The Letters of
James and Peter
THE LETTERS OF JAMES AND PETER

An Explanation of these Letters Especially for You

Rock Solid #10

Ger de Koning
Contents

Foreword 9

Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible 11
  Old Testament 11
  New Testament 12

Explanation of general format 13

The Letter of James 15
  Introduction 15

James 1 18
  Blessing | verse 1 18
  Faith In the Midst of Trials | verses 2-5 20
  Do Not Doubt, But Persevere | verses 6-12 25
  Partakers of the New Creation | verses 13-18 30
  The Practice of the New Life | verses 19-27 35

James 2 40
  Chosen To Be Rich In Faith | verses 1-7 40
  The Royal Law | verses 8-14 45
  Works That Justify Faith | verses 15-26 50

James 3 55
  The Danger of the Tongue | verses 1-6 55
  Two Springs | verses 7-18 60

James 4 66
  Friendship With the World | verses 1-6 66
  Orders | verses 7-10 72
  Against Judging and Boasting | verses 11-17 77
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Chapters</th>
<th>Verses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>James 5</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>Warning For the Rich</td>
<td>verses 1-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Patience</td>
<td>verses 7-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td>verses 13-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The First Letter of Peter</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Peter 1</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>Blessing</td>
<td>verses 1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A Living Hope</td>
<td>verses 3-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Test of Faith</td>
<td>verses 6-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Be Sober and Holy</td>
<td>verses 13-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Redeemed With Precious Blood</td>
<td>verses 17-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Brotherly Love and Born Again</td>
<td>verses 22-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Peter 2</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>Spiritual Growth</td>
<td>verses 1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A Holy Priesthood</td>
<td>verses 3-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A Royal Priesthood</td>
<td>verses 9-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Government</td>
<td>verses 13-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Following the Steps of Christ</td>
<td>verses 18-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Live For Righteousness</td>
<td>verses 22-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Peter 3</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>The Wife In Marriage</td>
<td>verses 1-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Husbands and All of You</td>
<td>verses 7-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Suffer For the Sake of Righteousness</td>
<td>verses 13-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Baptism and Its Consequences</td>
<td>verses 19-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Peter 4</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>Formerly and Now</td>
<td>verses 1-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Serve One Another As Good Stewards</td>
<td>verses 10-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Judgement Begins With the House of God</td>
<td>verses 14-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Peter 5</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>Care For the Flock of God</td>
<td>verses 1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The God of All Grace</td>
<td>verses 6-14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Second Letter of Peter

2 Peter 1
Salutation and Blessing | verses 1-2
Divine Nature and Spiritual Growth | verses 3-7
An Abundant Entrance | verses 8-15
The Prophetic Word | verses 16-21

2 Peter 2
Examples of God’s Judgment | verses 1-6
The Way of Balaam | verses 7-16
Turn Away from the Holy Commandment | verses 17-22

2 Peter 3
Mockers Get an Answer | verses 1-9
Grow In the Grace and Knowledge | verses 10-18

Other Publications
Dear friend,

I am glad to present this new volume of the ‘Rock Solid series’. These studies are meant for your spiritual edification. If you have read the previous parts of this series, I trust that you have become fascinated by the riches of God’s Word.

In this book you will find an explanation of three practical letters. They have in common that they are addressed mainly to persons with a Jewish background. In that sense they are related to the foregoing letter, that to the Hebrews. In that letter the work of Christ is the prominent theme. In the letter of James, the first letter of Peter and the second letter of Peter it is about how faith in Christ is made visible in practice. These letters appeal to you as a follower of Christ. It is about following Him, Who is rejected. Just like the letter to the Hebrews these letters are very inspiring for living a life in faith.

I would like to repeat the practical tips that I suggested in my previous books:

1. Provide yourself with a good translation of the Bible. Some good translations are the New American Standard Bible (NASB), the New King James Version (NKJV), the New Translation by J.N. Darby (JND) and the King James Version (KJV), preferably with the New Scofield word updates. I will be using the NASB, with permission granted by The Lockman Foundation on February 10, 2016 when referencing and quoting Scripture unless I note otherwise.

2. I tried to write this book in a way that encourages you to use the Bible. At the beginning and end of each section, I have listed the Bible verses pertaining to that section. I encourage you to read those verses before and after reading the section. It
would be a good idea to keep your Bible open to those verses so you can easily refer to them.

3. Self-discipline is very important. You have to be willing to discipline yourself to take time to understand the Bible better. I suggest that you read the Bible at a set time that’s best for you.

To help you with this, I have divided this book into forty-six sections. I also noted with a ‘V’ which verse is explained. Read every day one section. If you do that, over a bit less than seven weeks you have got a good impression of three appealing letters from the Bible.

The whole Bible indeed is a great Book. It is my prayer that you will be convinced of that more and more.

I wish you God’s blessing!

Middelburg, Netherlands, English edition 2016
© Tel. (0031) 0118 638458
@ E-mail: ger.de.koning@gmail.com
Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible

Old Testament

Gen - Genesis
Exo - Exodus
Lev - Leviticus
Num - Numbers
Deu - Deuteronomy
Jos - Joshua
Jdg - Judges
Rth - Ruth
1Sam - First Samuel
2Sam - Second Samuel
1Kgs - First Kings
2Kgs - Second Kings
1Chr - First Chronicles
2Chr - Second Chronicles
Ezra - Ezra
Neh - Nehemiah
Est - Esther
Job - Job
Psa - Psalms
Pro - Proverbs
Ecc - Ecclesiastes
Song - Song of Songs
 Isa - Isaiah
Jer - Jeremiah
Lam - Lamentations
Eze - Ezekiel
Dan - Daniel
Hos - Hosea
Joel - Joel
Amos - Amos
Oba - Obadiah
Jona - Jonah
Mic - Micah
Nah - Nahum
Hab - Habakkuk
Zep - Zephaniah
Hag - Haggai
Zec - Zechariah
Mal - Malachi

New Testament

Mt - Gospel of Matthew
Mk - Gospel of Mark
Lk - Gospel of Luke
Jn - Gospel of John
Rom - Letter to the Romans
1Cor - First Letter to the Corinthians
2Cor - Second Letter to the Corinthians
Gal - Letter to the Galatians
Eph - Letter to the Ephesians
Phil - Letter to the Philippians
Col - Letter to the Colossians
1Thes - First Letter to the Thessalonians
2Thes - Second Letter to the Thessalonians
1Tim - First Letter to Timothy
2Tim - Second Letter to Timothy
Tit - Letter to Titus
Phlm - Letter to Philemon
Heb - Letter to the Hebrews
Jam - Letter of James
1Pet - First Letter of Peter
2Pet - Second Letter of Peter
1Jn - First Letter of John
2Jn - Second Letter of John
3Jn - Third Letter of John
Jude - Letter of Jude
Rev - Revelation
Explanation of general format

PERSONAL PRONOUNS are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.

BRACKETS [ ] are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it.

SHARP BRACKETS <> are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words possibly not in the original writings.

ALL CAPS in the New Testament are used in the text to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts.
The Letter of James

First carefully read this letter to the end. Ask the Lord, while reading it, what His intention is with it for your life. Open yourself for His directions whether or not to do something, whether or what to change.

Introduction

The *letter of James* is a letter with its own particular character. Of course that goes for each letter in the Bible, but still this letter is indeed exceptional, as you will discover. It takes a special place in the New Testament. You could compare the place of the *letter of James* among the other letters with the place that *Jonah* takes in the Old Testament among the other prophets. All old testament prophets have a message for the people of God, except Jonah. Jonah is an exception, for he is sent with a message from God to the Gentiles.

Many letters in the New Testament, especially those of Paul, address the believers as members of the church and as united with Christ. James is an exception, for he addresses his letter “*to the twelve tribes*” of Israel “*which are scattered abroad*”. Therefore James writes his letter to the people of Israel in total. It is also remarkable that he, although he mainly addresses the Jewish Christians (he uses the word ‘brethren’ fifteen times), also addresses the unbelieving Jews.

James does not speak about heavenly blessings in his letter, which are the part of the church and the individual believer. He writes about the practice of the life of faith. In his letter he addresses everyone who confesses to belong to God’s people and tells him what such a person is supposed to show in practice. What a person says has to become visible. The life from God is to be shown. That is also essential, for the works of faith are *to other people* the only proof that there is real faith present in the heart. Faith *works*
through love (Gal 5:6) as an expression of the new creation that the believer is in Christ (Gal 6:15; 2Cor 5:17).

In this letter you do not find much doctrine or teaching. Possibly this letter has already been written before Paul wrote his letters. It nevertheless needs to be said that, to make this letter a reality in your life, it is necessary that you know the doctrine of Paul’s letters. Therefore it is not a letter that you just unthinkingly bring into practice. It is about living out the new man and about that new man Paul tells everything in his letters. If you have read his letters you will certainly recognize this. Although the rank order of the letters, as we have in the Bible, is not inspired, the letter of James therefore takes, right after the letters of Paul, a remarkably justified position.

The recipients are the people of God that are still a part of God’s earthly people. They are still not separated from them. The people as a whole have rejected the Lord, while these recipients yet confess that they possess the faith in the Lord Jesus as the Lord of glory (Jam 2:1). That means that through this letter God makes us familiar with a form of Christendom, which is a mixture: the Jewish Christendom. It is a letter that is written with a view to a transition phase of the old (Judaism) to the new (Christendom). The particular period of time in which we could best place this letter is the time of the church life of the first believers, as it is described in the book of Acts.

In this transition time God tolerates that certain customs of the old people of Israel are still being maintained in the newly established church. Soon there will come an end to that transition time, due to the destruction of Jerusalem that will take place in the year 70 by the Romans (the letter of James was dated between the years 45 and 62). James actually stresses that also when he speaks about ‘the last days’ (Jam 5:3). In a certain sense you may therefore call this letter an ‘end-time letter’.

Therefore this letter is also a topical issue to us. We also live in an end time and indeed the end time of Christianity. Also the end time in which we live will be closed with judgments. Another
thing is that we are on the threshold of a new time that will come after the judgments. That new time covers a period of a thousand years, a period that is characterized by peace in heaven and on earth under the most blessed government of the Lord Jesus.

In the rank order we have in the Bible this letter follows after the letter to the Hebrews. However, most apparently the letter to the Hebrews has been written later than the letter of James. In the letter to the Hebrews, also addressed to Jews, the call sounds to go forth outside the camp (Heb 13:13). That call sounds also with a view to the coming destruction of Jerusalem. We do not find such a call in this letter.

The people of Israel are still being addressed. James addresses those who are scattered, namely the Israelites who are scattered everywhere among the nations. He still sees the whole people, like Elijah (1Kgs 18:31; cf. Ezra 6:17) and Paul (Acts 26:7) did, until God executed judgment.

James has a leading position in the church at Jerusalem. You may say that he is the leader of this church. The church at Jerusalem consists of Jews who came to faith in the Lord Jesus, but who did not differ from their unbelieving compatriots, concerning the exercise of their religion. Among them James, together with Peter and John, is considered to be a pillar (Gal 2:9).

When Paul comes to Jerusalem after his third missionary journey, he goes to James with whom all elders of Jerusalem gather together. In the conversation that follows Paul is told that already ten thousands of Jews have come to faith, who all are zealous workers for the law (Acts 21:20). Under the leadership of James they submit a proposal to Paul through which he could show that he is also a Jew who is faithful to the law. Paul’s agreement with this proposal means the end of his public service.

Here you see how great the influence of James is. That great influence is also to be seen during the apostle meeting where James gives the decisive response that the Gentiles should not be troubled to keep the law (Acts 15:13-21).
James 1

Blessing | verse 1

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings.

V1. Although James is in fact the leader of the church in Jerusalem, he doesn’t present himself as such in this letter. He presents himself as “a bond-servant of God”. Each Israelite could have repeated that after him, for in the essence each Israelite was a bond-servant. To James that was not an uncomfortable subjection to God, but he mentions it as a privilege.

Then he calls himself also a bond-servant “of the Lord Jesus Christ”. Not each Israelite could and wanted to repeat that after him. James indeed calls himself like that and also here it sounds that he finds it an honor to be a bond-servant of the Lord Jesus. If you then also consider that he is a brother of the Lord Jesus according to the flesh (Gal 1:19), it is absolutely very striking that he calls himself like that.

With him you do not notice anything of the popular spirit that talks about ‘Jesus’ as if He was a friend from the street. He calls the name of the Man, Who was born of the same mother as he was, with great respect. He did not always have that respect. During the life of the Lord Jesus James did not believe in Him as the One Who was sent by God (Jn 7:5). That changed when the Lord Jesus appeared to him after His resurrection (1Cor 15:7). At least, it is very probable that this appearance has been the cause of his conversion.
Besides, you see that James puts God and the Lord Jesus on the same level by calling himself both a bond-servant of God and a bond-servant of the Lord Jesus. He honors the Son like he honors the Father (Jn 5:23).

James writes to “the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad”. Peter also writes to those who are scattered abroad (1Pet 1:1), but then only to the believing Jews, those who are born again (1Pet 1:23). James writes to the total.

With a brief “greetings” he expresses his fellowship with them. Greeting somebody or conveying greetings to somebody speaks of fellowship. This word is actually a wish that the other person may rejoice and is happy (the word only appears in Acts 15:23; 23:26 and James 1:1).

Now read James 1:1 again.

Reflection: What makes this letter so special compared to the other letters in the New Testament?
Faith In the Midst of Trials | verses 2-5

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have [its] perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. 5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

V2. The call of James to count it all joy when you fall into trials, connects wonderfully to the wish of the previous verse. By addressing his readers with “my brethren” after the general salutation of that verse, he makes them feel how much he is related to them. It emphasizes again that he doesn’t address them as a leader, but as a fellow brother.

Without any other introduction James speaks directly about “various trials”. He suddenly places you in the world and what you can possibly go through there. In the world the genuineness of your confession is tested by temptations and trials. The company that James is addressing this letter to, is particularly tested by poverty. That may also be the case concerning yourself. But these trials can also be sickness, invalidity, unemployment or the passing away of a beloved person. Those are all trials that the Lord allows in the path of the believers, in order to see in whom they put their trust.

James therefore starts with the test of the genuineness of the faith. As is already said in the introduction, the point for him is the practice of their life of faith. You may say that the world with its trials is the testing room of the faith.

James tells his brothers to welcome the trials and temptations to which they are exposed, with a feeling of joy. That seems like an impossible order, doesn’t it? It even seems to be in contradiction to what Peter says in his first letter. Peter actually says that trials
cause *sadness* *(1Pet 1:6)* and that’s much easier to understand. Still it only is an apparent and not a real contradiction.

James and Peter approach temptations or trials from two different points of view. When you are going through a trial, it makes you sad. You do not undergo a trial stoically and unstirred *(Heb 12:11)*. Nevertheless you may remind yourself that each trial is a matter that God has planned in your life. He is dealing with you.

The important thing for James is the fact of the trial of which he emphasizes that it may be different for each person. That’s why he speaks about ‘various’. The intention is that the trial you are going through, pushes you up to God. When that indeed happens, it is a result that makes you rejoice, but above all it is a result that rejoices God. In that way you are able to experience something that Paul has experienced, which caused him to say: “*As sorrowful yet always rejoicing*” *(2Cor 6:10)*.

V3. James also explains to his readers why they should count it all joy when they fall into trials. He can also tell them that they know the purpose of the trials. After all they know that those trials, through which their faith is being tested, make their faith stronger and those trials also challenge them to hold on. The purpose that God has with the trials into which we fall, is to teach us to persevere. Perseverance is the proof of a genuine faith.

You may say now: ‘Does salvation then depend on our own efforts ultimately?’ No, absolutely not. Salvation is anchored in the work of Christ. When we say that we are saved, it will be proved by the perseverance in faith, even though we fall into the toughest trials.

The most difficult thing of trials is the time that it can take. Sometimes you manage to maintain yourself well and keep on trusting God when you suddenly fall into a trial. But the real test comes when the trial takes longer. Then that is precisely the time to keep on trusting God that He has everything in control. Then it is important to trust that He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able *(1Cor 10:13)*.
V4. When the trial keeps on going that long that you may think: ‘When will it ever end?’ then that is a trial that has the purpose to let the perseverance have a perfect work. In the life of a Christian perseverance is an important characteristic. When Paul summarizes the signs of an apostle he mentions firstly ‘perseverance’ (2Cor 12:12). To both James and Paul the word perseverance means: to bear the suffering with perseverance. Like James also Paul shows the bountiful results of perseverance in trials (Rom 5:3-5).

An example of a person with whom perseverance did not have its perfect work, is king Saul. He is not able to wait for Samuel and gives the offerings too early. That costs him his kingdom (1Sam 13:8-14). But also David fails in his perseverance. He is continually being chased by Saul. The long duration of that trial becomes too much for him at a certain moment and he thinks to himself: “Now I will perish one day by the hand of Saul” (1Sam 27:1).

The only solution he sees is to seek refuge with the Philistines. That indeed delivers him the rest he was looking for, because Saul no longer chases him, but he, however, loses fellowship with God. With him perseverance did not have its perfect work, because instead of asking God for wisdom about what he should do, he came up with his own solution. In contrast to Saul, David came back later on the path of and with God and in that way perseveres until the end.

The perseverance lasts until you at a certain moment completely subject yourself to the will of God. “Have [its] perfect result” indicates actually that you fully submit yourself to God and that His will becomes yours. That is a process and that process will last your whole life. With the Lord Jesus there was no own will, but He was certainly tempted like us, yet without sin (Heb 4:15). With Him the result of the temptation was that He became perfect. In that way He became the cause of eternal salvation (Heb 5:7-10).

If this work has been fulfilled in you, in other words, if you are fully submitted to God, that doing His will is the only thing that you desire, then you are “perfect and complete” and you lack noth-
ing. That does not mean that you now know everything of God’s will and that you do not need to learn anything from God anymore. The point is that you have rest in the will of God with your life and the circumstances you find yourself in. You trust Him that He only wants your best. In that submission to Him He can reveal His will to you. In this way you are to be reached by Him and also useful.

The perfection James is talking about here, has got nothing to do with sinlessness. Even if you live in submission to God, it can occur that you, how well your intention may be, still sin. An example of that you see in the life of Peter. He really wanted to live fully submitted to the Lord. He even said that he was willing to give his life for Him. But the Lord had to tell him that he was going to deny Him three times.

With all his good intentions Peter was blind to his own weakness. And because he even neglected the warning of the Lord, he sinned by denying the Lord. Fortunately he repented and received forgiveness (Lk 22:33-34; 54-62). Peter failed in persevering in his faith when he was tempted, because he lacked the wisdom for the right decision and for the right confession.

V5. We need “wisdom” to be saved from such experiences. Wisdom is making use of the knowledge that you have in the circumstances you find yourself, where your faith is being put to the test. Because your faith is continually being tested, you are continually in need of that wisdom. You will surely feel the lack of wisdom when you look at the life of the world around you. I surely do.

To be able to go on, to be able to persevere, it is important to see what the intentions of God are. That means that you need to go to Him, in the sanctuary. In the sanctuary you see which way God intents to go with you. You also see that His ultimate purpose is blessing.

What a great word James is speaking about here. It is in fact a wonderful invitation. James actually invites you to ask God for
wisdom. He also tells you how God responds to that request. God replies your request bountifully and gently without any blame.

If you ask a man for help, you have a great chance to be blamed for something. People often find that impertinent or they feel they are being used or they say that you are to deal with it yourself, because they are after all not able to help you. God does not react in such a way at all. If you ask Him, you will learn to know Him as a giving God. He is not a demander to whom you approach as a beggar, in order to soften Him. No, He is a God Who loves to see you coming to Him, Who loves to listen to you and Who loves to answer you.

Now read James 1:2-5 again.

Reflection: Ask God for wisdom with a view to the temptations you are dealing with.
First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

6 But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, 8 [being] a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. 9 But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position; 10 and the rich man [is to glory] in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. 11 For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away. 12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which [the Lord] has promised to those who love Him.

V6. In the previous section you saw that God loves to see you come to Him. Though there is a condition attached to it. That condition is that you should come “in faith” (cf. Heb 11:6) and without any doubt in your heart concerning His kindness. When you ask God for wisdom, while you still doubt His kindness for giving that wisdom, you look like the surf of the sea. In such a case you focus yourself on God to ask Him for wisdom, while in your heart you still seek other possibilities where you might find wisdom to escape the trial. You open yourself to God, but at the same time you listen to the opinions of others or you look at the circumstances and make your decisions dependent on that.

Then there is no room for God to make something clear to you. The result of such an attitude is that you are tossed to and fro, like a wave of the sea is being driven up and down. Doubt looks like the open sea, where the waves are a toy ball of the wind. Such is a man who doubts: he is a toy ball of opinions of other people to which he opens himself.
V7. It is not wrong to seek one another for advice, but that advice is not to take the first and leading place. When the advice of others means that much to you that your trust in God is not effective anymore, you will receive nothing from God. Seeking others for advice or listening to the good advice of others must on the contrary increase the confidence in God. God wants you to trust Him unconditionally.

V8. A man who doesn’t do that is “double-minded”. That such a man is inwardly double-minded will also appear from his ways. He is “unstable” in all his ways, not to be understood. You may think for a moment that he is on the right way, but a moment later he goes a totally different direction. He is not a reliable person. He has a wavering course. He has no stability at all in his faith life.

V9. After the general starting points about persevering in temptations, James applies these starting points to “the brother of humble circumstances”. You could derive that from the word “but”. In that way James makes a contrast with what is earlier said and especially with the doubtful person. The lowly or socially deprived brother runs the risk to doubt the love of God for him. As an Israelite he was raised with the thought that richness is the proof of God’s blessing and that poverty is the proof that God’s blessing is being withheld, due to unfaithfulness. But things are not like that anymore, James says. Poverty is not necessarily a proof of unfaithfulness and God’s dissatisfaction about that. Poverty is a temptation that can be endured with joy, because that can be seen as a test of the faith.

James adds a special encouragement to that. He says to the social- ly deprived one that he may rejoice in his spiritual riches and “his high position”. He can do that, owing to his relation to Christ. The poor can glory in his exaltation, because Christ is not ashamed to call him ‘brother’ (Heb 2:11). This title is being ignored and counted as nothing in the world. The poor, however, knows that the glory of this world will pass away as a flower of the field, while he rejoices to be a partaker of those who are acknowledged by the Lord of glory as His own.
James 1

V10. James has also a word for the socially prosperous one. The rich man who boasts in his riches must realize that in a spiritual sense he is lowly and poor in his riches. James calls on the rich man to boast “in his humiliation”, which means in what he in himself is to God. In himself the rich is a sinner who cannot stand before God. Besides, it would be a good thing for him to realize that all his riches will fade away.

V11. That not only goes for the riches of the rich man, but also for the rich man himself. Grass represents the prosperity of human life with its inextricable link that that prosperity will quickly pass away. The flower colors grass and gives the grass a shiny appearance, but even the color and appearance of the flower quickly pass away.

You see the illustration of that in the history that the Lord Jesus tells about the poor Lazarus and the rich man (Lk 16:19-25). Lazarus was really poor. The rich man did not care about him at all. Lazarus means ‘God is help’ and God had brought Lazarus in such particular circumstances, in order to bring the meaning of his name into practice. Lazarus had nothing and no one else to help him, but God. The rich man lived only for himself alone and needed no help from God. But on the other side of death the roles are reversed. There the rich has become a poor man and the poor Lazarus has become a rich man.

The value of being rich, or better said, the meaninglessness of being rich, appears to be as the heat of the sun as an illustration of tests in life. When sickness and death make their entry, it appears that health and life are priceless and not for sale, even if a person would possess all the money of the world.

You can also see the sun with its heat as a metaphor of the Lord Jesus, Who is presented as “the sun of righteousness” (Mal 4:2). When He comes to judge the earth He will humiliate everything that is high and exalted (Isa 2:10-12). What man considers highly and prominently, will be destroyed by Him. All things in which the heart of man can possibly put his trust and through which he thinks not to need God for, will pass away when the Sun of righ-
teous appears. In the light of the Sun that reveals everything, will be seen what has been all worth it.

V12. With the promise “blessed” to the man that endures temptation, James concludes the introductory portion of the test of faith. The man who has overcome the temptation, receives beside that approval also a reward. To him “the crown of life” will be given.

The word for ‘crown’ here is stephanos. There is another word for crown, the word diadema. The ‘diadem’ is the symbol of royalty or imperial dignity. That word is quite often used in the book of Revelation. Here it is stephanos, which is a crown of honor as a symbol for a winner. This crown is not of gold, but of bay leaves. Therefore it has no material value. The symbolic value however, is enormous, because of the honor that goes together with it.

This crown is received by someone who has delivered an exceptional achievement. This crown was to be gained in the Olympic Games in those days. With this crown as a goal the participant was prepared to make great sacrifices and deny himself of all kinds of pleasures. The stephanos is a great encouragement to run the race.

