood the true grace of God. And he goes on to speak about suffering in verse 17. It's better if that is God's will that you suffer for doing what is right rather than doing what is wrong.

Okay. Then we go to chapter four and he says, Jesus also suffered during the days of his flesh. When he was here in the flesh, he suffered.

He never asks us to go through a suffering he did not go through himself. He humbled himself under Mary. Can you imagine sometimes when Jesus was busy doing something or playing as a little boy and Mary said, Jesus, come here, go and get some water from the well.

He would have done it. He would have denied himself. He learned submission.

He learned obedience through suffering. Jesus suffered in the days of his flesh. He denied his own will.

Now you, if you're a disciple of Jesus, you must arm yourself with the same mind. That means you determine, Lord, I don't care what it costs. I'm not going to sin.

I'm going to suffer rather than sin. And if you have that attitude, it says in verse one, you will cease from sinning. Many people wonder how can I stop sinning? Here's the answer.

You decide with all of your heart, arm your mind with this attitude. I am determined to suffer like Jesus, my savior suffered, and I'm not going to live the rest of my life anymore for the lusts of men, verse two, but for the will of God. This is the true grace of God.

He says you have lived enough for the world. Now you live for the will of God. The time is short, verse seven, the end of all things is at hand.

So be of sound judgment. And then he gives us some practical illustration, I mean, advice. Be hospitable to one another.

One who has experienced the grace of God will be large hearted. His home is open to God's people. His hands are open to help the needy.

He is hospitable. Stingy people, miserly people who are always calculating, don't know the grace of God. Be hospitable.

I've seen in India, it's the poor people who are really hospitable. The richer you get in the scale, the stingier they become. Be hospitable.

And in the church, if you received a gift, exercise that gift in humility. That's part of the grace of God. If you speak, speak as the mouthpiece of God, verse 11.

If you serve, serve with the strength God supplies and so on. Again, he speaks about suffering in verse 12. Don't be surprised when you go through a fiery ordeal because it's come for your testing.

As though some strange thing has happened. You shouldn't be surprised when suffering comes to you in this world. Because we are like fish out of water.

When you experience the true grace of God, you're not surprised when suffering comes. If you're reviled, verse 14, for the name of Christ, you're blessed. If people make fun of you, but don't suffer as a murderer, verse 15, or a thief or a busy body in other people's matters.

A lot of Christians, they don't suffer as murderers or thieves or evildoers. But the fourth category mentioned there in verse 15, they suffer as busy bodies in other people's matters. That's a bad testimony.

And it says instead of judging other people, verse 17, let us judge ourselves first. You see, in the world, they put themselves first in everything except judging. In judging, they put others first.

A Christian puts others first in everything except judging, where he judges himself first. He's the opposite of the world. And you know that if you experience the true grace of God, when you don't judge others, but you judge ourselves first.

It says in verse 17, the household of God, we judge ourselves first and leave the other people's judgment to God. Again, he speaks about suffering in verse 19. And then he speaks to the elders.

The church of God, which experiences God's grace, needs shepherds. And here's a challenge to those who are elders in verse 1. If elders have experienced the grace of God, verse 2, they will look after their flock voluntarily, cheerfully, without seeking for money. Verse 2, but gladly, if they get money for their needs, praise the Lord, if they don't get it, it doesn't matter.

They will still look after their sheep. An elder who's looking for money has not experienced the true grace of God. And such an elder will not boss over people, verse 3, but he will be an example.

And one day when the chief shepherd comes, he will receive a crown of glory from him. Younger people, young people, you can experience the true grace of God. And when you experience it, you will submit yourself to your elders, verse 5. Because God is opposed to the proud, but he gives grace to the humble.

Therefore, humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. What is the mighty hand of God? The mighty hand of God, verse 6, 5, 6, is all the circumstances that God sends into your life. That difficult boss, that troublesome neighbor, the difficult circumstances, the financial difficulties, the sickness, the trial.

All these things God allows in our life is the mighty hand of God. What should you do when you come to face these circumstances? Humble yourself. God knows how to lift that mighty hand and exalt you.

That same mighty hand will exalt you one day. Like Job, one day the mighty hand that crushed him, exalted him. Jesus submitted to the mighty hand of God, it pleased the Lord to crush him.