In this sense the ‘crown of life’ (also mentioned in Revelations 2: 10) will be handed over by the Lord Jesus on the day of decoration, just like the other crowns that are to be earned (e.g. ‘the crown of righteousness’, 2Tim 4:8, and ‘the imperishable crown of glory’, 1Pet 5:4). Those who have endured the temptations and who have testified not to be living for the life on earth, but for the true life, who were even prepared to pay their faithfulness with death, will receive that crown as an exceptional homage from God.

When the Lord Jesus will return with His own, they will be characterized by ‘the life’. That means that it will be seen by all people that they bear the special mark of the Lord Jesus as the life, for He is the life (Jn 11:25; 14:6). They will bear the life as an honorary distinction. The life that they have lived and of which the excellent quality in the most difficult circumstances has been demonstrated, will be received out of the hand of the Lord Jesus, what
will be visible to all people. In this way He will be glorified in His saints and will be admired in all who have believed (2Thes 1:10).

We ought to be Christians who exercise themselves in abstaining from everything that could keep them from gaining the prize (1Cor 9:27). To be able to do that with heart and soul, we need love. James speaks about that in the last part of verse 12. Only those who love Christ are prepared to subject themselves to a hard and long lasting exercise.

“Those who love Him” is a wonderful expression, which appears four times in the New Testament, of which two times in this letter (Rom 8:28; 1Cor 2:9, Jam 1:12; 2:5). That actually shows that the real practice of faith is only possible when the love for the Lord Jesus is the driving force. Only the love for Him will have the effect in you that you make efforts and sacrifices. In order to make that happen in you a total change had to take place, for you were an enemy of God. Loving God is your answer to God for loving you.

Now read James 1:6-12 again.

Reflection: How can you receive the crown of life?
Partakers of the New Creation | verses 13-18

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

13 Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. 17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. 18 In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

V13. The temptations James is talking about in verse 13 are of a totally different kind than those he has been talking about up to now. The temptation he has spoken about up to now are the temptations you have to deal with in the life around you. Those are circumstances in the midst of where your find yourself in and which challenge you to practice your faith.

The temptations that James refers to in verses 13-14 are temptations that have their origin in yourself. Those are temptations that are related to your flesh, in other words, your sinful nature. So you see that James indicates two kinds of temptations: temptations that are challenging you from the outside and temptations out of yourself, from your inside.

God can test you through external circumstances. His purpose with that is to bless you. You see that with the example of Abraham. To tempt Abraham, that is to test and make his faith visible, God asked him to sacrifice his son (Gen 22:1). You see that in the way that Abraham goes in the obedience of faith, his faith reveals itself as faith in the God of resurrection. Of course God knew that he possessed that faith, but now you know that too. The faith of Abraham has become visible. Therefore this temptation does not
come from Abraham himself, but from God. When there is no question of sin, but when obedience and perseverance are being tested, it concerns the condition of the heart, to be taught, guided and formed.

But as soon as there is a question of stirring up the lusts, it cannot possibly be said that God is tempting. The temptations that are coming from your inward self do not come from God. You can never say that God is trying to stir you up to sin. A temptation to sin occurs when you do not keep your lusts under control, but give in to it.

God cannot be tempted by evil, for there is no evil in Him. Therefore evil or sin cannot possibly come from Him in order to tempt you in one way or the other. You see that in a striking manner in the Lord Jesus, especially in the temptations to which He was exposed in the wilderness (Lk 4:1-13). He was and He is without sin (Heb 4:15). He could not possibly be tempted by something from Himself, because there was no sin in Him (1Jn 3:5). The ruler of the world could not find anything in Him when He was on earth, not a single connecting factor (Jn 14:30).

But the Lord Jesus has been in very tough circumstances. His path on earth, which He went through in dependence of His God, was the cause of that. He wept at the grave of Lazarus and over Jerusalem (Jn 11:35; Lk 19:41). His sorrow was genuine, for He felt the consequences of sin in perfection. Calamity did not pass Him by. Despite all sadness and disappointment He kept on trusting God. But He has never been tempted by God to sin. Neither does God stir us up to sin. He does not tempt to sin.

V14. When you give in to temptation then that is because you are being drawn away and enticed by your own desire. You might have watched something bad on the internet and you started to think about it. In that case you have not judged it radically, but you allowed yourself to be enticed by what you saw. It might have been a beautiful car, a beautiful woman or a handsome man. You gave your fantasy the free reign and you have let yourself be drawn away by your own lust.
James 1

V15. Once that process has started the desire will not only remain an inner desire but it will surely result in a deed. You now have come that far in your thinking about the desire that you also want to possess that yourself. Then the desire gives birth to sin. You take possession of the object you desired, either in reality by for instance buying that car or in your feelings by inwardly taking possession of that woman or man and start to have fellowship with her or him in your feelings. If you continue to live in this situation, then sin will have power in such a way over you that you cannot control it. It becomes full-grown and strong. It rules in such a way over you that it leads you in death.

James says these things to warn you not to let you be misled in the temptations that come from yourself. Those temptations do not come from God and therefore you should not try to consider them at all. If you do, then it means the end of your life as a Christian. The end of the path of a sinner is death (Jam 5:20). You may say that lust is the grandmother of death: lust gives birth to sin and sin brings forth death.

When you consider the way Paul speaks about that, it seems it doesn’t agree with what is said here. Of course each agrees with the other, only you ought to know how Paul presents these issues and how James does. When Paul says that lust comes forth from sin, then he means with sin the indwelling sin, the power of sin (Rom 6:12). The indwelling sin, the sinful nature, is the source out of which all sinful deeds come. The indwelling sin produces lust (Rom 7:8).

When James appears to say the opposite by saying that lust gives birth to sin, then that is an apparent contrast. What he says is not in contrast to what Paul says, but it allies with it. James speaks about lust as a sinful deed that can only produce another sinful deed. Therefore you may say that James deals with the efficacy, while Paul deals with the source.

V16. In verse 16 James appeals not to deceive yourself regarding the fact that what comes forth from yourself does not come forth from God. He does that with a special appeal on how much the
brothers mean to him. You hear that in the way he addresses them as “my beloved brethren”. When you see your brothers and sisters as your ‘beloved brothers and sisters’, you will not allow that something disturbs that relationship.

V17. A wrong perception on temptations disturbs that relationship. When you say for example that God is against you when you are tempted, you give a false impression of God. James has condemned that. But now he will explain that although you are in the midst of temptations and although there are temptations which may come forth from you, you still belong to a perfectly new world. He speaks about that when he says “that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures” (verse 18). That means that you, by faith in the Lord Jesus, already belong to that new creation that will be revealed when He will reign in majesty and glory.

That wonderful new thing and everything that’s related to it, finds its origin “above” in heaven, from where it comes down as a “good thing given” and a “perfect gift”. The expression “every good thing given” relates to the act of giving by God, in which there is absolutely no wrong motive. The expression “every perfect gift” relates to the content of what God gives.

The good thing given and the perfect gift of God is the Lord Jesus (2Ko 9:15). You may also think of His Spirit and His Word as good things given and perfect gifts. That is the case with everything that comes from God. From God only good and perfect things come forth. Here you see that God is a Giver, while in the Old Testament He is the Demander.

He gives as “the Father of lights”, which means as the origin of a manifold light. Every gift comes from the light but will always remain in relation with the light. Therefore a gift of God will never ever be related with darkness and sin.

V18. Therefore, in order to be able to give you according to His intentions in His heart for you, it was necessary that God Himself started to work that in you. Because He cannot change, you had
to be changed. He has made that happen. He planted the new life in you. He did that “in the exercise of His will”, which implies that He will never come back to that matter. He did that “by the word of truth”, for only in that way you learn to know God and therefore also yourself. That Word has been applied to you by the Holy Spirit. That is how you became a new creation.

It is still “a kind of”, because it still does not apply to your body. Inwardly, however, you already partake of what will be general in the creation, in the millennial kingdom, in future. In the old creation God now already sees people who belong to that new creation. You happen to be one of them. Isn’t that a reason to praise God?

Now read James 1:13-18 again.

Reflection: What are the contrasts between the section of verses 13-15 and the section of verses 16-18?
First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

19 [This] you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak [and] slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and [all] that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. 22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; 24 for [once] he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. 25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the [law] of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does. 26 If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his [own] heart, this man’s religion is worthless. 27 Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of [our] God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, [and] to keep oneself unstained by the world.

V19. After the wonderful explanation of the work of God in His own James continues with the practice of the new life. His intention is that his readers, whom he again calls “my beloved brethren” may know what ought to mainly characterize the new life. The first thing he mentions is “to hear”, to listen. When you are newly converted it is especially important to listen to the Lord and to do that in the attitude of the young Samuel. Eli taught him to say: “Speak, LORD, for Your servant is listening” (1Sam 3:9). The Lord Jesus is the perfect example of Somebody Who hears (Isa 50:4). Therefore He absolutely always knew, when He was on earth, what to say to the right people at the right time.

You also can only say something meaningful when you have first listened. It is good to consider why God has given you two ears
and only one mouth. Be quick to hear what the Lord has got to say.

Do not be quick to respond to what men say. Control your tongue and try not to be rash with your mouth (cf. Ecc 5:1). Don’t let yourself be tempted to react sharply and angrily when people treat you unjustly. That anger can just suddenly pop up when you see or hear something that is unjust or when you feel yourself to be offended. Then you may just lose patience.

V20. Of course it is not always wrong to get angry. Anger is a feature of God. When He gets angry He exerts His anger in perfect righteousness. Sometimes it is necessary for you to be angry, but watch out to make it an issue for your own benefit. Therefore it is for a reason why Paul warns us not to sin when we are angry (Eph 4:26). For when you get angry because of seeing a certain injustice, you can get so upset and angry that you cannot control yourself anymore. Then you say or do things that are not fitting to you as a ‘first fruit among His creatures’.

With the Lord Jesus anger and sorrow go together perfectly (Mk 3:5), while with us anger can possibly go together with being personally offended. When we are angry because we are personally offended, it has got nothing to do with “God’s righteousness”. In that case it becomes clear and visible that we are our own judge, while there is nothing to be seen of God’s righteousness.

V21. In order not to fall into the trap of a wrong anger, James passes on some instructions. You have to lay aside something and receive something. Consider the order. You ought to put aside something first, for then you create room to receive something. James mentions two things you should lay aside. As a matter of fact he is very up to date when he starts with “all filthiness”. The world is full of that and the believer can so easily get stuck to it.

Filthiness may just jump towards you; it all splashes out from the bill boards alongside the road and if you do not watch out it happens also all over your television or computer screen. Just do not
look at it, just turn your eyes off of them, do not be occupied with such things. You must inwardly take distance of those things.

That also goes for “[all] that remains of wickedness”. Do not be tempted to express your anger in a way that you show more of yourself instead of showing the reason why you are angry.

James urges for a good mind. That good mind expresses itself in “humility”. When you are meek, God can implant His Word in you. ‘Meekness’ is the right ground for the implanted Word to grow and to come to maturity. Then that Word can be effective. Then you will be led by the Word on your path of life and in that way you will be able to proceed that path up to the full salvation. Your life will bear fruit that comes from the new creation that you are, a fruit which is a joy to God.

V22. In that way it will become clear that you are not only a hearer of the Word, but also a doer. Herod for example was only a hearer. He loved to hear John speaking (Mk 6:20), but he was not a doer of the word spoken by John. When it came to the crunch he’d rather have John killed than coming back to a promise he quickly made under the influence of his aroused lust (Mk 6:21-27).

V23-24. John had held up a mirror to him. Herod had looked into that mirror for just a moment. He saw what kind of man he was, but he left and forgot how he looked like. When you read in the Bible you should not do that in a hurry, but calmly. When you just read something quickly, you do not really look into the mirror. The Bible has to be given the chance to show you what kind of man you are, that you may adapt your life to it.

V25. Therefore you ought to look into “the perfect law of liberty”. The perfect law is not a series of rules and commandments that God imposes on you as His demands. With the perfect law is meant the whole Word of God. That Word of God holds up to you the law, which means the lawfulness, of liberty. He who has received the implanted Word with meekness will show the fruits of that Word. That is a lawfulness, a process that cannot occur in any other way.
You see that perfectly in the life of the Lord Jesus. The law of God was in Him (Psa 40:8) and that law completely connected to His desire to do the will of God. A small example may possibly clarify this. If I give one of my children the command: ‘Eat of those cookies’, then he or she does that delightfully, because it is fully in accordance with his or her desire. Being obedient out of love and doing things that you naturally love to do, give the greatest sense of satisfaction.

James adds to it that it is important to continue in it; that means that you must persevere. Then you will “be blessed” in what you do; it gives you the sense of happiness. It doesn’t mean that you will succeed in everything you do, but that you experience happiness in everything you do.

V26. James comes back to the tongue. The tongue is the most important measure of what dwells in the heart of man. The Lord Jesus even says that we are being justified or judged according to our words (Mat 12:37). When you know how to bridle your tongue, then you are also able to serve God in the right way. But he who thinks to be religious, who thinks that God should be satisfied with the way he serves Him, while at the same time he opens wide his lips, deceives his own heart (Pro 13:3; 10:19).

Why is James that sharp in his judgment of the tongue? He will explain that urgently in chapter 3, but it is already clear here that what matters to him is that it comes down to deeds and it is not about nice words. He actually says: ‘Just show what religion means to you. All that talking doesn’t mean anything to me.’ He who talks much, but does not do, has a ‘worthless religion’. He may think that he is doing great, but what he is doing is worthless.

V27. In the final verse of this chapter James explains the way it supposed to be. It is about “pure and undefiled religion in the sight of [our] God and Father”. All service of God must happen in purity of the heart. Insincere motives are not to be playing a role here. Even the service itself ought to happen without being spotted by using
any inappropriate means. Serving God means that God is in the center. He determines how the service is to be done.

When you visit widows and orphans in their afflictions you show them God’s Fatherly love. He is after all the Father of orphans and the Judge of the widows (Psa 68:6; 146:9). God’s love seeks the helpless and the socially deprived ones. When you visit them in their affliction it means more than only showing your interest in them. It means that you are trying to empathize with them in their circumstances and in that way expressing your concern for them.

But this is not the only way to acquire greater content for ‘pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father’. If that was the case, then Christendom would not be more than a social program. God is not only love, He is also light. That’s why James adds to it that you ought to keep yourself “unstained from the world”. True religion doesn’t lose out of the sight the natural character of the world, but takes into account that the world has rejected the Lord Jesus. The world lies under the sway of the wicked one (1Jn 5:19). You have been delivered from it (Gal 1:4), you do not belong there anymore.

Therefore you cannot use anything from it in your service for God. Everything you would like to use from the world to only make your staying in there as pleasant as possible dishonors God. His judgment of the world ought to be the key for you concerning your dealings with it, just like His care for the defenseless people in the world should be the key for your care for them.

Read again James 1:19-27.

Reflection: How do you exercise the practice of what James says in this portion?
James 2

Chosen To Be Rich In Faith | verses 1-7

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with [an attitude of] personal favoritism. 2 For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, 3 and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, “You sit here in a good place,” and you say to the poor man, “You stand over there, or sit down by my foot-stool,” 4 have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? 5 Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world [to be] rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? 6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? 7 Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?

V1. You have seen in the final verses of the previous chapter that God is a caring Father and that He is light and love. By helping widows and orphans you can show that God is a Father Who looks after those who are deprived of all help. Because God also is light, the command goes together with keeping yourself unspotted from the world.

In order to keep you from exaggeration and from falling into Pharisee-ism in your living in separation from the world, James presents to you in the first verse of this chapter “the glorious Lord”. He does that in connection to the admonition that there should be no “personal favoritism” with those who believe in our “Lord Jesus Christ”. 
James calls the Lord by His full name, because he must rail against the great evil in the Christian church, regarding giving preferential treatment to certain people, due to their social position. Such a conduct is absolutely in contrast with the Person of Christ and the confession of the faith in Him. Partiality is totally strange to Him (Acts 10:34). That is also not the way He dealt with you and me, right?

When you are impressed by socially successful people, people with a high position, and admire them for the nice looking car by which they come to the meeting and the nice clothes they wear for that occasion, then you have not really looked well to ‘the Lord of glory’. What does that entire earthly splendor mean in the light of His glory?

The Lord had glory with the Father before the world was (Jn 17:5). Also on earth He had glory, not for men (Isa 53:2), but for those with faith (Jn 1:14). This glory radiated through His humble stature. He will have glory when He returns to earth (2Pet 1:16-17). There is also a glory that is typical of Him and which we will see without taking part of it (Jn 17:24). He is the center and the radiation of all God’s thoughts and glory (Heb 1:3). All glory is in Him.

That glory is in sharp contrast with earthly glory. In the light of the Lord of all glory there is no room for rank or position. Then everything that is attractive to the man of the world shrinks and also the matters that still exert a strong attraction on us as believers, such as wealth, reputation, position and power. Those are all matters that make man blind for true glory and through which he is being drawn to hell. We too are inclined to look at the outward appearance (1Sam 16:7). Let us bear in mind that what is highly estimated by men is an abomination to God.

Besides, James doesn’t appeal to take away all differences, to eliminate ranks and classes out of the world and make all men to be equal. His intention is that the differences in the social life among the believers in their dealings with one another should play no part. In case that happens, he wants this evil to be judged. Actually there are differences among believers that are to be con-
sidered in their dealings with one another, such as a difference in age, in gender, in gifts. Those differences were made by the Lord. The differences are not to be played off against one another, but are supposed to be complementary to one another.

V2-3. James calls the evil by its name. He describes how men behave towards a rich man and towards a poor man when they enter the synagogue. Both the way of their approach to the rich man and the way of their approach to the poor man are totally wrong. It is far below the level of the glory of the Lord in Whom they say they believe. They look up to the rich man, due to his golden rings and his nice clothes and they look down to the shabby clothed poor man. They guide the rich man with a bow to a nice place, and they give the poor man a standing place or a place at their footstool.

V4. With such a behavior they show an arrogance that comes down to playing the role of judge. They have neither authority nor ability for such a way of acting. The distinction they made, they made by themselves, for their own benefit. There is nothing of the Lord in this matter. On the contrary, they act “with evil motives”. Such an evil motive is for example that they try to gain favor with rich people, because that can deliver them profit. They cannot gain any profit with poor people and therefore they do not care about them.

Do you still remember what James said about ‘pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father’? Was it not that precisely the poor people were to be visited in their affliction? How far away is making this distinction with evil thoughts from the true religion!

V5. “Listen”, James says. In other words: ‘You must listen very carefully. You are really my beloved brethren and therefore I tell you how God thinks about the socially deprived people. The poor in the world have priority with Him, they have a special place with Him.’

Paul also says that to the Corinthians, who were also that sensitive to the honor and reputation of the world (1Cor 1:16-28). The
fact that God has elected the poor does not mean that He has elected them because they have no money, but because they have no rights and because they are dependent on others. With God it is about people who are of no account.

Due to their election they became rich in faith. To be rich in faith means to be rich in God (Lk 12:21). These riches are not to be expressed with money. Even the world is theirs (1Cor 3:21-23), because they belong to Him Who owns all the gold and silver (Hag 2:8). They still have to wait for taking possession of that until the Lord Jesus comes back.

The Lord Jesus was the poor One par excellence. He was rich, but became poor for our sake, that we might become rich through His poverty (2Cor 8:9). That poverty was not the stable in which he was born and the swaddling clothes in which he was wrapped, for that could not possibly make us rich. It was also not His poverty on earth, where He had nowhere to lay His head (Mat 8:20). We have become rich through nothing else than through the poverty of the three hours of darkness on the cross, where He carried the judgment of God over our sins.

That is also the only ground on which God could have made us “heirs of the kingdom”. When the Lord Jesus comes back to claim His kingdom, then all heirs will share with Him in His kingdom. God has promised that kingdom “to those who love Him”. James relates the promise of the kingdom to loving God.

That kingdom is only honored by those who know Who God is in His love. The love for God is present with each who knows that God first loved him (1Jn 4:19). When you have seen and also experienced that God has loved you, of which the highest proof is the gift of His Son, then there is nothing else left for you than to love Him, isn’t that true?

Therefore you as an heir can also look forward to that kingdom. Up to that moment you are able, just like the poor about whom James is talking, to enjoy your spiritual riches. Do you already
know something about your riches? They are all included and hidden in Christ (Col 2:2-3). It is up to you to dig them up.

In the light of His riches all riches of the world will lose its grip on you. Each investment of time and effort to make the riches of Christ to be your own, will show its efficiency when the Lord Jesus comes back. When you are that rich you will also be able to make other people rich. Then you can be a person of whom Paul says: “As poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things” (2Cor 6:10).

V6. James points out to the readers that they have dishonored the poor by treating them with such disdain. They are blind for what these poor ones mean to God. But also for their conduct towards the rich with whom they love to gain favor, they seem to be blind. What God has done to the poor is in sharp contrast to what the rich had done to the poor.

Just take a good look at what the rich are doing, James says. They oppress you and drag you into the courts. You think that you will yield profit when you treat them with tribute, but in the meantime you are being robbed by them. These folks are merciless.

V7. And the worse thing is: through the conduct of the rich the “fair name” of the Lord Jesus by which you were called, is being blasphemed. Therefore there is absolutely no reason to look up to them and to approach them obsequiously.

Now read James 2:1-7 again.

Reflection: Do you approach your fellow believers without personal favoritism?
The Royal Law | verses 8-14

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

8 If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. 9 But if you show partiality, you are committing sin [and] are convicted by the law as transgressors. 10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one [point], he has become guilty of all. 11 For He who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not commit murder.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. 12 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by [the] law of liberty. 13 For judgment [will be] merciful to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment. 14 What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?

V8. The difference between the poor and the rich in the assembly is reprehensible. It is strongly condemned by James. He speaks out his condemnation in such a powerful language, which cannot be misunderstood. When they disregard the poor they are contradicting the “royal law”. In that law all Israelites are considered as objects of God’s favor. There the people are addressed as a whole. James brings his admonition in a positive way. He tells them that they do right when they fulfill the royal law “according to the Scripture”, which means when they carry that out in the way that it has been written in God’s Word and according to its intention.

The royal law is the law of the ten commandments. James calls it ‘the royal law’ in order to emphasize its high value, which is to serve as another exhortation to obey it. This law will be effective in its fullness and excellence in the kingdom to come, that will be reigned by the Lord Jesus as King. That law will then be written in the hearts of the members of God’s people (Heb 8:10). Because that law is written in their hearts they will also be able to live accordingly.
The fulfilling of the royal law happens when we love our neighbor like ourselves. Then we do right, then we live right, then we live just as God has intended it. This commandment makes clear that in the Old Testament each member of God’s people had his own place before God and that they were all equal in the sight of God. Each member of the people was the neighbor of the other and the other had to be treated with the same love with which a person treated himself. By dealing in that way with one another there would be no room for a preferential treatment of the one person or the neglect of another. In loving your neighbor the whole law is being fulfilled (Gal 5:14; Rom 13:8-10).

You may now ask yourself: ‘But we do not live under the law anymore, do we?’ Indeed, we do not live under the law anymore. Therefore James’ intention is not to bring us back under the law. He shows us that when you love the other you do what the law demands. Do you remember that James writes his letter in a period that God still tolerates His scattered people keeping the law? That’s why James refers to that. He appeals to them in their confession of faith.

This word is to appeal to you too. Not in the way that James appeals to his readers, for you (most apparently) do not belong to Israel. The application for you is, that when you love the other you will never do something that damages or hurts the other. To love is not a score that you achieve because the law demands that of you. To love is the expression of your new life that seeks the good for the other. When you seek the good and not the evil for the other, then it is clear that you, so to speak, automatically fulfill the law.

V9. The law puts everyone on an equal level of responsibility towards God. That law says: You must love your neighbor as yourself. If we then still make distinctions, then we do not act according to the royal commandment. The neighbor is my brother or sister in faith, the member of God’s church, of which also I am a member by grace.
All Israelites belonged to the one people and each Israelite was a neighbor of each other compatriot. That is how we also are related to one another. When you pray for your brother that he may do well, you pray that also for yourself at the same time, for if your brother does well, you also do well. When love is real your preference will disappear. God also did not deal with you by preference.

If you still act with partiality then you sin evidently. Is it not clearly in contrast with the law that says that each member of His people is equal to the other and that you are to treat each member of God’s people with the same love? It is undoubtedly a violation in case you still make a difference in your approach to the members.

V10. By violating this one commandment you are guilty of violating the whole law, although you have not really violated each of the commandments. That is because in the law the will of God comes to you. The authority of the Giver of the law supports the law. When Moses comes back from the mountain, he not only deletes one commandment, but he casts both tablets out of his hands and brakes them (Exo 32:19). The violation of that one commandment caused the people to be guilty of all the commandments. When you violate a commandment you are dealing with God Who gave both the commandment you violated and all other commandments.

V11. James uses an example. You can keep a commandment, but violate another commandment. Then you are by definition guilty of violating that commandment and in that way you stand guilty before the law wherein the other commandments are also established. The law forms a whole because God is the Giver of the law. When you violate a commandment, it means that you have given in to your own will and that you have despised the will of God, which He has revealed in the total of the law.

V12. As it is said, it is not the intention of James to put us under the law of the ten commandments. His argument is intended to clarify on the basis of the law how the interactions in the church are to be. The law contains the words of God and contains also
useful education for them. James is giving the education with the view to the Jewish-Christian church, but we can also learn a lot from it. The real significance he has gotten, regarding the law, now he believes in the Lord of glory, is that of freedom. He already talked about that in chapter 1: 25 and here he gets back to it.

Freedom is not a non-aligned status. Freedom surely knows limits. Those limits are not to limit our freedom, but to prevent that we will use freedom in a wrong way. True freedom is doing the will of God and showing Who He is. That was done perfectly by the Lord Jesus. We see that the law of freedom perfectly comes to expression in His life. He was perfectly free, because there was nothing of His own will or sin in Him. In that way He could be perfectly tied to the will of God. There was nothing that separated Him from that, nothing that could come between Him and His God and Father.

V13. That law of freedom is the measure of judgment that we ought to make use of in our contact with others. If we live just like the Lord, in undisturbed fellowship with the Father, then that will be heard and seen in our speech and actions. We will especially show our awareness of being judged by the law of freedom by showing mercy. In that way God’s love also came to us. God came with His mercy in our miserable circumstances.

When we do not express in our speech and actions to others the mercy that we have received, we prove that we have not received the new life and cannot act according to the law of freedom. God will judge over that and that will be just as merciless as the mercilessness with which we have treated others. When we show mercy, we act like God also acted when He dealt with us. Then we do not judge the other, but we show him God’s mercy. In that way mercy triumphs over judgment. Mercy conquers judgment.

V14. When you are merciful you show that you yourself are the object of God’s mercy. You may claim that you have faith, but if you do not show that from your works, by showing mercy for example, then it is no more than sweet talks. It is cheap talk and it
doesn’t prove anything of the inward life. To claim that you have faith is hollow and empty when there are no works.

You cannot see faith, but it becomes visible from works. Therefore faith and works are inextricably linked. The faith that a person claims to be having, cannot save him. You do not see the roots of a plant, but when it grows and flourishes it is a proof that the plant has roots. You do not see electricity, but when a lamp goes on there is a proof that there is electricity. The Lord Jesus also speaks about the new birth of which you do not know how that happens, but you certainly hear its sound (Jn 3:8). Works prove that there is faith indeed. James gives an example in the following verses.

Because Luther the reformer has had much difficulty to understand this statement of James, he called this letter ‘a straw letter’, in other words a letter without any nutritional value. He said that, since he had discovered the forgery of the doctrine of the roman-catholic church that says that works are necessary to be saved. But in that way Luther threw the baby out with the bathwater. James definitely does not teach that a person is being saved by works. On the contrary he urges to prove faith by works that come out from that faith, works that prove that there is faith. Otherwise there is no faith and therefore no salvation. A ‘lip faith’ doesn’t give salvation.

Now read James 2:8-14 again.

Reflection: How do you bring the royal law into practice?
First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for [their] body, what use is that? 17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, [being] by itself. 18 But someone may [well] say, “You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” 19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. 20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? 22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,” and he was called the friend of God. 24 You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. 25 In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? 26 For just as the body without [the] spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

V15. James clarifies by an example what he means with works that show faith. He suggests his readers to imagine “a brother or sister” who has not got enough clothes against the cold and who has just enough food to survive. That example is very up to date to his readers, for they are not too fond of the poor (see verses 2-3). They might have felt involved.

V16. It could have been the case that they had just had a nice talk with one or other poor brother or sister without giving them what is necessary for the body! When they have enough themselves they can easily say to the poor: “Go in peace.” When they even say in addition that they should be warmed and filled without doing anything about that yourself, then all that talk is plain hypocrisy.
V17. Talking about somebody’s lack or even praying for it, without any desire to do something about it, is a dead faith. The proof of mercy is missing and when that is missing there is no faith. Where there are no works, the faith that is present in the mouth, is dead on itself. Then the faith is not alive, there is no living faith. Faith and works are not to be separated. Faith as such cannot be seen. It can only be made visible by works. Through works it becomes apparent that there is faith present.

V18. The argument of James is quite clear. Despite that there comes an objection of somebody who wants to make a distinction between faith and works. It is somebody who has heard what James had said about faith and works. The person himself has no part in faith, but he can actually point at a lot of good works. Because he has no part in faith he has missed the point in James’ message. He is boasting in his works.

James responds to him that the distinction this person makes between faith and works is not possible. If he wants to make a distinction, let him then show his faith without his works. He is not able to do that, but James is definitely able to show faith out of his works. The point is not that James ought to show faith to God. God is sure about his faith. No, the works of faith are precisely to show to men that there is real and living faith in him.

V19. When it is only about faith, without works related to it, then it is no more than an orthodox confession. You can speak that out with your mouth, without it having any meaning to your heart. Look at the Jewish confession. The orthodox Jew whole-heartedly confesses that there is one God. That is what God has also prescribed (Deu 6:4). That is a wonderful and fully just confession. It is a good thing that that confession is being made.

But do you really think that only speaking that out is the proof of a real faith? You can forget that. Then it would mean that demons also really have faith, in other words that they trust God. They confess to believe, but they shudder at the same time, because they know that God will judge them because of their works that are all being done in rebellion against God.
V20. James concludes his dispute with his (possibly imaginary) opponent. As a kind of conclusion he again clearly says to him, whom he addresses as “foolish fellow”, that faith without works are “useless” or meaningless. By the means of two examples he shows the real efficacy of faith.

V21. In the two following examples James clarifies what the works of faith in fact are, how faith becomes apparent from works. Those are not examples of works that men call good works. According to human standards, without the involvement of faith, we would call Abraham a child-murderer and Rahab was no more than a collaborator.

You will see however that those are in fact excellent works of faith. These deeds were achieved out of love for God (by Abraham) and out of love for God’s people (by Rahab). Those are the two characteristics that each work of faith has. Both works speak of the full confidence in God.

James starts with Abraham. He strongly says that Abraham was “justified by works”, without mentioning the faith. By presenting it this way James underlines once again how necessary works are, if you want to make a statement about faith.

If you only look at this verse, without reading the following verses, it seems as if he forgets for a moment that justification can only be received by faith and that he comes into conflict here with what Paul teaches in Romans 4:2-3. As you have seen earlier James and Paul of course do not contradict one another. Through the Spirit each one of them approaches the truth from another point of view.

Paul speaks about the person of Abraham in his relation to God. With Abraham God saw a faith that was focused on Him. God saw that Abraham trusted Him with a faith that He will do what He had said to do, while there was no indication at all that it was going to happen. Because of that faith God declared the person of Abraham to be righteous. But James is not talking about the person of Abraham to God; he is talking about the faith of Abraham
that became visible to men. The faith that God saw in him was to be seen by men.

God needed no proof of Abraham’s faith, but he led Abraham into a situation in which his faith became visible to his environment. Therefore you read in Genesis 22:1 that God tested the faith of Abraham. He asked of Abraham to offer his son Isaac on the altar (Gen 22:2,9). James says that “Abraham our father” (after all, he is their forefather), was justified “when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar”. You know that he did not literally need to offer Isaac, but to God Abraham really offered his son.

V22. In that way he showed that his “faith was working with his works”. It even goes further. The faith that Abraham inwardly possessed, was perfected by his works, in other words completed, accomplished.

V23. By this deed, by this work of the faith, the Scripture was fulfilled that says: “And Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” This quotation comes from Genesis 15:6 and there it refers to the justification of Abraham because of his faith in God. But James connects this quotation to Abraham’s work of faith in Genesis 22, because this work of faith confirms that he really possessed faith. Only in that way Abraham could offer everything he had on the altar. Do you also do that? Offering all your possessions, you yourself, your family as an offering?

In Isaac Abraham offered everything on the altar. In that way he even offered all God’s promises on the altar. In doing so Abraham proved that as for him God was above everything. The Giver surpasses the gift. The only way Abraham could offer his son was because he looked upon God, because He trusted God and loved Him. In this all Abraham behaved as “the friend of God”. This is how Jehoshaphat speaks of him towards God (2Chr 20:7) and that is how God Himself calls him (Isa 41:8). When you are a friend of God it means that you love God.

V24. James concludes this example of Abraham with the undeniable conclusion that works of faith are absolutely essential in
order to prove the presence of faith. It is only justified to say that you believe when it also appears from your works.

V25. In order to illustrate this more abundantly James points at another example from the Scripture. Next to the great man of faith he places Rahab, the harlot, the woman from a cursed nation. In that way he delivers a striking proof that with God there is no partiality. He says that she “in the same way”, which means like Abraham, was justified by faith.

And what were her works of faith consisted of? She received “the messengers” into her house and hid them from her compatriots. James calls the spies (see Heb 11:31) ‘messengers’, because they came to her with a good message. By receiving the messengers she chose for God’s people and against her people. She believed that the land where she lived lay under the judgment and that this land was to be given by God to His people. She sacrificed the present possession in order to possess it together with God’s people. That is faith in action.

Do you also sacrifice the land where you live in, the world, in order to possess it with the Lord Jesus in future? If you know yourself to be related with God’s people that will only later on take the world into possession, then you are in the eyes of the world a traitor, for you will surely make no effort for anything that is this world. Do not make it difficult for yourself. Just look at the Lord of glory and you will know Whom you are doing it for.

V26. James concludes his teaching about faith and works with a metaphor that is conceivable to everyone: as the body without the spirit is a dead thing, so faith without works is dead also.

Now read James 2:15-26 again.

Reflection: Which works of faith has James mentioned up to now?
James 3

The Danger of the Tongue | verses 1-6

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 Let not many [of you] become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment. 2 For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. 3 Now if we put the bits into the horses’ mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. 4 Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. 5 So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and [yet] it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! 6 And the tongue is a fire, the [very] world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of [our] life, and is set on fire by hell.

Introduction. You have received practical teachings in the chapters 1-2, a practice that is surrounded by heavenly light. That practice can only, as you have seen in chapter 1, become reality when there is new life. That means that only new creatures (Jam 1:18) are able to bring faith into practice. In chapter 2 your attention was focused on an object for the heart: the glorious Lord (Jam 2:1), the center of the new creation. By Him you are being drawn to follow a straight course through the world. But another thing is needed and that is wisdom that likewise the gift of the new life comes down from above (Jam 3:17; cf. Jam 1:17-18).

V1. Before James starts to talk about this wisdom from above he first urgently demonstrates the danger of the tongue to you. The tongue is the most accurate measure of what is present in your
James calls on his brethren because of the fact that it appears that many people tend to present themselves as a teacher. By that he means that they tend to place themselves above others in order to lecture those others about how things should be done. So he is not talking about the teachers in the church who are given by the glorified Lord as gifts to His church (Eph 4:11). It is not possible that James is addressing those teachers.

It is about those who want to be something that God has not given to them. It is the same like wanting to be rich, which is different than when God makes a person rich. James warns that you should bear in mind that when you want to be a teacher, you will receive a more severe judgment. If you want to be a teacher without first being taught yourself, then it will appear from your words that you do not know what you are talking about. However, you will be judged by that.

By itself, it is not wrong to have the desire to teach others and it is certainly a good thing that there is room to teach in the meeting of the church. That seems also to be the case here, for this admonition would be unnecessary when not all the brothers are involved to have the liberty to speak. Only it seems that it was crowded around the pulpit. It is like with the Corinthians with whom Paul also needed to put the brakes on their impulse to express themselves (1Cor 14:27-33).

If you want to teach others in the right sense of the word, you absolutely need to be taught first at the feet of the Lord Jesus (Lk 10:39). He Himself gives the right example. To Him has been given a tongue of the learned, in other words: of somebody who has been taught (Isa 50:4). He had always obeyed His Father. He never passed on anything, unless He had heard it from His Father. Therefore He was able to talk with the weary woman at the well of Jacob and tell her everything she had done (Jn 4:6, 29). He was able to speak because He had opened ears (Psa 40:6).
V2. Another instruction for not desiring to be too eager to be a teacher, is the stumble that we have in our words. If you honestly look at yourself, then you need to admit that it regularly happens that you do not put in the right words that you mean, do you? When you look back you sometimes have to regret that not everything that you have said was right. It shows your weakness and you have to be clearly aware of that.

If you are perfect in your speech, thus if you perfectly control your tongue, then you will also control your deeds and the course you take. The Lord Jesus is the only One Who has never stumbled in His words, which also makes only Him perfect in everything that His body did. To us it is important to guard our tongue, for that is the greatest stumbling block for us.

V3. James wants to clarify the functioning of the tongue and the effect of both the right and wrong use of it on the basis of examples from nature. You keep your body in control by keeping your tongue in control. It is the same as how you bridle a horse. If you want to bridle a horse you must put a bridle and bit in its mouth (cf. Psa 32:9). In this way you can manage to direct the whole horse to your pleasure and turn it wherever you want. That large body of the horse is totally in your power through the small bridle in its mouth.

Horses were mainly used in battle purposes. We may apply this example in that sense to a battle of words. Precisely then it is important for us to control our tongue. Especially in battles of words or disputes we often say things that we later regret.

V4. The second example is that of a large ship that is being driven by the hard wind in its sails. Still it is no toy of the wind and the waves. That large ship actually has, in proportion to the large ship, a small rudder. That small rudder is being steered by a pilot. When the pilot steers the rudder with his firm hand, then that large ship obeys according to the position of the rudder. The position of the rudder determines where the ship is heading to and not the wind.
We can apply this example of the ships at sea to our journey through the sea of life which we are sailing and where we are exposed to all kinds of winds. Of course events in our lives do stir us. But if we know that the Lord Jesus is standing at the rudder of our life ship, we know that those events do not happen accidentally. That will prevent us from sinning with our mouth, as we see that with Job (Job 2:10). We stay on the right course when we keep focusing on the Lord and our home harbor with Him.

V5. After the positive examples of the use or rather said, the control of the tongue, James turns to the destruction that the tongue often causes. He already showed how the tongue as a little member can control major powers. Now he shows how the tongue as a little member can cause major destructions as an untamable power.

The tongue is a member by which the pride of man and his independence of God are being expressed in the most arrogant manner (Psa 12:4). The tongue is the instrument by which man boasts in great deeds. You can hear that daily in the language that politicians use. Without the slightest modesty they summarize everything they have achieved according to their own convictions. In these same speeches they also make their promises while they keep on overestimating themselves gigantically. It would be shameful if believers serve themselves with such arrogant use of language.

This blustering and exaggerated language has often already caused the spark to be kindled all of a sudden. It is for a reason that James says that the tongue is a fire. The point is that although it is a small fire it is like a match stick that is able to light a large forest or a great stack of wood. Look at the fall of man and all its consequences. The sin of the tongue has been the first sin that entered creation. The fire that has been kindled in paradise has been destructing the lives of all men until this day. Everyone who does not convert will be delivered to this fire forever and ever.
V6. It is that fire that is burning in hell and that comes out through the tongue. "The [very] world of iniquity" is summarized in the tongue.

Of all parts of the body the tongue takes the place of ‘blemish maker’. You can do as many good deeds as you possibly can and in that way build up much goodwill, but once you say something that causes others to stumble, you have been marked forever. People will always remember what you have said and they will always echo that after you. An irreversible stain has destroyed your garment of good deeds.

Besides, you do not only deal in your personal life with the results of a wrong use of the tongue. The whole nature, the way natural life develops and has its course, is put into fire by the tongue. Statements that are being made in all kinds of areas without God’s involvement, provoke a reaction that can only make things worse and lead them to greater destruction. The fire consumes everything that is in its environment. This fire is ultimately from hell, with which the man without God is related. No man will admit that. Men without God deny the existence of hell, but James shows the reality.

Now read James 3:1-6 again.

Reflection: Which positive and which negative elements are present in the tongue?
First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

7 For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. 8 But no one can tame the tongue; [it is] a restless evil [and] full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless [our] Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; 10 from the same mouth come [both] blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. 11 Does a fountain send out from the same opening [both] fresh and bitter [water]? 12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor [can] salt water produce fresh. 13 Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. 14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and [so] lie against the truth. 15 This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. 16 For where jealousy and elfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. 18 And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

V7. “The human race” has the ability to tame all animals with their natural tendency toward freedom, in other words to control them. Man is able to catch and control the wildest, fastest and most uncatchable animals, the highest flying birds and the most terrifying deep dark sea monsters.

V8. Man is superior to all creatures, but the tongue is the chief of man. You may be able to control your tongue. That is only possible by the power of the Holy Spirit. If you give Him the control in your life He can manifest the new life through your tongue.

However, there is no way that you can have any control over another person’s tongue. No man will ever be able to control the
tongue of another person. The tongue is a “restless evil [and] full of deadly poison”. You can arm yourself against poisonous animals or put them in a cage so that they may not harm you, but it is absolutely not possible to prevent the deadly poison of the tongue. The tongue of mankind is compared to a serpent and his words to deadly poison of asps (Psa 140:3; Rom 3:13-14).

V9. I think that you can fully agree with this sharp characterization of the tongue. But be careful. All of a sudden James puts the emphasis on you, while he includes himself also. He speaks about confessing believers and that includes you also. What do you do with your tongue? You bless the “Lord and Father” with it and you curse “men” with it who have been made “in the image of God” (Gen 1:26-27; 1Cor 11:7).

V10. How could it be possible that “from the same mouth … blessing and curse” proceed? Or can you not recognize it? Haven’t you ever cursed somebody because he treated you badly, while you also blessed God for the kindness and grace He has shown to you? Well, that is what James means and that should not be possibly happening. It is possible that in a meeting you may bless the Lord Jesus and the Father and right after that you slander your fellow believers or unbelievers with your tongue, while visiting someone.

V11. James radically condemns such a double-hearted use of the tongue. He clarifies such an improper use by some examples from nature. In nature it is impossible that opposite things come from the same spring. The tongue forms an exception to that general, logic rule. Unfortunately, the tongue can utter opposite words. The tongue, considered as a spring, can indeed cause both the sweet and the bitter to spring up. The tongue can make spiritual statements at one moment and fleshly statements at another moment.

You are able to speak a sweet word at the one moment, a word that is pleasant, and at another moment a bitter word, a word that expresses bitterness. You must consider, however, that both words are not from the same deeper lying spring. The good, “sweet” word
comes forth from the new life, the “bitter” one comes forth from the old nature.

Therefore it is important to pay attention to which nature has authority over your tongue. Due to the new nature you are able to speak with a new tongue. That means that since your conversion you are able to speak differently than in the time that you did not know the Lord Jesus. If that is not very noticeable, it may be the case that your heart is often too little filled with the Lord Jesus.

V12. Each saying indicates out of which spring that expression comes forth. When you slander a fellow man it comes forth from the old man. A praise to God comes forth from the new man. From the fruit you know the tree (Mat 12:33). In nature it is natural that each tree bears the fruit that belongs to that tree and that it bears no fruit that belongs to another tree. It is foolish to assume that you would be able to pick olives from a fig tree or figs from a vine. Likewise it is impossible that you can drink sweet water out of a salty spring. Unfortunately, what is impossible in nature can be possible with the believer.

V13. However, there is still something that can help us to use the tongue properly. We can use our tongue properly when we are wise and when we are aware of the time we live in. We live in the end time. In such a time we can simply not afford to use our tongue improperly, for instance to undermine one another. In the end time we are appealed to be “wise and understanding”. That is why the question sounds who is ‘wise and understanding’.

The prophet Hosea also speaks about that (Hos 14:9). Hosea describes the ways of God with Israel. God’s ways result in a world that is full of peace under the rule of the Lord Jesus. ‘Wise and understanding’ is he who learns from the ways of God and applies that in his life. You can learn from the past of God’s people how you should live.

Also in Psalm 107:43 the question sounds as a response to the ways of God. It seems that James has pondered on those verses. That he asks the question means that not everyone is wise and
understanding, but that he would want to appeal to the few, like you. In Israel there was mention of only one tribe of which could be said that it was wise in understanding the times (1Chr 12:32).

If you understand that you live in the end time, then you also know that it does not come down to words, but to deeds. It is about “a good behavior … in the gentleness of wisdom”. Such a conduct has got nothing to do with powerlessness, but on the contrary with powerfulness. Only it is not natural power, but spiritual power. You see that in perfection in the life of the Lord Jesus on earth. You can learn it from Him (Mat 11:29). If you learn from Him and practice that in your life you will be an encouraging example to others (Dan 11:33).

V14. However, James says, nothing of that will happen if you have “bitter jealousy and selfish ambition” in your heart. You are envious when you begrudge another person to have something, because you don’t have it and you yourself want it also. That goes for both material and immaterial matters. Such an envy expresses itself in quarrelsomeness. Quarrels arise because you begrudge another person to have something. Big words come out of your mouth. You think you at least have the right to have what the other person has, right?

In that way you end up lying “against the truth”. You contradict the truth of God’s Word in which we see clearly that we are all different and that we also deal differently with things in life and also in the church.

V15. Such an attitude is not a sign of a wisdom that you have received from above, but on the contrary a wisdom that is from below. It is not a Divine heavenly wisdom, but an “earthly” wisdom. It is not a wisdom that comes from the Spirit of God, but from your natural feelings, just say your ‘gut feelings’. It is a “natural” wisdom, for it is about the satisfaction of your fleshly needs. This wisdom is guided by the chief of demons, the devil, the father of lies (Jn 8:44) and is therefore also “demonic” by nature.
V16. You see that in the consequences of “jealousy and selfish ambition”. Envy and self-seeking cause nothing more than “disorder” and a practice that shows all kinds of evil.

V17. It is possible to hand in and condemn that wisdom and replace that for letting yourself be guided by the wisdom that is from above. That means that you look upon Christ Who is the wisdom of God (1Cor 1:24,30). He is also presented like that to the church at Colossae and therefore there was no confusion there, but order and steadfastness in the faith (Col 2:3,5).

1. The first attribute of the wisdom from above is that it is “pure”. James emphasizes that purity comes “first”. The next attributes flow out from it. Purity is the most important, because it is about God Himself Who is pure. He is in no way to be related to sins (Jas 1:13). When there is sin in your life, you cannot possibly be guided by the wisdom that is from above and there can neither be mention of the following characteristics of wisdom.

2. When you confess the sin you become pure again (1Jn 1:9) and then you can be “peaceable” and go on peacefully. This is how the Lord Jesus speaks about it at the sermon on the Mount, where peace also follows after purity (Mat 5:8-9).

3. You will also be capable of being “gentle”, meaning that you will not seek to defend your rights and demand things for yourself.

4. You are also “reasonable”, which means to be submissive, available and correctable.

5. If you allow yourself to be taught by the wisdom from above you will be “full of mercy and good fruits”, that will be visible in your life, as it was the case with the Lord Jesus.

6. You are “unwavering” and therefore against forming sects and will not be dragged to join a certain party or sect.
7. Finally you are “without hypocrisy”, which means that you do not pretend to be different than you are.

V18. You can show all of that in the world and practice that towards others. These seven attributes of the wisdom that is from above, are the fruit of righteousness. They come forth from righteousness. When they are exercised in practice they are being sown, as it were. These fruits can only be “sown in peace”. Peace is the motive to sow this fruit.

And what does this fruit deliver? Peace (Psa 85:10). When you make peace, when are a peace maker (Mat 5:9), you harvest peace. You harvest what you sow (Gal 6:7b). You are always sowing. All the words you speak out and all the deeds you do are seeds sown by you.

When your words and deeds are inspired by the wisdom from above, you will harvest wonderful fruits, the peace. Then you will now already be able to enjoy what will be present in the coming kingdom of peace all over the world.

Now read James 3:7-18 again.

Reflection: In what way can the wisdom from above be effective in your life?
James 4

Friendship With the World | verses 1-6

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have; [so] you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; [so] you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend [it] on your pleasures. 4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: “He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us”? 6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore [it] says, “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

V1. What James says in these verses is contrary to the end of the previous chapter. There the issue is peace and here the issue is war and fights. James denounces this matter interrogatively. He does not say: ‘There are quarrels and conflicts among you and it should not be like that’, but asks where those “quarrels” and “conflicts” are coming from, where they come forth from. It is also significant that he speaks about “among you”, thus among the members of God’s people to whom all count themselves by their confession, whether they are reborn or not reborn.

That means that those quarrels are civil quarrels, for it are quarrels between citizens of the same kingdom, they are between citizens who belong to the kingdom of the Lord Jesus (Jam 2:5). Through internal battles the powers are consumed. That causes that there is no power left for the fight of the gospel in the world,
in order to liberate people from the power of satan. If we have to deal with civil quarrels, then there will be no power left to fight together against false teachings, for the enemy knows how to use that situation for his benefit.