One day God raised him up, he'll do the same for you. And when you humble yourself like this, you can resist the devil, verse 8 and 9. Firm in your faith, he comes like a roaring lion, but he can't touch you if you have humbled yourself under God's hand. Otherwise, he can have power over you.

And finally, verse 10, after you have suffered, again that expression, for a little while. For a little while means 70 years. After you have suffered for 70 years, what will happen? God will call you, the God who called you to his eternal glory will perfect you, confirm you, strengthen you, establish you.

If you are interested in that, listen to this message. Peter says in verse 12, this is the true grace of God. We move on to chapter 2, which is a very, sorry, 2nd Peter, which is a brief episode.

And the theme of this episode is some of the promises and dangers for Christians. Particularly, partaking of God's nature. That's what Peter's great thought is in the 1st chapter, partaking of God's own nature.

The Christian life is not a bunch of rules and regulations. Peter says, God has given us, verse 4, fantastic promises in the new covenant. Much better than the old covenant.

What have you got in the old covenant? Healing, plenty of children, plenty of money, plenty of sheep, cattle, oxen. I say, I don't want plenty of sheep and oxen and cattle and plenty of physical children and plenty of money. Here is something far better.

In 2nd Peter 1.4, I can partake of his nature. Praise God. That's the greatest promise God can ever give to anybody, 2nd Peter 1.4. To partake of God's own nature.

There's absolutely nothing superior to that. And here's another promise in verse 3. God has given us everything necessary for life and godliness. There are many things in the world I don't know the answer to.

But everything necessary for a godly life, God has revealed in the scriptures and He's given me the power and you through the Holy Spirit. Everything necessary for life and godliness. And so, since God has given us these promises, what should we do? First of all, we must be diligent, verse 5. We must be hardworking.

We must keep on adding virtues in our Christian life. To faith, when we have faith, morally, our life will become more excellent. As you walk like that in faith and your moral excellence increases, you'll come to increase in your knowledge of God, verse 5. And as you increase in your knowledge of God, you'll have more and more self-control in your life.

Over your tongue and other aspects of your life. And as you have more and more self-control, you'll find yourself becoming more and more patient. And the more and more patient you become, the more and more godly you'll become.

And the more and more godly you become, the more and more you'll be able to love your fellow believers. And the more and more you love your fellow believers, finally, you'll be able to love all people. That's the progression in verse 5 to 7. And he says, if these qualities are yours and they keep on increasing as you're progressing, you'll never be unfruitful.

Your life will be fantastically fruitful for the Lord. But if you lack these qualities, verse 9, you're short-sighted. And another mark of a short-sighted believer, verse 9, is that he forgets what type of sinner he was.

Remember what it says in verse 9, don't ever forget what a filthy sinner you were, what a pit Jesus dug you up from, pulled you out from. Then you won't despise other people. All this pride and despising others comes because we forgot what type of pit God pulled us out from.

So brethren, be diligent to make certain about His calling you. If you continue this way, you will get in verse 11, an abundant entrance into God's kingdom. I don't want an ordinary entrance, sort of creeping in and say, Lord, if you can somehow give me a last seat in heaven, I'll be happy.

Some people look for a last seat in heaven. I'm not looking for a last seat in heaven. I want to please God with all my heart in this earthly life because Jesus suffered so much for me.

And he says, if you go this way, you will have an abundant entrance. And Peter says, you know, I'm going to go to be with the Lord pretty soon. The Lord has shown me that.

But as long as he says that in verse 14, but as long as I'm alive, verse 13 and verse 12, I'm going to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, even though I wrote them to you before. You see, these apostles were like the prophets. They kept on preaching the same thing, and they were not afraid to preach the same thing again and again.

They said, we're not ashamed to tell you the same thing. You need to hear it again. And I'm going to tell you again about partaking of divine nature.

I'm going to tell you again about the true grace of God. I'm going to tell you again that God has provided everything necessary for godliness. And I'll remind you as long as I'm alive, and I'm going to write letters to you so that after I die, verse 15, you'll still remember what I said, what a burden he had.

He says, because and he says how he saw Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, verse 17. And he says, we are not telling you stories. And he refers to the Old Testament as a word, which is like a light shining in a dark place.

And then he warns us. There are these prophecies that true prophets have spoken, verse 19, 20 and 21, inspired by God. They wrote scripture.

And they didn't just write whatever came to their heads. They wrote as God inspired them. Take those scriptures seriously.