That James has to speak about “quarrels” or “wars” indicates that the disagreement lies deep. A situation of war does not start without any reason. Before a person starts a war he first has achieved deliberations and has determined strategies in utmost secrecy. Also during the war deliberation still takes place. A war is also a long-term issue by nature.

This is not the case regarding “conflicts”. Conflicts often suddenly break out and quickly quenches, although the fire can keep smoldering for a long time.

Quarrels and conflicts however, have one thing in common and that is the source from where they come forth. We read that in the response of James himself to the question “what is the source”. They do not come forth from the wisdom that is from above (Jam 3:17), but from their “pleasures”. Their desires do not seek to be satisfied by what they have in the world of the Lord Jesus, but by the world around them.

In their “members”, which are the members of their body, the desires of pleasure are fighting to use these members as instruments of sin (cf. Rom 6:13; 7:23). The head center is the heart and the desires have taken that into possession. The desires have therefore captured the body and now control it. Now the result is that that body is seeking to enrich itself to the detriment of other people.

V2. But what is the result of that? James points to the consequences. They desire, but they have not. In spite of all their fighting in order to live prosperously and pleasantly they do not have that. They are occupied with quarrels and conflicts. Those matters do not fill the deepest desires of a person, but they work out something different, namely murder and manslaughter.
James speaks with a strong speech. He explains to them that what they are doing is murdering. That can refer to literally murder someone, but it also applies to committing a character murder. In the latter case a lot of slander is being spread about a person that the person is not able to function normally anymore. He feels threatened and totally withdraws himself. A person who is a target of a smear campaign is being torn down. Such campaigns come forth from people who are envious of other people, they begrudge the other to have something, in order to have it for themselves.

If you are not satisfied with what you have you are capable of acting in such a way. Do not let yourself be dragged down by feelings of dissatisfaction. Look at people who indeed let themselves be dragged down and you will draw the same conclusion that James does. These people cannot gain what they desire. They can totally be absorbed by quarrels and conflicts. He who wants to obtain something in that way only breaks things.

Then James makes clear that they do not have because they do not pray. Praying means that you are consciously dependent on God. As long as you go on with working out your own strategy to gain something, you will not succeed. Sometimes you seem to succeed, but still, the final result is that you are empty handed and especially empty hearted. Once you become aware of that you will surely start to pray.

V3. Now praying is supposed to be happening with the right mind. That means that when you pray, you surrender yourself to the will of the Lord. You make Him decide whether something is good for you or not. When your praying has got more to do with demanding than with asking then it is clear that your desires have got nothing to do with God’s will, but with your own will and the fulfilling of your own desires.

If you want to pray in accordance with God’s will and your wishes are not being fulfilled, then you can also see that as a kindness of God. For if He would have given it to you, you would have
only harmed yourself by that and even harm other people and in that way dishonor Him.

Therefore it is about testing the motives of your heart. God knows the hidden motives of your heart when you pray. He precisely knows the reason why you ask Him something. He labels your prayer as wrong when He sees that your prayer is only prayed out of selfishness. Then your only intention with what you are asking for is for your own use. In this context James does not speak about using or misusing, but about “spend [it] on your own pleasures”. That indicates that there is no appreciation at all for what has been given. This is not the way God wants us to be dealing with what He gives and therefore He does not give it.

V4. Their total conduct is through and through worldly. James therefore justly addresses them as “adulteresses”. You cannot pursue your own pleasures without getting entangled in the world. The fulfillment of desires without God is only to be found in the world after all. Therefore if you seek the fulfillment of your desires in this world, you seek “friendship with the world”. But dealing with the world as a friend of the world is spiritual adultery. It is a denial of your relation to God. Your life shows the contrary to what you confess as a Christian.

As a Christian you say that you said goodbye to the world, that you belong to God and that you want to serve Him faithfully, but in your life you enjoy the things of the world. Through your worldly behavior you show that you are a friend of the world. The way the world goes on with and for itself still appeals to you and you follow it. The world loves that and acknowledges you as a friend. The appreciation from the side of the world is in itself very alarming already.

The flipside of this black medal is even more alarming, for it says that it is “hostility toward God”. The one is inextricably connected to the other, make no mistake about it. James is very clear about it.

He speaks so radically about it, because in these cases each compromise is an insult to God. Just think about it. You formerly be-
longed to the world. You have realized what the world is, how empty and how full of enmity against God it is too. That enmity has become visible at the most in the rejection of and the murder of the Lord Jesus of Whom you say that you owe your life to Him. If that is reality for you, how could you still make friends with people who are still considered to be haters of the Lord Jesus? Towards such people you can only testify of what you have found in Him yourself and pray that they also may get to know Him.

But such a testimony is out of the question if you still cooperate with the world. How could you ever speak credibly about God’s judgment over the world, if it appears from your life that you walk according to the world and that you enjoy the world very much? It comes down to whether you live for the world and therefore you are an enemy of God or you live for God and therefore you do not want to have anything to do with the world. There is not impartiality possible in this case (see 2Cor 6:14).

V5. To underline his strong message James refers to the speaking of the Scripture and to the yearning of the Spirit. From the Scripture there comes a statement that is not to be explained in more than one way. Wherever you read in the Scripture, you will encounter the testimony that everything that is from God cannot possibly be related to the sinful man. Everywhere in the Scripture we find that God’s people are warned not to be involved with the world. Or do you think that the Scripture says that “to no purpose” or “in vain”? Forget it. The Scripture does not speak about that in vain, except then for people who ignore the Scripture. No, the Scripture speaks clearly to those who have ears to hear.

By referring to the work of the Spirit subsequently, James shows to which extent the Word and the Spirit cooperate. What is strange to the Scripture is also strange to the Spirit. That also goes the other way around. Just as you cannot discover any relation between God and sin anywhere in the Scripture, it is neither possible that “the Spirit Who dwells in us” can make you act with “jealousy”. The Spirit Who dwells in you does not cause quarrels and conflicts. Quarrels and conflicts happen in the world and unfortunately also can happen among believers.
V6. The Spirit Who dwells in you wants to lift you up far beyond that, by giving you “greater grace”. That more grace is given to you by Him in order to enable you not to participate in that and to live for the other person and to the honor of God.

Then it is necessary for you to take the place of humility. The flesh, the world and the devil may have great power, the grace that God gives is much greater. He, however, gives that grace only to the “humble”.

Now read James 4:1-6 again.

Reflection: Which aspects in your life do you still need to label as ‘friendship toward the world’?
First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

V7. To receive the grace of God it is necessary to have the right mind, that of humbleness. You can show that by submitting yourself to God. That is the motive of James’ call. You will always need to be reminded of this appeal. The point is that you are not in control anymore over the desires of your heart and your whole life, but that you let go of everything and lay everything in God’s hand. Without a doubt you will then experience His grace to be living out of that consciousness.

Don’t think that you can therefore easily lean back and think that everything will run smoothly for the rest of your life. Absolutely not. You can be sure that the devil comes into action when you allow the Spirit, Who dwells in you, to work also in you. In order to stop his activities you have to resist him. The devil is all about making you act independently of God again. If you submit yourself to God you will surely be able to resist him. In this way the devil does not encounter a weak person, but the almighty God and this will surely make him run.

The Lord Jesus is the perfect example of submission to God. There was nothing that He had to submit Himself to, for His whole life has been a full submission to God. That submission led Him to the wilderness. There you see how He resisted the devil, when he approached Him to tempt Him (Mat 4:1-11). You learn from the Lord Jesus that you are able to resist the devil by the Word of God. You see the resistance also in the life of Abraham, when the king of Sodom comes to him with his trick (Gen 14:21-24).
V8. To be able to resist the devil you need to be in the sanctuary. There you see the greatness and power of God. Therefore you are being exhorted to draw near to God. It is indeed important that you draw near in faith (Heb 11:6). When you do that you experience that God is drawing near to you. He will make you aware that He is defending you against the power of the enemy. To be in the presence of God demands a practice that is in accordance with God’s holiness. Your submission to God must be seen in your deeds. Your hands show that. Your hands show to the people around you what you are doing.

It is good to consider that your actions come forth out of your heart. It is your hands that actually lead you to act. In order to be in God’s presence and to experience His protection, your hands are to be cleansed. That means that you need to have put away whatever does not belong there out of your life. You can hardly draw near to God while there are things in your life of which you know that God is speaking to you about those things. It is better to say that certain malpractices that you still maintain are depriving you from the desire to draw near to God.

Because man is able to draw near to God in a wrong mind (e.g. Lk 18:10-12), James also points to the disposition of the heart. Your heart should be purified from ulterior motives. James already talked about praying in a wrong way, meaning that you can pray with wrong intentions (verse 3). Now he appeals to you to purify your heart from those wrong intentions. God desires “truth in the innermost being” (Psa 51:6). You can purify your heart from wrong intentions by praying: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way” (Psa 139:23-24).

James addresses his readers as “double-minded”. Does he have to address you like that? Literally, a double-minded person means a person with a ‘double soul’. It indicates that a person is faltering between two opinions when he has to choose between two choices. Then you are tossed to and fro between both choices, while you inwardly know what the good choice is.
You find a good illustration of that in the history of Elijah on mount Carmel. Being led by Ahab and Jezebel the people find themselves in the realm and power of the idol worshipping and Elijah serves the true God. When Elijah challenges Ahab to a clash between God and the idols he called the people and the false prophets on mount Carmel together. When then the people draw near to Elijah he says: “How long [will] you hesitate between two opinions?” (1Kng 18:21).

Have you already made your final choice, or do you still falter between two opinions? Subject yourself to the authority of James and make a clean sweep with your life when there are things of which you know that they hinder your service for God.

As you have read in the first verses of this letter, James writes to the whole of God’s old people, the twelve tribes. Of this people many have not been born again. He tells the people as a whole that they should be miserable and have to weep and mourn. It is a miscalculation that has fatal consequences when a person thinks to be sharing the blessings of God’s people automatically, simply because of the fact that he is an Israelite by birth.

It is a miscalculation of the highest order that you also see in Christianity. A lot of people count themselves to be a member of God’s people and claim to be Christians, simply and only because they belong to a church by their baptism or because they have Christian parents. What applies to these people is the word of the Lord Jesus that they are wretched and miserable, blind and naked (Rev 3:17).

V9. It is crucial that such people realize the tragedy of their situation. He who gets the true picture of the world will surely become aware of his tragedy. The world is a system that functions as a fun fair. There is fun for everyone, but it is a fun fair of death. God will judge that. He who ponders on it just for a moment, must feel the emptiness. As long as a person remains in the world among his so-called friends, he will give the impression that everything is all right. He laughs and drinks together with them as if life is a
big party. But at home in his room he finds himself deeply miserable. He is overwhelmed by emptiness.

If he could and would only want to take up the courage and be honest about the life he is living, he would then definitely come to the conclusion that he doesn’t want to be part of it any longer. He will certainly come to realize that God must judge that. He also will realize that God will judge him too. After all, his life is a tragedy, full of disgusted deeds. It is justified that a fear arises for God’s judgment.

V10. The moment that he acknowledges that he starts up the road to blessing. That road begins with admitting his own hopeless situation without having any possibility to liberate himself from it (see Lk 15:14-20). Then that will be the end of the laughing with which he fooled himself as if it was all fun. He who learns to see himself in the light of God cannot but only weep and mourn. There comes repentance and a desire for forgiveness. The empty fun of the world, the laughing without real happiness changes into weeping and sorrow. In this way the sinner humbles himself before the Lord.

Once he comes to that point, he gets the assurance that the Lord will lift him up. It is an exceptional promise for a sorrowful sinner. He will share in the exaltation of the Lord Jesus, Who has freely humbled Himself. God will deal with the sorrowful sinner in the same way He has done to the Lord Jesus – exalt Him –, when the sinner does what the Lord Jesus has done – humbled Himself.

Beside to the unconverted sinner, the call also applies to those who are born again. The situation around you gives you absolutely no reason to express joy, but rather to express sadness. For those who have lost the sense to do that, the same exhortation applies as to the sinner who fully lives in such a situation.

In the so-called beatitudes the Lord Jesus speaks out a particular ‘blessed’ about those ‘who mourn’ (Mat 5:4). Those are His followers who could very well sense how everything in the world
is in rebellion against Him. They share in His feelings about the rebellion of the world and the resistance against everything that is His. In return He wants to give them His joy (Jn 15:11). That is a joy that has its origin in that other world of which He is the center. You experience this joy when you share with others what you have found in the Lord Jesus (1Jn 1:3-4).

When you live in the world you sometimes share with others, but you always lose what you share. Everything you share in the world of the Lord Jesus with others, enriches your spiritual life. Whatever you share you will not lose and you will never lose the profit. It can only increase.

Now read James 4:7-10 again.

Reflection: Which orders (these are not kind requests!) does James give in these verses? Which of them apply to you?
Against Judging and Boasting | verses 11-17

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

11 Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge [of it]. 12 There is [only] one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor? 13 Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.” 14 Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are [just] a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. 15 Instead, [you ought] to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.” 16 But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. 17 Therefore, to one who knows [the] right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

V11. At the beginning of this chapter James had to speak about quarrels and conflicts. These are outbreaks of disputes whereby parties openly stand against one another and are hostile to each other. In the portion you have now read he mentions another evil that is found among them. He addresses his readers on speaking evil of one another. That seems to be less serious than having quarrels and conflicts. Quarrels and conflicts are immediately visible. Speaking evil, however, can happen while you are enjoying a cup of coffee with another person and with an expression of concern on your face.

Of course in reality there is no mention of real concern. Real concern for the brother or sister of whom you are speaking evil, would be that you yourself address him or her about that evil. Then I only assume that the matters you discuss are real evil too. Speaking evil does not have to indicate that you speak untruth. The point is that wrong practices or proclamations have been observed.
Nevertheless James prohibits speaking evil of one another. When you speak evil of a brother you put him in a bad light and you exalt yourself above him. Evil is evil and you need to label it as that too, but speaking evil is a demonic action. When you see or hear something that is evil you should first consult the Lord about it and afterwards speak with the person in question.

To speak against a brother is both speaking speaking against the law and judging the law that condemns the evil (Lev 19:16). The law has to condemn the evil, but due to your slander it has no chance to do that. You keep the right to yourself and you arrogate yourself as an examiner of the evil. By keeping the law outside the evil and making your own judgment on the evil, you speak evil of the law and you exalt yourself as a judge. You judge the law as not being able to judge and in that way you contempt the law of God. Then you adopt, instead of obeying the law, a self-made law as a standard for the judgment of the evil.

V12. You not only set aside the law of God and take the place of the law, but you even take the place of God as the “Lawgiver and Judge”. That is a far-reaching arrogance. After all, God is sovereign (cf. Rom 9:11), for only He is able to save and perish. He saves on the basis of the work of His Son, but He will also destroy everyone who rejects His Son. That is the context in which you should see the question: “Who are you who judge your neighbour?” Therefore every arrogance to judge one’s fellow man should crumble towards the majesty of God as Lawgiver and Judge and as Savior and Destroyer.

It is also important to consider that it is not about judging public evil. The point here is judging one another and speaking evil of one another. Besides, we also cannot and are even not supposed to judge the intentions of one another (Mat 7:1). What James is saying is not in contrast to judging the evil in the church. There we are supposed to judge the visible evil (1Cor 5:12-13).

V13. Out of consideration for others, James has admonished not to speak evil and not to judge. In that way he rebukes the wrong attitude of his readers as people who always arrogate themselves
to know best. With this attitude they reveal a spirit of exaltation above others. That independent spirit also expresses itself differently in their life, namely in their own life with regard to the plans they make. They make plans to which city or cities they will travel to do business and of course to make profit as much as they possibly could.

Jews always have been a trading people. They always seek for profit. Therefore they travel from city to city. Actually, trading and making profit are not wrong in themselves. In an allegory the Lord Jesus uses trading as an occupation that happens for His sake (Lk 19:13). In that way it cannot be wrong. But the wrong thing about it is, when we are making plans for the future in the spirit of independence, thus without specifically considering God’s will in our plans. That is what James is telling his Jewish readers whom in such a way were driven by their trading spirit, that they forgot their dependence on the Lord.

V14. James warns us against the arrogant illusion that we ourselves have the future in control. We even do not have the next second at our disposal. We are to be aware that life is ephemeral and fragile. It has to be a sobering lesson to people, who think to have control over their life, when James compares their life to a vapor. For a vapor you see in a very short moment, but then it has disappeared, dissolved. There is nothing left that has the slightest meaning. That is the implication of the life of people of the world and also of those who confess to belong to God’s people, but without considering the will of the Lord.

When you consider the will of the Lord, your life is not a vapor. The life of the Lord Jesus was not a vapor and likewise the life of God’s children is not a vapor, at least when they behave themselves as children of God. When you consider the will of the Lord, you are engaged with the works the Lord has for you (Eph 2:10). Those works will follow you through all eternity (Rev 14:13). By considering the will of the Lord you will sow the seed now of which you will find the fruit again in eternity.
But life is short. Moses speaks about life as if it is a sleep (Psa 90:4-5). When we sleep the morning comes quickly. David speaks about life as a shadow that lengthens (Ps 102:11). Down in the East it gets dark quickly. To Job life is equal to a fast turning weaver’s shuttle (Job 7:6). Peter compares life to grass that today is on the field and tomorrow is thrown in an oven (1Pet 1:24-25).

We can live our short life on earth only once. The big question we could ask ourselves is: what do we do with it, who do we live for? When we realize that our ‘service time’ is that short, it will be an encouragement to do what is good for the Lord (1Cor 7:29-31).

V15. It is not wrong to make plans. Only, the point is whether these plans are made with the consideration that they are in accord with the Lord. You are surely allowed to make plans to travel to a certain city, only, you should do that in the awareness that it can only happen when the Lord gives you the strength and preservation to do that. In making these plans we should always consider: “If the Lord wills.”

You see that James presents it positively. He doesn’t say that we should be thinking: ‘If the Lord doesn’t want it, then He will surely not allow it to happen.’ We have a Lord Who wants to reveal His will to us, also with regard to doing business and to daily life. That also goes for making plans on behalf of the work for the Lord. You see that with Paul when he visited the church at Ephesus and then departed. When he said goodbye he said that he would come back to them, though with the addition: “God willing” (Acts 18:21).

V16. James reprimands his readers for boasting in their “arrogance”. He is saying that it is in fact pride when they do not take God’s will into consideration. There is no consideration for unexpected changes in the plans that have been made; there is a short-sightedness regarding their own capacities. While assuming to having control over everything, there is blindness as to their own limitations and weaknesses. Boasting in your own abilities is therefore evil for two reasons. With regard to yourself it is pride and with regard to God it is a denial of His sovereignty.
V17. In the previous verses James rebuked his readers for their wrong attitude towards one another and towards God. They now know what is wrong and are able to derive from it what is the right to do. Now they know how to do good they will be accountable for sinning when they neglect to do good. A person who knows how to be doing good but refuses to do so, makes himself guilty of the sin of negligence (cf. Lev 5:1). The negligence of doing good, while you know that you should do it, proves that there is a lack of grace and that your own will is operating. The life of the Christian does not consist of a lot of things that he is not allowed to do, but of doing good.

The only way to be able to do good is by the power of the new life, in being conscious of the grace that we have received and in which we are being led by the Spirit. A Christian is not a kind of scout who is satisfied with committing just one good deed a day. In such a case you may wonder what he is doing the rest of the day. No, doing good is what a Christian is continuously occupied with.

When we know what is good, but block the new life, which causes that it does not expresses itself, it is sin. This principle also applies to unbelievers. How many people do know that they have to convert, but do not do that? Each person, whether he is a believer or an unbeliever, is responsible for what he knows. That is what God will hold against him and He surely will speak with him about it on His day. Let that be an exhortation for you, when you know to do something which is good, to do so indeed.

Now read James 4:11-17 again.

Reflection: Which are the two aspects of life that James is dealing with in these verses? What speaks to you?
James 5

Warning For the Rich | verses 1-6

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. 2 Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. 3 Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure! 4 Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, [and] which has been withheld by you, cries out [against you]; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. 5 You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. 6 You have condemned and put to death the righteous [man]; he does not resist you.

V1. James is addressing the rich people in strong terms. They actually were asking for it. They reveal themselves as opponents to the poor in whom we can recognize the believing remnant of God’s people. They drag the poor to court (Jam 2:6). The rich are exerting power over the poor who are dependent on them. When the poor for example are not able to pay the rent of their houses, the rich are suing them. Of course they have the judges on their side, for they are corruptible.

The rich depend on their riches, they put their trust in those riches. That’s the cause of the separation between them and God. However, what they are trusting in will be taken away from them. They will be struck by the judgment of God. With a view to that James is calling on the rich to become aware of what is waiting for them. That should make them weep and howl as an expression of repentance about the sins they have committed. If they finally
repent, this weeping and howling will be of temporal nature. If they do not repent they will weep and howl to eternity.

V2. James doesn’t address them as ‘brethren’. These rich people are unbelievers who have gained their riches in a crooked way. The riches that they have are corrupted riches and the nice-looking garments they wear (Jam 2:2) with which they show off, expose traces that they were eaten by moths. Riches that are corrupted are riches without any security. Moth-eaten garments are garments that do not give any warmth.

This rebuke of James in the direction of the rich must have sounded strange to his readers, who belong to the twelve tribes. In the Old Testament wealth is generally after all contrarily a proof of God’s favor. Didn’t He promise them that He would bless them when they are faithful (Deu 28:1-14)? But that promise regarded a national blessing that the people would be receiving as a whole when the people as a whole would obey God. But the people as a whole awfully disobeyed God that reached the crisis level in the rejection of the Lord Jesus. Due to that things turned out differently and therefore the case can be that a faithful believer is poor and an ungodly person rich. That is the situation among the twelve tribes to whom James is addressing this letter.

V3. The rich are fooling themselves that their gold and silver can make them to enjoy life without limits. James completely over-turned that false security. The glitter of these materials, that are so precious for the rich, has not only faded away, but has changed to corrosion. James is presenting the ultimate result. Just as corruption and moths can decompose and consume materials, corrosion is a condition that makes materials totally useless. Corrosion is a process that ends up in total destruction. Everything that these rich people have gained will testify against them. God will surely reveal the uselessness of the treasures to them that they have gathered. That will deliver the proof of their ungodly life. After that they will receive the wages that they deserve in the eternal fire (Rev 20:11-15).
James speaks about an extra thing that they are to be blamed for: they were engaged with the collection of treasures “in the last days”. It is firstly foolish for a person to heap up treasures for himself, but it is even more foolish to do that in the last days. He who lives like that is not only selfish and insensitive for the need of others, but also short-sighted and blind for the threatening judgment that will strike him and his possessions.

It applies also as a warning to you as a believer. Don’t let yourself be dragged in the struggle for having more and more. The call of the Christian is not collecting, but giving. A Christian shows Who God is, and God is a Giver.

When James speaks about the last days, how much more should that apply to us. It has never been God’s intention that a Christian should heap up treasures on earth. Just look at the great Example, the Lord Jesus. You read of Him that He, though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might become (spiritually) rich (2Cor 8:9).

The servant of Elisha, Gehazi, is a striking example of how it should not be done. Gehazi had been heaping up treasures through lies and deceit. He got to learn that it was not time yet for that (2Kgs 5:26). He did not have to send back his wealth to Naaman, but the leprosy of Naaman was added to him. The greed for wealth makes a person to become a leper, meaning that it causes a disease that ends up in death. The rich who live for his wealth walks with death in his shoes.

V4. How did these rich people gain their treasures? They gained them in a most unfair way. They simply kept back the wages of the laborers whom they hired to work on their fields. They profited from the harvest of the work of the laborers and they also had pleasure in the thought that they kept the wages of their laborers in their own pocket. They counted themselves rich, for they thought to be doubling their profit.

James rebukes them by telling them that they were making a miscalculation. They actually count without “the Lord of Sabaoth”. The
Lord of Sabaoth is Jahweh of the hosts. It is God in His majestic greatness as the Chief of all armies.

The rich are closing their ears to the cry of the poor, the ones who have been disadvantaged by them, but the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth were not closed. His ears hear two things. The wages that the rich have kept back unjustly are crying out to the Lord and also the cries of the mowers are reaching His ears. The wages that were unjustly kept back are testifying in God’s sight against them. By committing these actions they make themselves violators of the law (Lev 19:13; Deu 24:14-15). They will be judged as that. God will vindicate the complainers who have called on Him and also make sure that they will be reimbursed.

V5. The rich have excessively fed themselves with all luxury and devotion to pleasure that the earth can possibly offer. They did that to the detriment of the poor. There was nothing in their heart that could stop them from living such a life. They “have fattened” their “hearts”. They whole-heartedly gave themselves to this depraved life. That only proves that they have become totally numb. Their conscience does not function anymore.

They have been gobbling like pigs. Every day was “a day of slaughter” for them, a day with an abundance of meat. Instead of sharing that with others, they pounced on it and stuffed their fat bodies with it more and more. Their god is their belly (Phil 3:19).

It is also a possibility that James uses the word ‘day of slaughter’ as an allusion to the risk of judgment that they are running. For an animal a day of slaughter means the end of his life. These people get to learn that, while the slaughter of the judgment is near, they happily continue to feast. They refuse to consider the judgment.

V6. As the high point, or better said, the nadir, of their selfish life style James accuses the rich for making themselves guilty of the death of righteous compatriots, who did not resist against it. James is able to speak of this accusation, because the spirit of the rich is the same spirit that brought the Lord Jesus to the cross. In a life that puts their own honor and satisfaction to the center there
is no room for Him. Wherever He appears in such a life to offer something that really gives joy, He is condemned and murdered, even though He may have done only good.

The selfish person does not tolerate kindness, which proves how bad and evil he is. He does not want to be confronted with it and therefore he will try to eliminate everything that tries to do that. He even does that with people who only come to ask him the wages they are entitled to. He cannot stand such righteous people.

That especially applies to the Just. James actually seems to consider Him in particular. The last sentence “he does not resist you”, seems to confirm that. The Lord Jesus has not resisted those, who are rich in might and honor and wealth in the expression of all their evil. He did not open His mouth, but let Himself to be led to the slaughter like a lamb (Isa 53:7). He endured all injustice and did not resist at all. He surrendered everything to Him Who judges justly (1Pet 2:23). He suffered as the Just for the unjust, that He may bring to God anyone who acknowledges that (1Pet 3:18). Towards all evil of man His perfection shines in everything. His example may be an encouragement for you when you have to suffer injustice.

Now read James 5:1-6 again.

Reflection: Which warning(s) does this portion contain for you?
Patience | verses 7-12

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. 8 You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. 9 Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door. 10 As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord’s dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and [is] merciful. 12 But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment.

V7. James connects his exhortation to have patience with the previous verse. There you saw that the Lord Jesus has patiently endured the suffering. Patience is something we can learn from Him. In verses 7-10 the word “patience (patient, patiently)” appears four times. That shows how important it is to be patient, for how easily feelings of impatience can arise. Patience is needed in circumstances where you are being treated unjustly and/or when you have no prospect in your circumstances. Patience is always rewarded when it means waiting on the Lord.

Being patient until the coming of the Lord here refers to His coming to the earth in order to administer justice, to exert justice and to reign justly and to reward everything that was done for Him. As a member of the church of God you may also look forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus when He will catch up all the believers together with Him (1Thes 4:14-18). That coming will precede the coming of the Lord to the earth.
You may also look forward to the coming of the Lord in the sense of a coming into the circumstances wherein you find yourself (cf. Phil 4:5b). That is not much of the point here, but you may surely draw consolation from it. You can be sure that the Lord wants to be involved in your circumstances, to support you when you open your heart for it. That will prevent you from getting stuck into all the injustice you have to suffer and which you seem to encounter.

Sometimes you have to accept that things will not change. Then you can be sure that the Lord will come to you to strengthen you. In that sense Paul had also experienced that the Lord came to Him and encouraged him (Acts 18:9). When you have a vivid thought about the coming of the Lord, you will experience that He is with you.

The thing with patience is the same as the farmer who had sown. The only thing that is left for him to do, which he does, after he has finished sowing, is to patiently wait until the delicious fruit of the land comes. For the growing of the seed and the ultimate fruit he is dependent on the rain from heaven (Deu 11:11, 14). He expects that from God.

Your life is a field wherein God has sown the seed of His Word. His desire is that fruit will come out of that. He does not accelerate the process of growing, but He waters the soil with His Word and His Spirit. His Word is like rain (Deu 32:2). He wants to have delicious fruit for Himself out of your life.

That also applies to Christianity as a whole. At the beginning there was the “early” rain. You can apply that to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1). That is how the church has come into existence which was intended by God to be bearing fruit for Him.

After the rapture of the church, there will be another outpouring of the Holy Spirit and that will be over the remnant of Israel (Joel 2:28-29). That is the application of the “latter” rain.
remnant has received the latter rain, it will then surely produce delicious fruit for God.

V8. The patience to wait is the opposite of the immediate satisfaction of need to which the rich deliver themselves. They want to have something and they want it right now. Such an attitude is inappropriate for a child of God. A child of God is not supposed to expect that his desires will be directly fulfilled. He needs to learn to be patient. Therefore James, after the example of the farmer, repeats his exhortation to have patience.

He adds to that to strengthen their hearts and passes on the means of strengthening: the coming of the Lord. For the second time he refers to the coming of the Lord. The believer will only be satisfied in his desires when the Lord comes. And His coming is very near. That thought gives the heart courage to persevere in the path of faith. As soon as you lose sight of the coming of the Lord, you will make an effort to make your life on earth as pleasant as possible. When the Israelites were tired of waiting on Moses, they demanded a gold calf to be made and therefore they fell into idolatry (Exo 32:1). In a parable the Lord Jesus shows that the same danger is threatening the Christians (Mat 24:48-49).

V9. Looking forward to the coming of the Lord will therefore be a guarantee that we do not trouble one another, but on the contrary encourage and comfort one another with the view to that coming. How easily it occurs that we grumble to one another about the injustice we suffer. When we grumble to each other we quickly say things that are not appropriate or that are even untrue. It is possible that we accuse those who make our life difficult of much more than they in fact do. It is even possible that we blame God for our difficulties. We will then be judged for that at the coming of Him Who is on the edge of coming as Judge.

The coming of the Lord is not only a comforting event, through which there comes an end to all injustice that is done to us. The coming of the Lord also has the result that each person, you and I included, will have to give account of himself (2Cor 5:10).
Instead of grumbling and complaining about our circumstances, we have to look at the prophets and follow their example. Haven’t they tolerated many who grumbled about them, not to mention the injustice that they had to suffer? They had the thankless task from God to reprimand the people for their sins. That was not something for which the people were grateful. On the contrary, the people mocked, despised and ridiculed them (2Chr 36:15-16). What a lot of patience these prophets have shown. The people refused to listen, but they still went on to preach in the Name of the Lord.

When we notice endurance, a sense of admiration arises from our hearts. People who endure show character. Therefore they also make achievements. That definitely goes for us also when it comes down to the faith. Those who persevere in faith, show that they possess something that is worthy of holding on to, right through all adversities. That is what the prophets have shown.

James points at another remarkable example of endurance and that is Job. What this man has shown, concerning endurance, you can without a question call unique. Consider all the sufferings he had to endure. All his possessions were taken away from him in a very short time. He lost all of his children and also his health. When he got into that situation he was even deprived from his wife’s support. As his help she should have been pointing him to God, but instead she encouraged him to say goodbye to God. From being a very wealthy and blessed man, Job in a short time turned into the most pitiable man on earth (Job 1-2).

The readers of this letter are familiar with the matchless suffering of Job. James, however, does not write about the suffering of Job, but about the endurance of Job. They have heard about that and that had to be an encouragement for them. When Job has endured, shouldn’t they, who had to suffer to a lesser extent, also endure?

James adds another important detail. He does not tell us how gloriously Job overcame the tough afflictions. He writes about “the
outcome of the Lord”, meaning the final result of the Lord’s intentions with Job (Job 42:7-17). In this way James emphasizes that the Lord has achieved His goal with Job.

All the time of Job’s suffering, also caused by the accusations of his friends, the Lord was “full of compassion and merciful” towards Job (cf. Exo 34:6). It can be of comfort to us that when we feel to be rejected and lonely and to have failed, to be reminded that the Lord is with us with His affection.

V12. After the examples of patience James also exhorts to be patient with the tongue. He sees the abuse of the tongue as the greatest danger, for he says that they “above all” should not swear. When a person is facing a suffering which seems to last endlessly and when waiting for an answer becomes very hard, he runs a great risk to swear. A person then may for instance promise to do things as long as the pain gets lighter or as long as the difficulty disappears. Also revenge can be sworn towards the person who is seen as the cause of this suffering or that problem.

Such expressions of the tongue show the mind of a heart that is not subjected to God. That heart does not strengthen itself in God or in grace, but gives in to impatience. The Lord and His majesty are being forgotten and heaven or earth or other things are being called upon in order to empower the own will. That is very evil, which must be judged.

James speaks a lot about judgment. That’s because he approaches the Christian life practically and he calls the Christian to account for his responsibility. He often points at the tongue. Instead of using powerful terms we are to express ourselves by common words like ‘yes’ and ‘no’. We should not be ambiguous about these words. God and men must be able to rely on our words.

Now read James 5:7-12 again.

Reflection: What makes you to be quickly impatient? How realistic is the coming of the Lord to you?
Prayer | verses 13-20

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

13 Is anyone among you suffering? [Then] he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. 14 Is anyone among you sick? [Then] he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; 15 and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. 16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. 18 Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit. 19 My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, 20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

V13. In the first verse of this portion you see three situations wherein a person can possibly find himself:

- a person can suffer,
- a person can be cheerful and
- a person can be sick.

These are situations that may trigger those who are in such a situation, to respond in a certain way. The point is:

- in what way they respond to sufferings,
- how feelings of joy are being dealt with and
- how do people go through sickness.
The world tries to escape sufferings, it loudly expresses its feelings of joy and it goes through sickness by grinding its teeth. The believer can respond to that totally differently. It is wonderful to see that in each of the three situations James refers to God as the refuge of the believer.

- He who suffers can go to God with his suffering by praying. In that way he will find comfort (2Cor 1:3-7).

- He who lives in prosperity and is not being plagued by adversities, can sing out his thanks to God. In that way he acknowledges God as the source of his prosperity and is being prevented from forgetting God, due to prosperity. We are often willing to bring our sufferings to God, but we often forget to share our joy with Him.

- V14. He who is sick can tell that to the elders of the church. That doesn’t mean that God is not involved here and that the sick person expects his healing from people (cf. 2Chr 16:12), but this is the way that God shows. The elders are as it were His representatives. That doesn’t mean that for each sickness the elders of the church are to be appealed to. Timothy doesn’t get the advice to call the elders of Ephesus to pray for him and make him healthy. Paul gives him the simple advice to take a little wine to drink (1Tim 5:23).

What follows here makes it clear that it is about a serious disease that also may possibly be the consequence of certain sins. If that is the case, the sickness has revealed the sin. It is not enough that the sick keeps his sins between himself and God. The sickness is not a little flu. The word ‘sick’ that James uses, indicates that the sick is weak, without any power. It is also clear that the sick is not able to join the meetings, for he has to call for the elders. Another aspect that you find in the expression “the Lord will raise him up”, is that it is about a person who is bedridden (or housebound), while he lacks the power to raise up.
When the sick has called for the elders, they are to pray over him. The sick is not supposed to pray. The elders must also anoint “him with oil in the name of the Lord”. A lot has been written and said about the effect of the oil or what it represents. I will now pass on some possibilities to you for consideration, for they also meant a lot to me.

The first consideration is that the oil is simply a medication (cf. Isa 1:6; Jer 8:22; Lk 10:34). Therefore we should not ascribe any miraculous effect to that oil, just as less as we are not to do to the lump of figs that Hezekiah had to apply as a poultice on the boil (Isa 38:21). We should allow the Lord to bless the means. That is the reason why His Name is being related to it. Therefore the use of the oil by the elders may be a medical application that helps to lighten the sick from his pain, without relating any conclusion of healing to it. There is no question of a religious ritual here.

The other consideration is that the use of the oil has a symbolic meaning. The anointing then has the meaning in the sense of honoring a person. You can also read about the anointing of the feet of the Lord (Jn 12:3) and the body of the Lord (Mk 16:1). The Lord rebukes Simon for holding back the proof of generosity to Him by not anointing Him (Lk 7:46).

There is also a lot to say in advance of this meaning of anointing. It will make the sick, who may possibly be wondering whether God still cares about him, feel better by experiencing this anointing. In relation with Mark 6:13 the oil perhaps can also be seen as a symbol of power or authority of the elders to pray for healing.

V15. In any case, the prayer and the prayer alone produces blessing from God for the sick believers and the use of oil is in no way an essential part that would be necessary to receive that blessing. It is not the oil that works healing, but the prayer of the faith of the elders. That this prayer of faith is being answered by the Lord, is to be seen in the fact that He raises up the sick.

To the raising up of the sick forgiveness is related in case the sick has sinned. Then there can be no blessing of healing without con-
fession. Therefore confession must have preceded, for sins are only forgiven when they have been confessed. Here it is about the forgiveness by the elders. The sick will have had confessed his sins already to God and will have received forgiveness from God (1Jn 1:9). It is also important that the elders speak out the forgiveness (cf. Jn 20:23; Mat 18:18). As a result to that there is also a public restoration of fellowship with the believers.

V16. The situation of the ‘sickbed prayer’ makes James underline the necessity of the confession of sins to one another, also when there is no mention of sickness. Confessing sins to one another has got nothing to do with the penance, as it is being taught and practiced by the roman-catholic church. In that penance a person confesses his sins to a person who has nothing whatever to do with it and who arrogates the status of mediator between the sinner and God.

The call of James refers to situations wherein we have sinned to one another. Sin always hinders the blessing of God. That hindrance is being taken away by confession. When sin is being confessed, then the blessing can flow freely again and also healing and health can possibly take place in case of sickness.

By the way, it is not wrong for a person to confess sins to a person against whom he has not sinned in case of pastoral counseling. A person may be tortured by a sin, but doesn’t know how to confess. It may possibly be the case that this person for instance has sinned against a person who does not live any more. Then it is a good thing that this person confesses the sin together with a confidential counselor and that the counselor also ensures him that forgiveness by God is certain and clear, because God has said that in His Word.

The power of prayer is awesome. The condition, however, is that it is prayed by a righteous person. By “righteous” James does not mean a person who through faith is righteous to God, but a person who lives righteously. When such a person comes to God with a fervent prayer God can and will surely hear it. He does not need to speak first with the one who prays about things that are
not right in his life. A righteous person is associated with God, he is accustomed to it and that causes him to know the will of God.

You can be a righteous person. That is not a status that you achieve by living rightly, but you are that when, as far as you know, your life is pure before God. God wants to have your prayer involved in His actions. He listens to it and uses it to realize His plans.

V17. As an example of a righteous man who prays an effective, fervent prayer James presents Elijah. Elijah stands next to you and not above you, although you certainly will look up to him. At least I do. He is really a man of God. Elijah also has known his weak moments. For that reason it is written here that he was “a man with a nature like ours”. Therefore you can also learn a lot from him. He was able to stand fearlessly before Ahab because he was aware that he was not standing before Ahab, but before God (1Kgs 17:1). There he made known that there would be no rain. In that announcement you do not read about a prayer. That’s what you read here. James is telling that a prayer preceded that announcement.

How could Elijah pray such a prayer which in fact is a judgment? He knew God’s thoughts and that’s why he prayed this remarkable prayer (see Deu 11:16-17). He loved God’s people and he loved God. God wanted His people to turn back to Him and the only way to realize that was through the judgment of drought. It is a prayer to the Lord not to bless us, so that we may feel that we have departed from Him. The prayer of Elijah was answered.

V18. After a course of time he prayed again and this time he prayed for the rain to fall. He understood that the time of blessing had come, because he had offered up the offering and the people had spoken out the confession that Jahweh is God (1Kgs 18:38-39).

I cannot emphasize enough how important it is, especially in the last days, to pray. We are in need of people who know the will of God and who are convinced about the power of prayer. I hope that you may become a man of prayer. You do not need to have a gift for that, neither do you need to follow a training for that. You
simply have got to do it. Just give a careful consideration about this prayer of Elijah and try to commit yourself to pray more often and more fervently.

V19. James concludes his letter with two verses about bringing back a person who has deviated from the truth. That is in line with Elijah. Elijah was also a restorer. By his prayer he brought back the people to God. You can also by prayer bring back a person to God. Do you know people, believers, who first were faithful in their service for the Lord, but now do not seriously approach the truth anymore? When they continue to do so they will end up in death. You are allowed to bring back such a person from that misguided path by praying for him. When you pray in such a way for the wanderer involved, then the Lord can also make clear to you whether you should see him and how to address him.

V20. In the case of you bringing him back you save him from death and you also cover a multitude of sins. He will repent and confess his way of error. Then he may learn again that all his sins are forgiven, that they have been cast away in the depths of the sea. By bringing back the wanderer you also prevent him from being drawn further into the power of sin. Also in that sense you have made sure that a multitude of sins has been covered, for they were not committed. I sincerely hope that you have the desire that deviated believers will turn back to God.

Now read James 5:13-20 again.

Reflection: Commit yourself to pray for the restoration of deviated believers.
The First Letter of Peter

First read the whole letter. Ask the Lord while reading what His intention is for your personal life with it. Open yourself for His instructions whether to do or not to do or to change something.

Introduction

After the many letters of Paul and the one letter of James you now have a letter of another writer in front of you. The writer is the apostle Peter. He is the disciple about whom there has been the most written in the four gospels, of all the disciples who traveled through Israel with the Lord Jesus. He was also given a special task by the Lord to strengthen and encourage his brothers; those are in the first place his Jewish fellow believers. Peter receives the apostleship to the circumcised, meaning: to the Jews (Gal 2:7). By the writing of his two letters Peter fulfils the order of the Lord: “Strengthen your brothers” (Lk 22:32b).

To be able to fulfill this ministry he had to be educated and shaped. For that purpose God also used satan. Satan had asked God for the disciples that he may sift them as wheat (Lk 22:31). He got God’s permission to do that, whereby as with all temptations, God determines the limits. In that way satan had been an instrument in God’s hand in order to carry out His plans with Peter. The painful experience that Peter had to undergo – that he denied his Lord – was used by the Lord to make him fit for the ministry He had for him. The Lord made sure by His prayer that Peter’s faith should not fail (Lk 22:32a). The evidence of this are his letters.

Peter has learnt a lot from his fall and restoration. He knows from own experience that satan is a terrible enemy and he knows God’s restoring hand that leads out of the depth. His failure reminds him of how great the grace and faithfulness of God are. That is also the way he concludes his letter. As a kind of conclusion he
The First Letter of Peter

says to his readers “that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it” (1Pet 5:12). His whole letter is a testimony of that grace. What God wants to teach you with the grace that He shows, is that you may subject yourself to His will. That was the case with Peter.

After Peter’s restoration in the midst of the other disciples, he receives from the Lord his threefold order (Jn 21:15-17). The lambs and sheep that the Lord entrusts him with He emphatically calls: "My lambs" and "My sheep". It refers to the lambs and the sheep from the stable of Israel. The Lord knew about what His sheep would have to fear from the unbelieving Israelites. That’s why he entrusted them to Peter, who had been a straying sheep himself, but now has returned (Psa 119:176).

Peter calls the sheep that the Lord entrusts him with “those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout …” (1Pet 1:1). Scattering or dispersion is always a judgment of God due to the unfaithfulness of His people. At the same time the grace of God had taken care of them, for the promises of the Old Testament were made to them. They returned, not to the land, but to “the Shepherd and Guardian” of their souls (1Pet 2:25). Peter can help and guide his brothers, who came from a nation that just as he had denied the Lord (Acts 3:13) and who now live outside of Israel.

Just like the other apostles Peter also has a particular issue that characterizes his letters. Paul often presents the believers as members of the church, which means as members of the body of Christ. John sees the believers as members of the family of God. Peter can be called the apostle of the kingdom of God. ‘The kingdom of God’ is actually the main issue of both of his letters (although the expression itself does not appear). That means that he sees the believers and addresses them as servants in the kingdom of God.

In a way Paul also has spoken about the kingdom of God, but Peter is still the one who received the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Mat 16:16-19). (Just for the sake of clarity: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven are the same, but with a different accent.) He used the keys in Acts in order to open the door of the
kingdom successively for the Jews (Acts 2), the Samaritans (Acts 8) and the Gentiles (Acts 10).

In that way Peter has not been made the head of the church or the heaven’s gate keeper. The kingdom of heavens or the kingdom of God is a kingdom on earth. But what is that kingdom actually? When you think of a kingdom you think of a king and subjects. Therefore the kingdom of God is the kingdom that is ruled by God. He rules over everything that is His; that is the universe with everything that belongs there.

You cannot see that yet, but that is the intention of God to soon put everything under the feet of the Son of Man. What you do see is that the Lord Jesus has already been crowned as King (Heb 2:8-9). In the Old Testament the kingdom of God is something to come, for it is related to the coming of the King, the Messiah, the Lord Jesus (Dan 7:13-14). The Lord Jesus is the Heir of all things. But when He came to earth He was rejected. Therefore the kingdom in its announced shape, in which the Messiah will publicly reign, has been delayed for an indefinite time.

Nevertheless the kingdom exists, but actually in a special shape. This shape is unexpected and is not announced by the prophets. The particular thing about it is that the kingdom is not public, but is hidden. Therefore the Lord Jesus speaks about the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven (Mat 13:11). It is a hidden realm, because the King of that realm is hidden. The subjects, those who confess the Lord Jesus as Lord, are not hidden, but He, to Whom they subject themselves, is.

The world doesn’t see the living Lord of Whom the Christians are subjects, for the world has rejected and crucified Him. The world is not subjected yet. The world is still hostile and is still resisting against the believers as it once did to the Lord Jesus. Peter is focusing the eyes of the readers on the glorified Lord and on the future, when He will appear to reward the ones who are His (and to condemn His enemies, but he will write about that in his second letter).
Another theme is the suffering of the believer because of his identification with the rejected Lord. The suffering is presented in such a way that you can conclude that it is due to the following of Christ. Thereby you can discern different kinds that you encounter in this letter.

- Suffering as a test of the faith (1Pet 1:6-7);
- suffering for the sake of the conscience (1Pet 2:19);
- suffering for the sake of righteousness (1Pet 3:14);
- suffering for the sake of Christ and for His Name’s sake (1Pet 4:13-14);
- suffering from the side of satan (1Pt 5:8-9).

As the prophets already announced, suffering is an intermediate stage to glory. Like the Lord Jesus has come to glory right through the suffering, in that way it applies also to you. Therefore you are pointed to the inheritance that lies before you. The glory in this letter is not the Father’s house, but that you will be sharing Christ’s glory in the kingdom. Just like you are suffering with the rejected One now, you will be reigning with the glorified Christ after His return.

In order to understand the letter well, you should always consider that it is addressed to Jewish Christians. They know the Old Testament, they are looking forward to the kingdom and the glory of the Messiah and His government; they know about the judgment over the enemies. Now they believe in a Messiah Who they could not see, while the ungodly ones of the people have not been judged. On the contrary, both the ungodly Jews and the Gentiles cause the Jewish Christians to suffer. Everything is so much different than what they have believed from their childhood. They are being mocked by that, why there is no salvation by their Messiah. Due to that their faith may be wavering.
You are not in the same position, but there are many similarities between your position and that of them. It can also be hard for you to continue to trust in an invisible Lord. That trust in the invisible Lord can also result in different forms of suffering. It applies also to you that through this letter Peter focuses your heart on Him Whom you have got to love, although you do not see Him now.

Now read 1 Peter 1 again.

Reflection: To whom was this letter addressed and what is the main theme of it?
1 Peter 1

Blessing | verses 1-2

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.

V1. “Peter” presents himself as the sender of the letter to his readers. He calls himself by the name that the Lord has given to him (Jn 1:42). Then he clarifies that he writes as “an apostle of Jesus Christ”. In that way his letter has authority. It doesn’t mean that he addresses them from a superiority, but it is in order to ensure his readers that this writing has great significance. An apostle is a representative who speaks or writes on behalf of another person. Therefore he does not write this letter out of courtesy, but it is a letter that he writes on behalf of Jesus Christ. In this letter he passes on the love of the Lord Jesus to His own.

The recipients are addressed as “aliens, scattered”. The readers, the believing Jews, are pilgrims in the areas where they were scattered due to the persecution that broke out because of Stephen (Acts 8:1,4; 11:19). ‘Aliens’ or ‘pilgrims’ find themselves in tough circumstances, far from their native country. The fact that they were ‘dispersed’ implies that they lie under the judgment of God. If they had remained faithful to what God had told them, they would have enjoyed God’s blessings in His land. That is out of the question now. Instead, they find themselves outside the promised land in strange lands.
You may say that these believers are in two ways pilgrims or strangers. They are that to the Gentiles in the midst of whom they find themselves, while they are also that to their unbelieving compatriots, because of their faith in the Messiah.

Peter names the areas where the believing Jews were scattered. Those are the five provinces of the Roman empire that lie in Asia Minor, the present Turkey. It is the area where Paul has worked very often, as you can read in the book of Acts. Although it cannot be said with certainty, it is much likely that many have come to faith owing to his service.

Their dispersion relates to the endurance of suffering they had to bear with. Another reason why Peter writes his letter, is to encourage them in that suffering. He nowhere appeals to resist against that suffering or to rebel against it.