You know, in those days when Peter wrote this, the New Testament was not freely available. But even in days like this, when New Testament is available, we need that exhortation. Because he says false prophets arose among the people in those days.

And there will be false teachers among you. And he speaks a whole lot about false teachers in the whole of chapter two. I just want to mention two things which are the marks of false teachers.

How do you know whether a person is a false teacher? Is it by checking up his doctrine primarily? Maybe his doctrine may be wrong. But there are a lot of people whose doctrines are right, who are false teachers, and they are the more dangerous false teachers. If somebody comes here holding the Gita or the Quran, you won't be deceived by that.

If somebody comes up here and says Jesus Christ is not God, you won't be deceived by that. If somebody comes up and says there were no miracles, there was no resurrection, Jesus was not a born of a virgin, you won't be deceived by that. But if somebody comes and says, I believe in the Bible and preaches all the right things, that's the fellow who can deceive you.

And how do you know he's a false teacher? It says here, number one, is their sensuality, verse two. And number two, the first thing is their sensuality, verse two, and the second thing is their greed. Two things.

They are impure in their life. Verse 14, their eyes are full of adultery. A preacher, however right his doctrine may be, if his eyes are full of adultery, how do you make out whether a person's eyes are full of

adultery? Yeah, there's a lack of purity there.

And I want to say to you sisters, be careful of any man, young or old, who looks at you in a lustful way. It doesn't matter what his doctrine is, steer clear of such people if you value your life. They are the false prophets.

And secondly, they are greedy for money, verse three. These are the two characteristics of false prophets. And if you watch those two, God can save you from false prophets.

These false prophets are like people. Maybe once upon a time, chapter two, verse 21, they knew the way of righteousness, but they turned away from that. And now they have become like the pig, verse 22, that's gone back to wallowing in its mire, like the dog that returns to its own vomit.

I believe that there are many false teachers and false prophets like that in India and around the world today, who started out as very sincere people, who were pigs washed in the mire, but they never partook of God's nature. They remained as pigs, they remained as clean pigs, instead of partaking of God's nature and being transformed. They remained as dogs, instead of partaking of God's nature.

In other words, their cleanliness was only on the outside. And after a while, they went back into the muck. They went back to eat up what they vomited.

These are the false prophets. So don't think false prophets are only those who preach wrong doctrine. And God, he says, these false prophets will be punished one day.

Just like Sodom and Gomorrah was punished for their immorality. And just like God's punished the people in Noah's time for their immorality and their worldliness. And just like Balaam, verse 15, verse 5, he speaks about Noah's time, verse 6 about Sodom and Gomorrah, verse 15 about Balaam, who was punished by his immorality, whose donkey knew more about God than him.

And he's saying a donkey can know more about God than these false teachers. Chapter 3, he says, there'll be a lot as we come towards the end of time, there'll be a lot of mockers who say, verse 4, where is the promise of his coming? It looks as if, yeah, you old fellows are saying that Christ is coming. Christ is coming.

Where is he coming? People say that, but he will come. That's what they said to Noah. Noah, you say, rain is going to come.

Rain is going to come. Rain is going to come. Where's the rain? One day it came and so will it be in the coming of Christ.

And he says, if you believe that all this is going to be burnt up, what sort of person should you be? Verse 11 and 12, you should be living godly lives. Verse 11, because you know that everything you see around you is going to be burnt up. Don't think that the Lord is slack or slow, verse 9, in fulfilling his promise.

If he's waiting, he's waiting only because he wants all people to come to repentance. It's a lovely verse. Verse 9, as Jesus looks out at 1 billion people in India.

What is his desire for 1 billion people in India? That all should come to repentance. And that's why he waits. Some more people whose names are in the book of life have not yet been converted.

That's why the Lord is waiting. See, in the book of life is the name of all the believers. And there are some people in India whose names are in that book who have not yet been converted.

And God is waiting for somebody to go and bring them to the Lord. And when everybody's name whose name is in the book of life is converted, the Lord will come. That's what it says.

Therefore, beloved, verse 14, be diligent to be found without spot in him, blameless and spotless. Finally, verse 18, grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This also is the true grace of God.

We thank God for Peter's letters and we pray that we will have grace to walk in the light of that. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the tremendous privilege of knowing your word, of having our eyes open to see what the true grace of God is, of being able to partake of your nature, to overcome, to have discernment about the false prophets and false teachers, and to be ready for your coming.

Help us each one. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

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