Also today the children of God are dispersed everywhere and endure suffering. If you consistently follow the Lord Jesus you do not count in the world. You cannot find anywhere an appeal to unite yourself with other Christians in order to overthrow governments or even exert any political influence. Neither did the Lord Jesus do that.

V2. In their relation to the world the believers may be strangers who are scattered here and there; in their relation to God things are totally different. Listen to what Peter has to say about their relationship to God. They are great blessings for the believers. The world has no part in that, the world doesn’t even know anything about it. Also the unbelieving Jews have no part in that. He is talking about “chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father”. He also talks about “sanctification of [the] Spirit, unto [the] obedience and sprinkling of [the] blood of Jesus Christ” (JND translation).

Besides, here you see the triune God: God the Father, the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ. The triune God is the Source of all these great blessings and He works that its objects indeed take part in that too.
Let us briefly examine these blessings one by one. First that of being an elect. Being an elect sounds familiar to the pilgrims in the dispersion. They know that they, regarding their national origin, belong to God’s elected people. Only, that election regards an election to be God’s people on earth (*Deu* 7:6). Because the people had rejected the Lord Jesus, Israel has lost that place. When Israel will convert in the future, it will be God’s people.

But at this time there is another election, a higher, a heavenly one for the believers. The election of a believer is destined for heaven and not for earth. Therefore the election that Peter is talking about, stands opposite to the election of God’s earthly people.

This election has happened “*according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*”. The Father has, according to His perfect foreknowledge of all things, elected certain people to be His property (*Eph* 1:4). With God foreknowledge implies more than only knowing all things in advance. Nothing will ever happen that He did not know in advance. However, His foreknowledge is not passive, but it makes Him act in a certain way, like here concerning His election.

For you, who may know to be elected, that is an enormous encouragement, for it gives you the absolute guarantee that your election has been established to eternity. To Peter it is also, with respect to the readers of his letter, a secure matter (*cf.* *2Thes* 2:13). God is saying: ‘You belong to Me.’ Who can reverse that? Who is greater and mightier than God? Therefore election doesn’t depend on your efforts, but on the counsel of God the Father, Who executes what He plans to do (*Rom* 8:28-30). Peter will deal later in this chapter with the responsibilities that are also related to that.

When you look at the election you see the same concerning the following aspect that Peter calls the “*sanctification of the Spirit*”. ‘To sanctify’ means ‘to set apart’. God’s earthly people Israel was set apart from the nations that surrounded them, by all kinds of outer statutes. Thereby the law functioned as a dividing wall (*Eph* 2:14). Peter talks about a ‘sanctification of the Spirit’. The heaven-
ly people where these believers (and we) belong to, has been set apart for God by the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has worked the new life in them, separated them from the world and from Israel and related them to their Messiah Who is in heaven.

The same goes for the next aspect, that of “obedience”. As Jews they were indebted to obey the law, with the promise of life. To them as believers another obedience has replaced that, namely the “obedience … of Jesus Christ” (JND translation). Nobody was able to fulfill the old standard of obedience, the law. But now they are able to fulfill the new standard by the new life they possess.

That new life is the Lord Jesus. In that way they are able to obey just like the Lord Jesus has done. After all you read about the obedience of Jesus Christ. It is not about obeying the law. To the believer the standard of obedience is not the law, but Christ. Look at Him, how He always obeyed His Father in love and you will surely learn to be obedient like that. That obedience goes much further than obeying the law.

As a final aspect – an aspect that even like obedience is related to Jesus Christ – Peter points at the “sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ”. Here you find the blood of Christ as the foundation to obey. The blood gives the perfect security that to God everything is alright.

This aspect also forms a great contrast to what God has given to His people in the past. In the Old Testament indeed blood is mentioned as the ground for the atonement, but that is related to animals. However, that blood cannot take away sins and cannot give anyone a perfect conscience before God. Only the blood of Christ can (Heb 10:4-14). The blood of Christ places you in perfect purity in the sight of God. Through the blood of Christ you have peace with God (Eph 2:13; Col 1:20; Rom 5:1). You may be sure of that position to be yours.

Next to that Peter adds a wish. He wishes that “grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure” or that “grace and peace may be multiplied” to the believers. By that he means that you will expect
more and more from God’s grace and you will trust less and less in your own power. God’s grace will always be there to help you to do anything you have to do. When that awareness is present and also increases, you will surely experience the peace that Peter then wishes the believers.

God wants you to grow, that today you rejoice more in Him than yesterday, in spite of or maybe owing to the hardships that you experience. Actually, when your faith is being put to the test you get the chance to multiply in knowing the grace that God gives to you and in the peace that God Himself has.

Now read 1 Peter 1:1-2 again.

Reflection: In what blessings, according to these verses, may you rejoice?
A Living Hope | verses 3-5

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to [obtain] an inheritance [which is] imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

V3. After his introductory words wherein he highlighted the greatness and the work of the triune God, Peter speaks out a praise. He is full of what the God and Father of the Lord Jesus has done. He cannot do anything else but worship Him. That is what always happens when you are awed by Who God is.

Because he is full of God he sees more of God, of Who He is and what He has done. He speaks in full admiration about God’s “great mercy” through which He did great things which can only amaze us. ‘Mercy’ is caring about people whose need is in such a way that they risk destruction, while they themselves have no possibility at all to come out of that need. It is about totally helpless people who in no way could become partakers of the blessing of God. That is the opportunity for God to show His ‘great mercy’.

Peter speaks about great mercy in relation to the regeneration of a sinner and the blessings attached to it. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ “caused us to be born again”. That is truly great mercy! You have felt your misery and despondency and also your total incapacity to change anything about it. You were standing totally outside God’s blessings. But God was very compassionate about you and He gave you new life.

The fact that you are born again implies that the origin of your new life is ‘from above’ (Jn 3:3). You have been begotten of God.
You yourself could do nothing about that, just as you couldn’t do anything about your natural birth.

You indeed received life through your natural birth, but no hope at all for a happy future. On the contrary, you were brought forth in iniquity and conceived in sin (Ps 51:5). The results have also become visible in your life. Death and hell were therefore your final destination. Through the regeneration that God has worked in you according to “His great mercy”, a radical change has happened in that final destination. You now have been begotten again “to a living hope”.

The hope that Peter presents here is totally different than the view to death and hell. This hope also goes much further than the prospect of a kingdom on earth under the government of the Messiah to which God’s earthly people always had looked forward to and is still looking forward to. The living hope is in fact related to a Jesus Christ Who is resurrected from the dead. The living hope that Peter presents here is not an earthly but a heavenly hope and therefore doesn’t look forward to the inheritance of the land of Canaan. “Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” the eye is focused on a part in another world.

Christ not only has given His blood and died, but He has also risen. You see a living Lord. Thereby you have a living hope and beyond death you see everything there that is related to Him. Without His resurrection there would be no hope (1Cor 15:19-20). A living hope is a hope that is alive in your sight. It is not about something insecure, but contrarily this hope is an absolute security. Through the new life you are sure about that hope.

This hope is both objectively and subjectively to be seen. By that I mean that you can see that hope as something that lies before you, thus something you look forward to. That is the inheritance that is presented in the next verses. You can see that hope also as something that is in you, thus something you feel and experience. That is the hope for the inheritance, the desire for it that makes you to be motivated to joyfully move on through life as a pilgrim.
**1 Peter 1**

V4. Through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus the hope for the inheritance has become your part. It is an inheritance that with perfect assurance will be your possession. It is reserved for you and it cannot be defiled by anything or robbed by anyone. The inheritance is fixed in heaven and is preserved there for you in Jesus Christ, the risen and glorified Man.

Nothing has the power to diminish the value of that inheritance.

- It is "imperishable", therefore not to be harmed by death, through which it would ultimately be destroyed.
- It is also "undefiled", therefore free from every spot and also not to be damaged by anything attached to sin.
- It also "will not fade away" and is therefore without any flaw or even a little reduction of its beauty and is not to be damaged by any test of time.

This inheritance is related to ‘the Heir of all things’ (Heb 1:2). Therefore it is untouchable for death, filthiness and decay.

The inheritance is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus that these Israelites, whom Peter is addressing, will once enter, just like you and I. However, it does not concern the kingdom on earth or the earthly part of the kingdom, which certainly will also be there, but the heavenly part of the kingdom. When the Lord Jesus will openly reign over heaven and earth, all believers who have died or have been taken up before the millennial kingdom comes, will be allowed to reign together with Him from heaven over all who are in heaven (angels, 1Cor 6:3) and who are on earth and over all things that are on earth (1Cor 6:2). It is the best part that you can ever imagine in the kingdom.

V5. The inheritance is therefore reserved for you by God in a place where no thief and moth and corrosion can possibly take away or damage. But what happens to the heirs? Aren’t they very weak and impotent to be able to preserve themselves? That is for sure. Therefore Peter also has an encouraging word for the heirs. They
actually are preserved by the power of God for the inheritance. Therefore you can be sure that the inheritance is reserved for you and that you are preserved for the inheritance.

And how does that happen? By nothing less than the “power of God”. As weak as you are, as strong as God is. You are being preserved by a guard that is continuously there and which cannot be misguided or overpowered. That is quite an assurance for you as an heir that you will possess the inheritance!

The mention of ‘being kept’ indicates that there is danger. That is something you should be aware of. The guard is not supposed to make you careless. You may know – and that is supposed to give you rest – that you are kept by the faithfulness and power of God. At the same time there is also something you should do. In order to experience God’s preserving power “faith” is needed from your side. Faith ascribes to God the place He is worthy of and it keeps you in the place of confidence in Him. Thereby you hold on to the declarations of His Word. Faith is essential until the inheritance will be obtained.

The fact that His preservation happens by the means of faith, means that it is only applied to believers. It also means that believers have the responsibility to trust themselves to Him for that preservation. After all, believing means to have confidence. He doesn’t take His own by the hand to drag them along and in this way bring them to the final goal. He works by faith, whereby He also makes sure that the faith does not cease. Peter experienced that preservation. After he denied the Lord he got restored, because the Lord had prayed for him that his faith would not fail (Lk 22:32).

As it is said, faith is needed as long as we are on the way to the final goal. Peter calls that final goal “salvation ready to be revealed in the last time”. Therefore the salvation here is still to come. The salvation is what will be our ultimate part when we are with the Lord and then come to earth together with Him.
That the salvation is *ready*, implies that everything that is necessary for it has been done already. That the salvation has not come yet has got to do with the longsuffering of God, Who doesn’t want that any should perish (*2Pet 3:9*).

With “*the last time*” Peter means that when the salvation indeed comes, the fulfillment of time will occur. It is the millennial kingdom of peace in which all times will find their fulfillment (*Eph 1:10*). Then the salvation will be revealed, it will become visible. After the millennial kingdom there will be no period of time anymore, but eternity will come.

Now read 1 Peter 1:3-5 again.

Reflection: To what degree is ‘the living hope’ that you have received, alive?
The Test of Faith | verses 6-12

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 so that the proof of your faith, [being] more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls. 10 As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that [would come] to you made careful searches and inquiries, 11 seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look.

V6. The time of blessing and rest that will come with the coming of the millennial kingdom rejoices the heart of the pilgrim and encourages him to move on in faith. It will not last much longer, it will take only “a little while”, before you reach the goal. It is a short time in comparison to eternity and also in comparison to the time of the kingdom of peace that will last a thousand years (cf. 2Cor 4:17).

In that short time you will suffer “various trials”. Peter says additionally “if necessary”. When you in your life of faith suffer trials, it is because God thinks it to be necessary, in order to test your faith. Only when we face difficulties, it will appear what faith means to us, whether we really trust in God. When everything is going smoothly it is not difficult to have faith.
Trials or tests do not make things pleasant, they are no source of joy, but of sorrow. Nevertheless there can be joy when you are being tempted. After all, it can be a cause of joy when you consider that the trial or temptation is a proof that God is engaged with you. A trial that you have to face shows that He has an interest in you. This is how James is presenting it (Jam 1:3). So on the one hand there is sorrow, on the other hand there is joy (cf. 2Cor 6:10).

V7. There are “various” or different kinds of trials that God sends or allows to happen in the life of the believer, in order to test his faith. As it is said, He does that only when He thinks it to be necessary. For the important thing that He has in mind is that the faith will be expressed. Trials are therefore tests, for the goal of the test is not only to make the faith express itself, but also to make it more pure. To God the faith of His own is “more precious than gold”. Gold is the most precious metal in creation, but it is perishable. The faith on the contrary is not perishable.

To make gold as pure as possible it is freed from everything that diminishes its value. In order to achieve that, a process is needed whereby it is kept in the fire and is being smelted. In that way everything that is not gold will float to the surface and will be removed. That is the same with the faith that is being purified from all unfamiliar elements (Psa 66:10; Pro 17:3) in the fiery trial (1Pet 4:12). Tests make faith more and more pure (Job 23:10). Also the prophet Malachi speaks about the purifying process that the believers from Israel will have to endure in the great tribulation, which is with a view to the coming of the Messiah (Mal 3:1-3).

The purifying process is executed by the Divine Smelter. He determines the level of the temperature of the test with a view to the genuineness of the faith. Thereby He will not surpass what the faith can bear (1Cor 10:13).

The result of His perfect wisdom will become completely visible at the revelation of Jesus Christ, Who will then be glorified in His saints and will be admired in all who believe (2Thes 1:10). Then it will become visible to all eyes how precious that faith is, that enabled these believers on earth to endure everything. The invis-
ible Christ Who was rejected by the world, but Who meant everything to those believers, will become visible as the true motive of their life. He will be given all praise and honor and glory for His love and grace that surpass everything. This love and grace have given strength to the ones He owns to keep on trusting Him in the most difficult circumstances.

V8. Still Peter has not finished yet with presenting the glories that are related to the Lord Jesus and the faith in Him. Your life in faith does not only consist of expecting and looking forward to, but also of something that you now already possess and that is He Himself. You do not see Him, you even have not ever seen Him, but you still love Him. That is because of your new nature that loves the Beloved. That is how you have gained eyes of the heart and are able to see by faith (Eph 1:18; Heb 11:10,27; Jn 8:56).

To love Him and to rejoice in Him have a decisive and educational influence on your heart. It makes the heart firm and fills it with joy, whatever the circumstances. You have never ever seen the Lord Jesus, nor have you seen His blood, neither His work on the cross. But you surely know that it is all true. You believe that. It gives you a joy that you cannot possibly put into words. Your whole heart and life are full of it. It is a joy that is “full of glory”, which means that this joy is not from the earth and also doesn’t fit here, but it comes from heaven. ‘Full of glory’ means full of praise. It is a joy that is full of praise that is ascribed to the Lord Jesus.

V9. The pleasure of that joy also gives the consciousness of the “salvation of your soul”. The salvation of the soul is “the outcome of your faith”, meaning the goal of the faith, that what is being established by faith. You have accepted the Lord Jesus as the One Who was willing to die for your sins on the cross. That immediately gave you the salvation of your soul. That your soul has been saved implies that you inwardly have been perfectly liberated from the consequences of sin and that you are also free from the fruits of the misery of sin.
Your body, however, has not been saved yet (Rom 8:23). You still can get sick for instance. Also creation has not been saved yet, but still groans under the consequences of sin (Rom 8:22). The full salvation is still to come, that is what you are hoping for and that is where you perseveringly are looking forward to (Rom 8:24-25).

V10. The prophets of the Old Testament have prophesied about this salvation. They spoke about a time of peace and righteousness on earth during the wholesome government of the Lord Jesus. They understood that they were talking about things that they themselves did not possess, but that it is only “grace” to those who were going to partake of that. That grace was possessed by the readers of this letter. Isn’t it a great grace to be able to believe in Him through Whom the salvation has been fully realized in your soul and through Whom the salvation will be fully realized in creation?

V11. The prophets have shown the greatest interest in the things about which the “Spirit of Christ” inspired them to write. They made efforts to understand the things they wrote about. That a glorious time was going to come with the revelation of the Messiah was not a mystery to them. But what they could not understand, is that the Messiah first had to suffer and only thereafter the time of all kind of glories will come. Isn’t it indeed a great grace for you to know that the Messiah Jesus Who had suffered on earth, has now already been crowned in heaven with honor and glory (Heb 2:9) and that He will soon fill the world with His glory?

V12. God’s Spirit revealed to the prophets that the things they were reporting were not for themselves, but for the Jewish readers of this letter and also for us. Your eyes have been opened by those who have preached the gospel to you. These are the new testament evangelists, for, according to Peter, they had spoken “by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven”. After all, the Holy Spirit could only come after the Lord Jesus was glorified by God in heaven (Jn 7:39; Acts 2:33). What the Holy Spirit has revealed now in the gospel, relates to a glorified Christ and the relation of the believers with Him.
Then you read about a second party of those who are interested: the angels. Therefore there are two parties that have interest in these things: the prophets and the angels. But the angels themselves have no part in the things in which they are interested. The angels are eager to gain insight in the mystery of how God made worshippers of His Son from the murderers of His Son. They could recall the rebellion among the armies of angels when satan and his supporters resisted against God. They know how these fallen angels have caused that also man became rebellious against God. And now God grants salvation to fallen, rebellious people. That’s what extremely amazes the angels and that is something of which they would love to understand more.

In that view angels are an example to many Christians who, while they indeed have part in these things don’t show any interest in them at all. I assume that this does not apply to you, for then you would not read this explanation.

Now read 1 Peter 1:6-12 again.

Reflection: How can you purify your faith and how do you experience your joy in the Lord?
Be Sober and Holy | verses 13-16

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober [in spirit], fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts [which were yours] in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all [your] behavior; 16 because it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

V13. After the explanation about what has to do with Christ and His suffering and His glory, Peter speaks about the practical consequences that went together with these facts. You may know what your blessings are, but according to God’s thoughts you only have a right understanding of them when they also have an effect in your life. In order to work that out, Peter exhorts to take certain actions. He does that in a fervent, authoritative language.

First he says that you must “prepare your minds for action” or “gird up the loins of your mind” (JND translation). To ‘gird up’ has to do with making yourself ready to set out, prepare yourself, to leave. You see that when the people of Israel had to make themselves ready to leave Egypt (Exo 12:11). This is how you should be ready for the call of the Lord to leave the world and enter into the kingdom. This is the proper attitude of the pilgrim and that prevents you from settling yourself here on earth as if your future is here below. Other aspects that are related to girding up, are compliance and fights (Lk 12:35, 37; Jn 13:4-5; Eph 6:14).

What we must gird up, is ‘the loins’. The loins indicate the strength to walk (Deu 33:11; Job 40:16; Pro 31:17). When you have an illness in your loins you can forget about a brisk walk. Here the loins are related to your mind. The exhortation to gird up the loins of your mind means that you are being exhorted to let yourself to be guided in your thinking by Christ from Whom you have received your mind, to be strengthened with power and spiri-
tually be enlightened (1Jn 5:20). You have a mind, which means insight by God’s Spirit and God’s Word, of the things that will happen. Remain focused on those things and don’t let yourself be distracted by all kinds of matters that may seem to be interesting, but which are only ideas of people.

That is what the next exhortation is related to “keep sober.” You are sober when you see reality as it really is. That reality is the coming revelation of Jesus Christ Who will come to judge the world and to establish His kingdom.

Your soberness will disappear when you do not focus your mind on the future, but on the here and now. I have heard about a quite serious story that illustrates this biblical soberness very well. It is about the proclamation of the gospel to cannibals. Some evangelists went to cannibals in order to preach the gospel to them. Two of them were killed and eaten by them. Another one had the chance to escape. Still, a certain John persisted to go there to bring the gospel to those people. When he talked about this with an old theologian, the latter tried to persuade him with apparently sober argument to stop him from going. The answer of John was: ‘You will soon be buried and be eaten by worms. It is not a big difference whether I will be buried here and be eaten by worms or go there and be eaten by cannibals.’ That is ‘soberly thinking’ in the biblical sense of the word. The result is that the gospel reached that place and people came to faith there.

This soberness focuses the thoughts on the future that is totally controlled by the Lord Jesus. If you belong to Him, you will also share in His future, in His revelation or appearance. Then, after the exhortations to gird up your mind, you are exhorted to fully hope “on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ”. You must “fully” hope upon that. Therefore you should not allow anything to diminish that hope. No worry or illness is to make you hope less upon that grace.

It goes without saying that you are not to allow a certain sin to be the cause of that. When there is sin in your life you will not even hope upon that grace. Then you will keep at a distance the
thought of the revelation of the Lord Jesus. In order to look forward again to His coming with a desire it is necessary for you to confess your sin. When there is mention of sin in your life, I would urge you to hurry up to clear out that hindrance.

_V14._ Maybe there is no concrete sin in your life, but there is the inclination to give in to sin. You feel that you are being drawn to commit a certain sin. That may be caused by your desires of the past. Considering that, the next exhortation comes to you: ‘Be like a child of obedience, not conforming yourself to the former lusts.’ Do you remember what verse 2 says? You have been called for the obedience of Jesus Christ.

Literally it is not ‘obedient children’ but “children of obedience”, children who live according to the principle of obedience. That you are able to live as a child of obedience is the result of the fact that you are a child of God. You are born of God and due to that you have received God’s nature (2Pet 1:4).

It looks strange that Peter speaks to them about “former … in your ignorance”, while in their past they were actually so familiar with God. The Jews were treating the ignorant Gentiles with contempt and thought that only they had the knowledge, regarding the true God (Rom 2:17-20). It is true that God revealed Himself to them in a special way. However, that’s what made them arrogant. Their whole history has shown that they only boasted in their outward position and at the same time they were following their fleshly lusts.

Before the time that the Jews, to whom this letter is addressed, had come to faith in the Lord Jesus as the Messiah, they were also living like that. They abandoned that when they converted, but the danger to fall back is always there. For that reason they need to be warned not to live like that again.

_V15._ After this warning to lay aside something an exhortation follows to take up something. The Scripture is always balanced. This is how the Scripture speaks about putting off something and putting on something (e.g. Col 3:8,12). The point here is not about
being conformed to something of the past and to become holy in your whole walk instead. In this view you may compare your life with a garden. A garden is more than the absence of weed. It is necessary to weed, but it is not an occupation in itself. The important thing is that the garden exposes a sea of flowers or that it bears fruits. This is how your life as a Christian is like. That life is not being characterized by things that are not there, but by things that are actually there or things that are still to come. Here the point is that everything in your life (“all [your] walk”) thus your whole appearance) is holy, meaning totally devoted to God. The essential thing is that Christ, the Man Who is perfectly devoted to God, becomes visible in your life.

To be holy looks negative. That is true when you only see it as being set apart from the wrong. But to be holy is positive. The main idea is in fact: to be set apart for (something). You derive that from the first time when the word ‘sanctify’ in the Bible is used. That is at the creation when God sanctifies the seventh day (Gen 2:3). At that time there was nothing wrong yet in the creation. Everything that God had made was very good. Still God sanctified the seventh day. He set that day apart from all the other days as a day for Himself.

V16. To underline the importance of holiness Peter quotes a verse from the Old Testament. There God appeals to His people to be holy, because He is holy (Lev 11:44; 19:2; 20:26-27). But would His holiness only apply to the Old Testament and not to the New Testament? If you give this some thought, it will be clear to you that the holy God of the Old Testament is the same holy God of the New Testament. Nowhere has that become more evident than when He did not spare His own Son on the cross.

In the Old Testament He could not have anything to do with sin and in the New Testament He cannot either. The appeal to be holy is obvious, because God is holy. He cannot possibly apply a lower standard than Himself to a nation that is related to Him, whether it is an old testament nation or a new testament nation. The message regarding God’s holiness, which is obvious in the Old Testament, is made obvious like that by Peter here in the New Testa-
ment. That appeal should make you to totally devote yourself to Him.

Now read 1 Peter 1:13-16 again.

Reflection: Why is it important to be ‘sober’ and ‘holy’?
Redeemed With Precious Blood  |  verses 17-21

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

17 If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay [on earth]; 18 knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, [the blood] of Christ. 20 For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you 21 who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

V17. Peter adds another argument to the appeal to be holy. That argument comes out from the great privilege that you now have, that you may call God your Father. That privilege is indeed great. By the Spirit Who dwells in you, you cry out “Abba, Father” (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6). You may call on Him, honor Him, glorify and worship Him.

However, that privilege is attached to responsibility also. God is a Father Who loves you and Who, because of His love for you, also chastises you when He sees that you are going or running the risk to drift away. God is not an earthly father, who often does not chastise or sometimes even practices discipline out of a wrong motive (Heb 12:9-10a). He is a Father Who only chastises when it is necessary.

He perfectly judges each one’s work without giving preference to or being detrimental to anyone. He doesn’t only chastise to test your faith, but He also chastises when your holiness is in lack of something (see Heb 12:10b).

The judgment of the Father that Peter talks about here, does not refer to the judgment after this earthly life. That judgment has been given to the Lord Jesus by Him (Jn 5:27). The judgment of
the Father relates to your life as a pilgrim. When your life honors Him, it has His approval. When your life dishonors Him He will come your way to clarify to you that something has to be changed.

Therefore you are to go your way on earth “in fear”. Fear does not imply to be afraid of God or of still going to perish. Fear here means to fear for yourself because you know what is still within yourself that may cause you to do something that will grieve God your Father. Consider that you are His child and that you have become that by the redemption that the Lord Jesus has achieved for your sake. What a huge price did He pay for that! How could you still walk in the desires of the past, while you have been redeemed in such a way?

The fear to do something that is not to the honor of God ought to characterize you “during the time of your stay [on earth]”. The expression ‘stay’ (sojourning) indicates that you have no permanent residence on earth. As you have seen earlier you are being addressed in this letter as a pilgrim. You are a stranger on earth, on the way to your inheritance. That is something you should continually be aware of, for otherwise you will be distracted from the goal by various attractive things around you. The path of a sojourner is the path of the Lord Jesus. He has been the true Stranger and Sojourner on earth. He had no home, even no place where He could lay His head (Mat 8:20). When you stay focused on Him you will walk throughout the time of your stay here in a way that is pleasing to God.

V18. That it is not about a fear to still be able to perish or a fear because of the insecurity whether you are or are not a child of God, is to be derived from verse 18. Peter says clearly “knowing”. That rules out every possible doubt. And what do they know precisely? That they have been redeemed. They know what had certainly not and what certainly had redeemed them. They also know what they have been redeemed from: from all their rituals and traditions, from the walk of their ancestors.
By doing whatever you did before, you could not be redeemed. A walk after tradition, after copied and transmitted rituals, doesn’t bring a man any closer to the redemption. On the contrary. To one who in his heart trusts in an outward walk, the true redemption will disappear more and more from his sight. Such a person will get stuck more and more in outer appearances. Such a walk bears no fruit at all; it makes a person ‘unfruitful’ in the sense of emptied of content.

In order to partake of the blessings of God, it is essential to get redeemed from such a walk. Such a walk is like a prison. Those to whom Peter is writing could not be redeemed from that prison by perishable things like silver and gold. They know about a redemption by silver and gold (Exo 30:12), but that was an outward redemption and no liberation from a system that kept them imprisoned. It is the same as the blood of bulls and goats that cannot take away sins (Heb 10:4).

V19. In contrast to that completely inadequate blood is the “precious blood … of Christ”. That blood has certainly been sufficient to work the true and definite redemption. The blood of Christ was shed for the forgiveness of all your sins and for the redemption from all powers that were keeping you in bondage. It is as of the blood of an unblemished and unspotted lamb.

The lamb was the basis of the redemption of God’s earthly people from Egypt, whom by the blood were protected against the judgment of God (Exo 12:1-13). The Lamb, Christ, is the basis of Christendom. By the surrender of Christ in death and the shedding of His blood God’s judgment passes over each one who hides behind it. That means that it applies to him who believes that Christ has also shed His blood for his sins. Everyone who believes that partakes of the eternal redemption (Heb 9:12).

V20. God had the Lamb in mind already “before the foundation of the world”. Our redemption did not arise in God when He saw that sin entered the world and how miserable our condition was. God was not surprised by the fall of man. He knew what man would do. Before man had sinned, indeed before the world was
created, His mind was already focused on His Son, of Whom He knew that this One was going to be the Lamb.

This is what makes our position as Christians much more wonderful than that of Israel. Israel is a nation that is elected by God from the foundation of the world and that is destined for the earth (Mat 25:34; Rev 13:8). The new testament believers are elected before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4) and are destined for heaven.

What God already knew before the foundation of the world He did not keep to Himself alone. Christ has been revealed as the Lamb. He revealed Himself to His people and to the world. That’s why John could point to Him and say: “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (Jn 1:29). The end of the times commenced when the Lord Jesus came into the world as the Lamb. In all previous times God tried to encourage the most privileged people on earth, His people, to obey Him. Again and again man made clear that he was not willing to.

Then, as the final test, His Son came on earth. But instead of listening to Him the sin of man is exposed in the most horrible way. Men rejected and murdered the Son. In this way the obduracy of man was definitely determined. In a striking way this is all illustrated in the parable of the wicked vinedressers that is told by the Lord Jesus (Mat 21:33-46).

What means man ends, has given God the opportunity to make a new beginning. On the one hand the Lord Jesus has been revealed as the Lamb, in order to determine the sin of man in a most obvious way. When man rejects God, Who has revealed Himself in goodness, his condition is hopeless. On the other hand, the Lord Jesus has revealed Himself as the Lamb for the sake of each who believes, thus also for your sake. Through Him you believe in God. In Him you see that God is not an angry and vindictive God. On the basis of what the Lord Jesus has done for you, you know that God is not against you anymore, but He is for you (Rom 8:31-32). After all He gave His Son as the Lamb.
V21. Therefore you not only believe in the Lord Jesus as The One Who protects you against the wrath of God, but you also believe in God as the One Who made everything well. By raising Christ from the dead God has given the convincing evidence that He has considered and accepted the work of His Son as perfect. God gave Him the glory He is worthy of.

Your faith and hope are focused on God. All originated in Him. By the faith in what God has done with His Christ He will lead you to the goal. That goes together with the hope that the same Lord Who is now with God, will come back to reign and with Whom you will also be involved.

Now read 1 Peter 1:17-21 again.

Reflection: What do you learn in this section about the work of God, about the work of Christ and about yourself?
Brotherly Love and Born Again  |  verses 22-25

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

22 Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, 23 for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, [that is], through the living and enduring word of God. 24 For, “ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF, 25 BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER.” AND THIS IS THE WORD WHICH WAS PREACHED TO YOU.

V22. After the impressive words in the previous verses about the work of Christ and the wonderful results it has for those who partake of it, it is not a surprise that an appeal follows for “a sincere love of the brethren”. You have not reached your destination yet, you are still on the way to the inheritance. In the world you are a pilgrim, but you have a company in the world where you are at home. On the way to the goal you see brothers and sisters around you, people who have the same goal in mind. They are the objects of the same love of God and redeemed by the same Lamb. In their company you feel the warmth of brotherly love. Your presence contributes to the temperature of the brotherly love, for brotherly love is mutual. It receives and radiates warmth.

The call comes to you as a person whose soul has been purified “in obedience to the truth”. You have recognized yourself as a sinner in the light of God’s truth and in obedience you have confessed your sins to God and have been converted. That was done to you by a purifying work (Jn 15:3). You have become pure, you have received a pure heart. In practice it becomes visible in sincerely loving your brother and sister. The brotherly love is a proof of the new nature. You love your brothers because they are born of God (1Jn 5:1).

The fact that Peter speaks about ‘sincere’ love of the brethren, makes clear that it is a genuine love, which is without hypocrisy and without pretense. Hypocrisy, pretending to be someone...
you’re not, belongs to your former life. Therefore, in the company of brothers and sisters it is not only about a little, dull love, but about ‘a fervent love’ to one another. It is a command to love one another intensely. That excludes that we love each other dutifully. Also insincere or impure intentions are out of the question in this way of loving. It should be a love that comes from a pure heart.

V23. In a pure heart there is no room for sin; it is a heart that lives in fellowship with God. That fellowship started with having been born again. This new birth is a birth that has been worked by God’s Word and God’s Spirit (Jn 3:5). The Word is a seed that was sown in your heart and out of which the new life has been developed. The Word of God has life in itself. That life is not “perishable”, transient, but “imperishable”, everlasting, as God Himself is the imperishable, everlasting God (Rom 1:23; 1Tim 1:17). When He gives life, it is the life from Himself that of course also has His features.

V24. That life is in huge contrast to the life of the man who is not born of God. This contrast you also see in the quotation from the prophecy of Isaiah (Isa 40:6-8). From the quotation it becomes clear what the natural man is as originated from corruptible seed. The life of a natural man looks like grass and like a flower of the field. It is a metaphorical illustration of a life in which everything looks to be prosperous and wonderful, but when you look at it closely it is momentary and its loveliness quickly fades away.

V25. In contrast to that life Isaiah does not present the life from God, but the Word of God. The life from God is inseparably related to the Word of God. We have received the new life from the new birth only because God has revealed His Word to us by proclamation. That Word has worked the new life in us and therefore that life remains to eternity. It cannot possibly ever perish, just as something from God’s words can never perish. The new nature remains forever, for that is as imperishable as the Word of God.

Now read 1 Peter 1:22-25 again.

Reflection: How do you express your love to your brothers and sisters?
1 Peter 2

Spiritual Growth | verses 1-2

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, 2 like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, …

V1. The first verse of chapter 2 relates to the previous portion. That is to be derived from the commencing words “therefore, putting aside”. Those words sound like a logical result of what was said earlier. What is to be laid aside is all displays of the flesh, the ego, through which you devalue others in favor of yourself. ‘To put aside’ means to radically and immediately break with these things and in no way allow them to control you again. When Peter appeals to lay these things aside it implies that they occur among the readers of his letter and that they can also occur among us. Or don’t you recognize that you can also behave like that at times?

It is also not about a display at times on a certain occasion, but it is about “all malice and all deceit” and “all slander”.

- How easy do we feel “malice” arise from ourselves for various reasons,

- how easy do we make use of “deceit”,

- do we deceive others in various situations and do we pretend ourselves to be better (“hypocrisy”) or

- do we begrudge others all kinds of things they possess (“envy”).
And let us not forget the “slander”. How easy we make ourselves guilty of that in all kinds of conversations.

Depart from these things inwardly, do not let yourself be tempted and condemn it directly when you notice that one of these things arise in you.

V2. Besides these things seriously damage the relations among believers, they are also great hindrances for the spiritual growth. That’s the next issue Peter speaks about. When you are born again you have new life. That life longs for food, just like a newborn baby longs for it. You do not have to encourage a baby to drink. He naturally gives a sign for that. The food of a believer is the “pure milk” of the Word of God.

A healthy spiritual growth is extraordinarily important. Even like in natural life, health in spiritual life also depends on the kind of food you consume. Therefore you should lay aside everything that sabotages the brotherly love, which hinders the growth. That refers to verse 1. You should suck up the good Word instead, like a babe searches the mother’s breast, because he senses that there is the life that is needed to grow. That refers to verse 2.

The point here is not the first stage of the spiritual growth, about a person who is newly converted. It is not about a phase in the spiritual growth (like in Hebrews 5:12), but it is about a feature that applies to both babes in faith and spiritually matured believers. It goes for each believer that spiritual undernourishment arises when there is no hunger for it and no consumption. When a believer does not hunger for the Word there is definitely something wrong. A healthy Christian continually hungers for the milk from God’s Word. By nourishing yourself with God’s Word you grow to salvation, meaning to the full salvation.

God’s Word has saving power, not only for the future, but also for the road that brings you there. There are three aspects attached to salvation. The first is that you are saved for eternity. The second is that you are kept safe in all kinds of dangerous situations by
obeying the Word. The third is that you will be saved when you are with the Lord.

When you stuff yourself with light or even foolish reading matters you will not grow spiritually and you will grow crooked. Easily readable, cheap novels with a little bit of the gospel do not protect you against the attacks of satan who is seeking to make you sin. When you read such reading matters as a kind of spiritual candy, you will spiritually get sick. It is even more damaging when you consume reading matters that contain poison, for then the end is death. Then nothing will be left of your testimony as a Christian than a corpse.

Recently I read a report on Habakkuk, a digital daily magazine, on the internet, that I would like to pass on to you at the end of this section. It has got everything to do with integrating God’s Word within yourself. The report sounds as follows:

How do you properly transfer knowledge? … the French writer and a former teacher Daniel Pennac … argues: Education needs slowness and a revaluation of work as an activity of the spirit for the long duration. Only by slowness you can integrate something within yourself …. (Trouw, Dutch daily newspaper 15-12-2008)

According to Pennac you do a great favor to your pupils when you help them to develop a ‘mental library’. Pennac managed to make his own students fanatically learn phrases by heart. ‘A mental library’, isn’t that an awesome possession! It’s like always having a piece of Kafka or Marquez at hand. It’s not about learning something by heart which you later forget. No, it is about penetrating in the phrases step by step. And as soon as you have understood the phrase, it is a question of repeating and repeating, like somebody who really knows what he’s talking about. Afterwards you should practice of course and remain repeating, but you will not manage without understanding it.’
Without being conscious of that Pennac proposes a great challenge to Christians ... We have the Bible often in snippets in our head ... Wouldn’t that be an enormous treasure if you would have complete chapters or even complete books from the Bible in your mental library? That you penetrate through the texts step by step. And as soon as you have the understanding of a phrase, you repeat and repeat again ...

Now read 1 Peter 2:1-2 again.

Reflection: What are you doing, in order to grow spiritually?
First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

... 3 if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. 4 And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For [this] is contained in Scripture: “BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER STONE, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.” 7 This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, “THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER STONE,” 8 and, “A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE”; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this [doom] they were also appointed.

V3. So it is important that you spiritually grow. To do that properly you should not depend on a good intellect, but on your spiritual taste. The things Peter is speaking about do not address the intellect, but the heart that has “tasted the kindness of the Lord”. It is about the word of the Beloved and love is in the first place related to the heart, with the feelings that are in there for the Beloved. If you have tasted that the Lord is gracious you cannot help but long to know Him better. And how do you manage to know Him better? Through His Word. The more you read in His Word the more you will grow in your knowledge of Him.

Once you have tasted the Word and you have acquired the taste for it, your hunger for more will increase more and more. You may have heard the remark that he or she has ‘a very good taste’, by which people refer to the clothes a person wears or the way a person has decorated his house. Someone’s taste appears in that way. Your taste for God’s Word becomes apparent from the value that God’s Word has for you. Do you read it and do you live up to it? Then you will certainly grow.
V4. The growth also has a purpose. It is God’s intention that you behave like a priest, that you serve Him as a priest in His house. That is what the following verses are dealing with. Considering the priest service, it is of importance that you do not grow improperly. In the book of Leviticus, the book that is especially about the priest service, there is mention of members of the priestly family that are not allowed to exercise that service because of a defect of the body (Lev 21:16-23).

When we apply that spiritually, it means that a person cannot exercise a priest service when he hasn’t got a good view on his position as a believer, due to wrong teachings. You may think of a person who has always heard that it is not possible for you to know for sure whether you are saved, or that a believer who surely knows he is saved, thinks that he still can perish.

The priesthood of the believer is therefore directly related to the growth of the believer. These two aspects are related to one another through the Lord Jesus as “a living stone”. You came to Him when you converted and He accepted you. Coming to Him is however not an action that you do only once, after which you can continue to go your own way again. Now you have become a child of God, it is important that you continue to go to Him. He is the living stone. He has risen from the dead. Consider that it applies to you that there is life in Him alone. Therefore you are to be and remain related to Him.

To grow and to be edified you are dependent on Him. You see that Peter changes metaphors. First he speaks about growth and now he speaks about a stone and later about a house. He uses all these metaphors to make clear how your relation to Christ has become.

You come to Him Who “has been rejected by men”. You clearly see that in the gospels. You read there how His people and the Gentiles relegated Him to the cross and chose Barabbas instead of Him. Once you also rejected Him, but now you have come to Him and you continually come to Him. In Him you have discovered the most precious, which He always has been for God already.
You read here that He “is choice and precious in the sight of God”. That is much more than what He means to you, but at the same time it is something that you totally agree with. He is chosen by and precious to God and also to you.

V5. Because He is the living stone and you have come to Him, you now also have become a living stone. That implies that you have His nature. And there is still more. You are not the only one who became a living stone. To build a house you need many stones. That is how Peter also presents it. Together with all other living stones, which means together with each believer, you are being built up “a spiritual house”.

The intention of this house is clear. It is a house wherein God dwells and wherein the believers also may dwell (Eph 2:19-22). This house is built on the Lord Jesus as the Son of the living God (Mat 16:16-18). He is the living stone, the rock (petra in Greek), and you and all believers are ‘Peter’ (that means: (rock)stone, a piece of the rock). You see here a beautiful play of words.

Peter however, doesn’t see the believers as housemates of God and of one another, but as priests. Therefore the house here is a dwelling place of priests and their duty is to offer up sacrifices, spiritual sacrifices of course. You are a priest and together with others you form “a holy priesthood”, a generation of priests. Like a living stone together with other living stones form the spiritual house, you are as a priest a priesthood, together with others.

The task of a priest in the Old Testament is to offer up sacrifices. The task of a priest in the New Testament is not different. What is indeed different is the offering service. That does not consist of literal sacrifices, but of spiritual sacrifices (Heb 13:15). To God only the sacrifices that refer to His Son and the work He has accomplished, are pleasing. In order to get to this point to offering up sacrifices, you need to understand how precious the Lord Jesus is to God.

The priesthood is a ‘holy’ priesthood. It is a priesthood that is totally for God, but it is also set apart by Him. Human efforts are
absolutely excluded. It is one of the many and major deceptions of roman-catholicism to let literal priests, on the ground of a human training, function as a separate group between the church people and God. This mediation is a denial of the general priesthood that God has established for all believers.

You are a priest and each true child of God is a priest. Any appointment, consecration or blessing ceremony by men is completely against what God has established on the ground of the work of His Son. If that’s the way God has established it, then make use of that. Offer up those sacrifices. How do you do that? By telling God Who the Lord Jesus is for you, what He has done for you. Just simply tell God what you have read in His Word about His Son. That is what He loves to hear and He will show you more and more of His Son as a response to that.

V6. The Scripture testifies on each page of the joy that God finds in the Lord Jesus. Peter quotes from that to confirm what he just said. With the word “behold” he appeals to look at it carefully and to make yourself aware that the initiative was taken by God. He laid “a choice stone, a precious corner [stone]” in Zion (Isa 28:16). The intention of the use of the quotation is to make clear to you that God Himself has laid this stone.

In the quotation it is about Zion or Jerusalem, but it also applies to us. It applies to both the earthly Jerusalem and the heavenly Jerusalem that only what is built on Christ, will remain. Because you have put your trust in Him you “will not be disappointed”. That applies to everyone who does that, whatever the circumstances are in which he or she may be.

V7. This treasure is only for those who acknowledge the Lord Jesus as the Elect of God. Peter presents this preciousness to the remnant of the Jews whom he addresses. And he not only addresses those. It is fully true to everyone who believes.

There are two possible ways how people respond when Christ is presented as that preciousness. The one response is that it makes a person entrust himself to Him in the awareness of Who He is to
God. The other response is that one rejects Him in unbelief. Christ is the touchstone for each person. It is either accepting or falling. What is most precious to the believer is the most odious to the unbeliever. Anyone who does not believe, Christ is the stone that causes him to stumble. Again Peter quotes a verse of the prophet Isaiah (Isa 8:14). God’s Word has prophesied that the unbelieving Jews will fall by stumbling over Him and they indeed fell when they stumbled over Him.

V8. The fact that they were appointed to stumble over Him and fell, does not mean that God has appointed them to reject the Lord Jesus. God does not appoint anyone to reject His Son. What he indeed appoints, is that he who disobeys Him, will stumble over the word that He has spoken over His Son. The inevitable consequence of disobedience is the rejection of the Word. You may compare it to a fine that a person gets when he for instance has parked his car in the wrong parking lot. He is not appointed to erroneously park his car, but when he parks erroneously, he is appointed to get a parking-fine. This is how a person with a rejecting mind towards the Lord Jesus is appointed to stumble over the Word. But that is not the case with those to whom Peter writes, neither with you. That will be explained in the next portion.

Now read 1 Peter 2:3-8 again.

Reflection: How does your priest service look like?
A Royal Priesthood  |  verses 9-12

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

9 But you are a CHOSEN RACE, a ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, a HOLY NATION, a PEOPLE FOR [God’s] OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are the PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY. 11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. 12 Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe [them], glorify God in the day of visitation.

V9. You may know that you belong to a “chosen race”. That’s awesome of course! That race embraces all people that are born of God. In the Old Testament Israel was God’s chosen people (Deu 7:6; Isa 43:20). That embraced everyone who was born an Israelite. But the chosen race which you belong to, surpasses all boundaries and goes beyond every nationality. This race is not related to the earth, but to heaven and to Christ Who is there.

You may also know that you belong to “a royal priesthood” (cf. Exo 19:6). Earlier in verse 5, you saw that you partake of a “holy priesthood”. The important aspect there was the approach to God as a priest in His house, in order to have fellowship with Him about the Lord Jesus. The “royal priesthood” that you now have read about, presents another aspect of the priesthood, which is to the world outside.

You may say that your service as a holy priest in the sanctuary is the source of your service as a royal priest in the world. In the sanctuary you see Christ and you are being transformed into His image. The result will be that you proclaim the virtues or the excellent features or attributes of God in the world. In other words
that you reveal His attributes. Also this priest service is for all believers.

So the royal priesthood is focused on the world. The important thing thereby is that you indeed radiate the dignity of a king, but still do not exercise the rights that a king has. A wonderful example is to be found in the Lord Jesus. He is a King when He stands before Pilate (Jn 18:33-37). That’s what He also radiates, but He doesn’t exercise that right yet at that moment. The actual exercise of His kingship still has to come and therefore also the actual exercise of our kingship.

But in order to know Who the Lord Jesus is, the world doesn’t need to wait for the time that He comes. We are here to represent Him. We are not kings yet in the sense of ‘ruling kings’, but we are indeed able to behave like kings. We do that by showing the virtues of God, meaning by revealing His features.

Before we take a look at the virtues of God, you see that there are still two more descriptions mentioned, regarding the company you partake of. You belong to “a holy nation” (cf. Exo 19:6; Deu 7:6; Isa 62:12). The company you now belong to is completely separated from all nations of the world. As a member of His nation, God has set you apart from all nations on earth, so that you may be for Him alone. That is emphasized by the expression “a people for [God’s] own possession” (Exo 19:6; Deu 14:2; 26:18; Mal 3:17). God has a people of His own, that is the people that He has chosen to be for Himself through the work of the Lord Jesus (Tit 2:14). Through this people He wants to show the world Who He is.

This people now has the responsibility to proclaim His “excellencies”. Proclaiming has not that much to do with ‘speaking’, but more with ‘revealing’, demonstrating by what you as a member of that people, are, what you do and what you say. It is about your whole life, wherein God and the Lord Jesus can be seen. In order to make that possible He has called you out of the darkness of sin to be in His “marvelous light”. That light is ‘marvelous’. In that light you see Who He is. God took away everything that disturbed that and He also took you away from the realm of dark-
ness. What an awesome God He is that He could work like that, whereby in no way He compromised on any, not even one, of His holy demands.

V10. Therefore you may say that a great transformation has happened in the relation between God and what Peter can now call “the people of God”. Those to whom Peter writes this letter were in literal sense God’s people indeed, but in spiritual sense they were “not a people”. They lost the right to be God’s people.

God metaphorically expressed that in the family situation of the prophet Hosea and in the names that Hosea had to give his children (Hos 1:6,9; 2:1,22). The unfaithfulness of Hosea’s wife is a metaphor of the unfaithfulness of God’s people towards Him. In the names that Hosea had to give his children, God makes clear that He couldn’t call His people His people anymore (Lo-Ammi, Hos 1:9) and that He could not allow them to partake of mercy anymore (Lo-Ruchama, Hos 1:6). What applies here to God’s old people we may apply to each man.

By God’s grace there will be a change in this broken relation. He will soon start over again with His people and call them His people again and be merciful to them again. That is what Peter applies to those whom he is addressing and it is also applied to you. Through the work of Christ on the cross and the faith in Him, they have become God’s people and you too have become a member of that people. You can only praise Him for this great grace and mercy and show in your life that you honor Him for that.

V11. How this will take place, is expanded in the following verses. In the portion of chapter 2:11-3:12 it is actually told how you can be God’s witness in the world. You get instructions there for a more detailed implementation of proclaiming God’s virtues. It is about your walk of life, whereby the differences of territories are made in which your life is taking place. For instance, that you are subjected to the government in society. You are also dealing with your occupation or study and how you behave yourself therein.
Also the way of life in the family and the relatives you belong to and your conduct among the believers are being dealt with.

Peter presents these instructions as admonitions or exhortations. In order to make an entry with his admonitions, he addresses his readers as “beloved.” In that way he surrounds his admonitions with the realm and warmth of brotherly love. He is absolutely aware of the fact that believers live in a hostile world which causes them to be exposed to suffering. In the world you are an ‘alien’ and a ‘stranger’. As an alien you live among people who live in a place which is their home, while your home is somewhere else. They have various facilities, while you are not entitled to anything. As a stranger you are on strange ground and you speak another language, while you know that your own homeland is heaven.

By the way of life of the people around you and the environment you live in, you continually are under pressure to adapt yourself to their world of life. Therefore the reminder of the fact that you are an alien and a stranger is not superfluous. There is still another danger that you may adapt to the world and that has got to do with your “fleshy lusts”. That doesn’t refer to what is around you, but it refers to what is within yourself.

The world you live in and the fleshy lusts within you, form a perfect match together. The fleshy lusts always seek to have control. Therefore Peter admonishes his readers to abstain from those lusts, meaning that they are to be ignored, for otherwise they will bring the soul into bondage again. You shouldn’t pay attention to them (see Rom 13:14). The Holy Spirit, Who resists the lust of the flesh (Gal 5:17), is willing to give the strength for that. The fleshy lusts always fight against the soul that through the conversion wants to nourish himself with Christ.

V12. Therefore you must also do something in reaction to that and that is to clearly say ‘no’ to the lusts of the flesh. Then you can concentrate yourself on a behavior that is “excellent”. This is also something the Holy Spirit is willing to help with (Gal 5:16).
A good conduct “among the Gentiles”, that are the people of the world, underlines the confession that you make with your mouth.

Despite your good conduct the people of the world will speak evil of you. It should not be the case that they have a reason to speak evil of you because of your evil behavior. But even when you do good, the world will speak evil of you. That is what they also did to the Lord Jesus, Who did only good.

The only way to respond to that evil speaking is by good works, not by defensive speaking. Unbelievers will certainly notice those good works. But they do not want to recognize them as such, because they will notice God therein and in no way they want to acknowledge Him.

There comes a day that they will be forced to glorify God on the basis of those good works. That day is “the day of visitation”. It may be that in the life of such evil speaking unbelievers something happens through which God speaks to their conscience. That’s when a visitation comes over them. Then they will discover that Christians have something that they lack. Then they will turn to the God Who they formerly met in the good works of those He owns and Whom they had rejected. Isn’t that a wonderful result of your good works?

Now read 1 Peter 2:9-12 again.

Reflection: Which virtues of God do you know and how can you proclaim them?
First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

13 Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, 14 or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. 15 For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. 16 [Act] as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but [use it] as bondslaves of God. 17 Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

V13. After the general admonitions to have a good conduct, Peter speaks about particular relations in which that good conduct has to become visible. In the first place he draws your attention to your relation towards the government. Peter says that you are to submit yourself to “every human institution”. He also adds a motive to that: it is for the Lord’s sake. That excludes other motives. Therefore it is not the intention that you only obey the government when, according to your calculation, it may deliver you a personal benefit.

V14. The government is an ordinance that has been established by God (Rom 13:1). Within this government there are different levels. There is a king as supreme government to which believers are to submit themselves. There are also lower levels of governments, such as governors, whom are, however, clothed with the authority of the king. They are representatives of the king, in order to punish evildoers, but also to honor those who do good.

Today we know the national government and also the lower governments, such as the provincial and municipal principalities. The fact that they often do not consider God’s will, is not our business. God will hold them accountable for the way they performed their duty. In a general sense they indeed restrain the evil.
It can be hard to adopt the right attitude towards the government. You are subjected to it, while you do not even have anything to do with their appointment. As an alien and a stranger it is after all not allowed for you to get involved with the politics of the land of your sojourning. Participation in the government or even the exertion of influence on its composition is not fitting for you as a Christian. The Lord Jesus does not rule either publicly yet. The kingdom of God is still a hidden kingdom, because its King is still hidden in heaven.

Therefore we cannot possibly have government duties yet. The Corinthians had forgotten that and Paul had to blame them for that also (1Cor 4:8). God rules the world now by governments, also by those who do not consider Him at all. The Lord Jesus is, such as always, the example. This is why He also did not want to be a judge in a case of an inheritance (Lk 12:13). He was not of the world and neither are we. His time to reign is still to come and therefore ours also.

V15. It is the will of God that you submit yourself to the government. Therefore it is not a kind request for you with the option to think about it and deal with it differently. This submission is also not to happen by grinding your teeth or by having a passive behavior. The important thing is to do good. The believers whom Peter addresses and also Peter himself have to do with the ungodly and cruel emperor Nero. God even allowed that under the government of this monarch, both Peter and Paul were sentenced to death.

How ungodly a government or ruler may be, it is the responsibility of the believer to submit himself to it or to him and behave himself as a good citizen of that one’s government. Doing good will result in being honored by the government, although that honor will possibly not be expressed. The government will acknowledge that Christians deliver their positive contribution to society, although their life may cause the hatred of the local authorities.
Besides the honor of the government, doing good has another effect. That effect is that you put to silence the “foolish men” whom in their foolish “ignorance” accuse the believers of the most absurd crimes. So it is not about words here, but about deeds wherein the value of the Christian life becomes visible.

V16. This life in submission is true freedom. Freedom is not doing whatever you want. If you do whatever you want, you only allow yourself to be controlled by your flesh, the sin, and this is bondage. That you are a free man also means that you do not put yourself under a law or that you impose or allow to impose a yoke on yourself. Freedom is that by possessing a new nature you love to do what God wants you to. The Christian freedom implies that you have been freed from the bondage of sin and the law, in order to enter into the sanctuary of God.

This freedom does not mean, however, that you must not do what the government says you should do. As it is already said, it is the will of God that you obey the government. The entire will of God is written in His Word. You are to obey what God orders or prohibits in it. It is foolish to avoid that with an appeal to your freedom. It is most possible – and it is a good thing to recognize that – that you misuse this Christian freedom (Gal 5:13). You can fool yourself in this view. Therefore hold on to God’s Word as the supreme form of authority.

That indeed brings you to another field of tension and you experience that when the government requests or permits something that is in contrast to God’s Word. Then it is important that you obey God more than men (Acts 5:29). Thereby you can think of the acceptance of unmarried living together or of having a homosexual relationship. Those are reprehensible things. When you approve of such things with an appeal on the Christian liberty, you are using this liberty “as a covering for evil”. It is in contrast to the fact that you are a bondslave of God. As a bondslave of God you are accountable to do God’s will. That is not a hard and difficult thing to do for someone who delights in doing the will of God (1Jn 5:3). When you see yourself as a ‘free bondslave’, you
will not allow yourself to be misguided to act in a way that is in contradiction to God’s will.

V17. The fact that you must refuse and condemn sinful practices does not mean that you must despise the people who commit these sins. Peter calls on to honor “all people”. That is because all people are made in the image of God. You honor all people when you do good to all. That’s what the Lord Jesus also did when He was on earth. He for instance, without distinction, healed all who came to Him (Mat 8:16).

In the midst of those ‘all people’ who are to be honored, is a special company for which we have a special love. That is “the brotherhood”. That is the total of all believers and not only those, whom you are practically in contact with and certainly not only those, whom you can easily get along with. Peter says that we are to love the total of the believers, all who are children of God, without exception. Of the Christians from the first century it is said that they loved one another before they got acquainted to one another. That is a wonderful testimony and that is how it is still supposed to be today, for love has not changed.

The love for the brotherhood will not always reveal itself in the same way. You are to love the brothers, but not the fleshy lusts or the worldly mind. You do not love what seeks the destruction of the brotherhood, for example causing divisions or a false doctrine. That is the reason for the addition that you should fear God.

To fear God means that you have reverence for Him in everything. That is being reflected in your obedience to His Word. It is also reflected in the respect that you show to the king that is appointed by Him, as a representative of His authority. You will not always be able to do what the government expects you to do because you fear God, but that should in no way cause you to cease respecting the government. The recognition of the government should remain, for, as long as the church is on earth, there is no government or authority except from God (Rom 13:1).
You may summarize this section as follows. Peter addresses you as a subject of the kingdom of God. That is not an easy position, because you live in a world that does not know anything about it and does not want to know anything about it. The world is seeking to make you suffer like they did to the Lord Jesus. It is impossible to be a follower of Christ without stirring up the resistance of the world with that.

As His disciple you are subjected to His authority of Whom Peter says that you have to sanctify Him in your heart (1Pet 3:15). You are dealing with His authority in your life. But He has also placed you in authority relationships. That authority comes from Him. The authority of the governments comes from Him. Regardless of the fact that these powers strongly resist against God, they still are God’s ministers. We subject ourselves to them as if we are directly subjected to God.

Now read 1 Peter 2:13-17 again.

Reflection: In which situations do you have to subject yourself to the government and when do you have to obey God more than men?
First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

18 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. 19 For this [finds] favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. 20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer [for it] you patiently endure it, this [finds] favor with God. 21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, …

V18. After Peter showed you the authority relationship of you as an inhabitant of your land of residence towards the government, he now draws your attention to another authority relationship. He will now talk about the authority relationship between “servants” and “masters”. Likewise the government is an appointed authority, also the authority relationship between ‘servants’ and their ‘masters’ is a result of sin.

There is also a distinction. The government is appointed by God as a judiciary authority (Gen 9:1-6). Regarding the relation of a servant towards his master it is different. God never intended to make a man to be a servant of another man. However, God does not take away the consequences of sin, but gives instructions on how men, who confess their sin can live to His honor right in those consequences. Regarding bondage, God gives room for the servant to become free, should he have the opportunity to (1Cor 7:22). For the servant who has no opportunity for that God has something else. That servant gets a special opportunity, especially in his work as a servant, to show what it is to be a Christian.

Although Peter speaks about ‘servants’ and not about slaves, the position of servants is similar to those of slaves. That becomes evident from the word ‘master’ that literally means ‘despot’, which
implies that such persons have unlimited power and that they are the absolute ruler of their house. A servant belongs to the house management and he therefore has more contact with his master than other slaves. That only makes the danger to rebel or manipulate greater and greater. Therefore Peter admonishes them here to submit themselves to their masters with all reverence.

In order to prevent them from excuses he says in addition that this does not only apply to the “good and gentle” masters, but also to “those who are unreasonable”. It is not that hard to be submissive to a good and gentle master. But it takes a whole lot more to be submissive to a harsh master. For such masters the servants are nothing more than living tools that they have available for themselves, with whom they can deal according to their wishes. Therefore, when servants have an ‘unreasonable’ master, they are especially well-placed with the opportunity ‘to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior’ (Tit 2:10).

You may apply what is said here about servants and masters to what we call today ‘employees’ and ‘employers’, although this comparison is only partially applicable. As it is already said, in those days of Peter a master was somebody who had absolute power over his servant. He could do with him whatever he wanted, while the servant had no right or any opportunity at all to defend himself against it. Today there are numerous opportunities for an employee to defend himself against certain labor circumstances. He even has the right to strike. Nothing like this was possible in those days.

The circumstances may have changed, but the principles that the Scripture brings forward here are still fully effective today. Therefore the believing employee ought not to use his right to strike. He is not appealed to strike, but to work. The reward that he will receive is not to be expected from the striking treasury, but he is to earn that by labor (see 2Thes 3:10). Peter therefore does not speak about the rights of the servant, but about his duties and especially about his attitude towards his master.
V19. When you are the submissive person in a relationship, while your superior is ‘harsh’ and treats you unjustly, you may take different attitudes. You can resist against it or endure this grief. You read here what God expects from you. It is said here that the injustice that is being done to you, makes you sad. Therefore it is important that the injustice that is being done to you does not make you obstinate. The attitude that adorns you as a Christian is the suffering of the injustice that is being done to you.

You endure it “for the sake of conscience toward God”, which means because you know what God expects from you. When you would respond otherwise, you would be defending your right, but at the same time go against your conscience. ‘Bear up under sorrows’ is foolish in the eye of the world, but God’s Word calls that “favor” and “it is commendable” when you are “suffering unjustly”. In this way you follow the steps of the Lord Jesus Who has endured this in a perfect way.

Isn’t that a great grace to look like Him? When you endure ‘grief’ it is a proof that God’s grace is at work in you. It gives you the opportunity to proclaim the virtues of God as they became visible in Christ.

V20. In case the servant would rebel, he would also have to face suffering, because his master would be beating him. Then those whips would be his just reward, for rebellion is a sin. Even when a person suffers like that, he may be persistent in his attitude of rebelliousness and he may become even more rebellious than ever. That is not commendable before God. Such an attitude may be right for people who only think of their own rights and want to get their own way, people who have the idea that one should defend oneself.

Such an attitude is absolutely far away from the grace that God has for anyone who is aware that he is totally dependent on God and has no right to anything. It is a joy for God to relate Himself to you when you suffer like that, because it reminds Him of the suffering that His Son has endured. When you have a harsh employer, it is God’s exercising school for you to make you look
more and more like the Lord Jesus. Isn’t that what you also eagerly want? That is what God has in mind for you when He brings you in a situation where you suffer because of your conscience.

V21. This suffering is an inseparable part of your normal life as a Christian. You do not simply accept suffering as an inevitable and most unpleasant incident that you would want to avoid as soon as you possibly could. I heard from a committed Christian whom had once been treated wrongfully, to which he rebelled. He came to a confession of this wrong response when an older sister asked him: ‘Is that all you’ve learned from Golgotha?’ In God’s Word the question approaches us: “Why not rather be wronged? (1Cor 6:7)? To suffer injustice is not something you and I can do naturally. That’s something we have to learn. The issue is whether I am willing to and whether you are willing to.

Suffering goes together with your call as a Christian. To know what endurance and suffering mean and how you can learn that, your eye is fixed on Christ. Only when suffering and enduring is related to Him, it is valuable and makes your heart happy, how great your suffering may be. Christ has suffered because He in no way gave in to the evil that is in the world and because He didn’t want anything more than going God’s way. The way He went through the world is an example for us. He did not sin by deeds nor by words, because He was totally in the will of God and put all things in the hand of His Sender, of Whom He knew that He judges righteously.

When it is written here that Christ has “suffered” as an “example” for us to follow, it is of course impossible to have any reference to His reconciling and substitutionary suffering. We absolutely cannot possibly follow that. We read about the reconciling and substitutionary suffering of Christ in verse 24. The suffering wherein He is an example for you to follow, refers to His whole life before the cross. All the time of that life was a ‘suffering’.

He was living in a sinful atmosphere in an unclean world. He was tempted by satan. He was hated by men in return to His love for them. At the same time He went through this suffering “that He
might become a merciful and faithful high priest” for you (Heb 2:17; see also Heb 4:15), for He knows all trials from His own experience. In His whole way on earth you have an example that you can follow. When you do that, you will be fulfilling your call. That is God’s goal with your life.

If you want to know how to follow the example of Christ, you couldn’t do better than study the gospels diligently. There you see how the Lord has responded to all suffering that was done to Him in whatever way. The word ‘example’ was used as an indication for writing models that children had to copy, in order to learn to write and also for drawings from which they had to trace the lines. That’s how you could look at the Lord as an example, in order to learn how to follow Him.

Do not follow Him at a distance, like Peter once did, which caused him to deny his Lord (Lk 22:54). You are only able to follow the example of Christ by walking right behind Him. Then you will be able to follow His steps. You see, as it were, the trace of His footsteps in the sand and that’s where you put your feet into. The more you get behind, the more the trace of His footsteps fades away. When you walk right behind Him, His example will remain very clear and in that way you go with a firm step in the right direction to the goal.

Now read 1 Peter 2:18-21 again.

Reflection: How can you follow the steps of Christ in your situation?
First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

..., 22 *WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH;* 23 and while being reviled, *He did not revile in return; while suffering,* *He uttered no threats,* but kept entrusting [Himself] to Him who judges righteously; 24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. 25 *For you were continually straying like sheep,* but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

V22. With reference to the example that the Lord Jesus has left us to follow, Peter points at what the Lord definitely did not do and what He surely did. What He did not do is related to Himself and to the people around Him. What He indeed did do is related to His Father.

As it is said in the previous section, you see the example of the Lord in an outstanding way in the gospels. These gospels were not available or were only recently in circulation in the days of Peter. What his readers certainly knew, were the scriptures of the Old Testament. To show to them the example of the Lord, Peter quotes from *Isaiah 53.* In that magnificent chapter Isaiah prophetically writes comprehensively and impressively about the Lord Jesus. Just read that chapter (again) yourself. Isaiah takes you by the hand and tells you about the birth, the life, the death, the resurrection and the glory of the Lord Jesus in a way that makes you forget everything around you and see only Him.

The first quotation from the book of *Isaiah* is related to what the Lord Jesus has *not* done. He “*committed no sin*”. He did not commit any sinful deed. Whatever was seen of Him, it was without sin. Sin is lawlessness (*1Jn 3:4*). This shows the essence of sin and the point is that it doesn’t respect any kind of authority. That regards to both the authority of people that are placed above us and the authority of God. With the Lord Jesus there was the full recog-
nition of God’s authority and also of the governments, given by God. He came to do the will of God and fully submitted Himself to that will (Heb 10:7).

Therein He is an example for you. He committed no sin, because He fully submitted Himself to the will of God. Likewise you will not sin when you fully submit yourself to God’s will. That is surely possible, for the Lord Jesus is your life.

The best proof that He had committed no sin appears from the next quotation, wherein you read that He never spoke any deceitful word: “Nor was any deceit found in His mouth.” His enemies often tried to catch Him because of a wrong word. They were searching for that, as the word “found”, used by Peter, makes you think of. Their attempts appeared to be fruitless, because He never said anything that was untrue. He only spoke what the Father told Him to speak (Jn 12:50).

How about you? Can that be said of you too, that no deceit was ever found in you? I know believers who sincerely confess how difficult it is for them not to lie. They say that lying had become a second nature to them. Now they have confessed their sins and really want to live with the Lord, they still sometimes suffer consequences of that and that they regularly have to admit that they have fallen back in their old pattern of lying. The Lord wants also to be an Example for them. When they look upon Him and learn from Him, they will surely be able to follow His footsteps in this too.

V23. The way His enemies approached Him did not stir up anything in the Lord that can possibly be related to sin. He always replied to His adversaries in a perfectly calm and persuasive way. As a response to that they took their refuge in scolding Him. He did not scold in return. When they ultimately overpowered Him, because it was God’s time for that, and they made Him suffer in the most horrible way, He did not threaten. Instead of scolding and threatening in return, the Lord prayed: “Father, forgive them” (Lk 23:34).
He surrendered everything in the hands of His Father, Whom He knew as the righteous God. He was fully aware that God was going to judge everything righteously. When you have that awareness, you will surely be able to endure suffering. You can surrender everything, including the unbelievers who mock you, the intolerance you’re facing, the injustice being done to you, to God Who judges righteously. You may totally lay yourself in God’s hand. In His time He will reveal the truth about everything you have done for His sake and for which you have suffered. Do you believe that?

V24. In verse 24 your attention is being drawn to the unique suffering of the Lord that He endured from God’s side, because of your sins. In this He is not an example for you. He is absolutely inimitable in this suffering. Nevertheless this aspect of suffering must be mentioned, because the Lord Jesus could have never been an example for you, had He not borne your sins.

His death is the result of the wrath of God over your sins, which He took on Himself. He took these sins away, so that you may be free now from your sins and therefore be able to take His life as an example to follow. When you, in contrast to that, still sin and in that way cause yourself much suffering, you disregard the work of the Lord Jesus. The work of Christ, achieved for sin, is the basis to be able to follow Him. In no way you have to give in to sin.

It is also significant to point out that the Lord did not bear your sins during His life on earth. He did that only on the cross, in the three hours of darkness. The idea that during His life He already was under the wrath of God, is absolutely a misconception. It is possible that this misconception comes out from a wrong transcription of the verse in a certain translation that says that He ‘has brought our sins in His body on the tree.’ Therein lies the suggestion that He already bore the sins during His life and then brought them to the cross. As it is already said, it doesn’t make any sense at all. During His life the Lord Jesus was fully and perfectly pleasing to God, Whom more than once spoke that out too (Mat 3:17; 17:5).
So it is clear that the Lord Jesus has borne your sins in the three hours of darkness and received God’s judgment over it. There He died in your place and you have died with Him there. You have died to sin. Sin has no power over you anymore, you do not have to give in to it anymore. That is really an awesome truth! God now sees you in Christ and He accounts to you what He did to the Lord Jesus. By the way, you cannot find anywhere in the Scripture that you have to die to sin. You are dead. If you see yourself like God sees you, sin will in no way get a chance in your life to express itself.

Instead of giving sin the opportunity in your life, through the work of Christ you are able to “live to righteousness”. Your life is not focused anymore on earning righteousness, but on being allowed to show in your life the righteousness that you have received in Christ. You are now able to live in accordance to the right of God. That new life attitude is the result of the “wounds” of the judgment that struck the Lord Jesus by the chastising hand of God.

By ‘His wounds’, you therefore ought not to think of the scourging given to Him by the soldiers of Pilate. It goes without saying that those stripes couldn’t possibly have caused your salvation and redemption. Everything that men have done to the Lord Jesus only made the guilt towards Him and towards God greater. No, only what God has done to the Lord Jesus in the judgment over the sins of everyone who believes, causes everyone who believes “to be healed”. Here it concerns the healing of the spiritual life that has been affected and destructed by sin.

V25. That you now have been spiritually healthy, appears from the fact that you “have returned to” the Lord Jesus as “the Shepherd and Guardian” of your soul. Like everyone has gone astray from God and has been lost (Psa 119:176), you also were. You lost the way and couldn’t find it back. Then the good Shepherd came to give His life, that you may find your way back. The sword of God’s judgment was woken up against the Shepherd (Zec 13:7), God’s Companion, and it struck Him instead of you. In that way
the way to return to the Shepherd had been opened. Now you have returned to Him.

You have found the Shepherd back, which means that the ‘Shepherd’ found you. He wants to lead your further life and does not want you to be in lack of anything (Psa 23:1). He is also the ‘Guardian’ of your soul. He guards over it. If you stay with the Shepherd, if you remain to follow Him, He will preserve you as the Guardian of your soul in peace and in health.

Now read 1 Peter 2:22-25 again.

Reflection: What is the difference between the suffering of the Lord Jesus from the side of men and from the side of God?
1 Peter 3

The Wife In Marriage | verses 1-6

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any [of them] are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, 2 as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. 3 Your adornment must not be [merely] external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; 4 but [let it be] the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. 5 For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; 6 just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.

V1. The words “in the same way” with which chapter 3 begins, refer to verse 18 of the previous chapter. Just like servants are to be submissive to their masters, even if it is a harsh master, a wife is to be submissive to her husband, even if she has a husband who doesn’t live according to the Word. The submissive attitude of the wife towards her husband is today completely abnormal. In the world the wife is being told not to be submissive at all, but that she has her own rights, with which she has to defend herself.

When in the marriage the husband doesn’t consider God and His Word, unfortunately the wife is often being used as a utensil. The believing wife finds the strength to, despite a humiliating treatment, be submissive to her husband out of her relationship with the Lord. Biblical submissiveness is a proof of great spiritual strength.
By her relationship with the Lord Jesus she will get strength to be of help to her husband, for which God has intended her (Gen 2:18). That means that the husband is the one who is the ‘needy one’. It is not an inferior position when you are a help. How could that be when you consider that God calls Himself the Help of His people (Deu 33:7; Psa 33:20)?

It is a good thing to always consider that Peter writes about relationships like they are in the kingdom of God. Those relationships radically contradict the relationships that are applied in the world. That also goes for the relationship in the marriage between husband and wife. When that relationship comes under pressure because the husband does not listen to the Word, the wife ought not to lecture her husband. How hard that may be for her, God’s Word says here that she ought not to do that.

She has another means available and that is her conduct, which means her way of life as a Christian woman in the daily care for the house management. Thereby the most important thing is not that she technically takes actions, like keeping the house clean and to make sure that husband and children eat well and are well taken care of. The most important thing is her mind in doing these things. Does she do these things reluctantly or with the love of the Lord in her heart?

It surely will be difficult to keep on nourishing her husband and children with the good mind without her ever receiving any nice compliment. It is also difficult, even when you know better, to still remain silent. The temptation is great to lecture her husband when he makes things difficult for her again. After all she knows from the Scripture how a husband is supposed to approach his wife. Nevertheless she may not do that. Unbelieving husbands or husbands who disobey the Word, really do not tolerate their wife to call them to account for their conduct.

The perfect model for the wife here is also the Lord Jesus. In every relationship He has taken the right place. Therefore He did not lecture the older people, but asked them questions and replied to their questions. He knew everything perfectly better, still He took
the right place (*Lk 2:47*). That place He also took towards His fallible parents (*Lk 2:51*).

V2. There is another danger for the wife to fall into and that is making use of her natural charms to win her husband’s favor. That’s why Peter speaks about a “chaste conduct”, which means a pure conduct, a conduct that is free from the impurity that rules the world. She ought not to ignore her obligations by not giving her husband also in sexual view what is related to a marriage (*1Cor 7:3-5*). But she ought not to use the needs of her husband to manipulate him.

Because she has this means available and also knows how to use it, her conduct must “be respectful”, that she may do nothing that gives a wrong picture of the Lord and His Word. What God’s Word addresses here to the wives who find themselves in such a situation is not easy to follow, but it is certainly the way to be blessed. Such a conduct does not remain unnoticed by her husband and he “may be won” (verse 1) for the Lord.

V3. The adornment of the woman lies in the outer things which are natural for her. It is her weakness to even more strongly emphasize the beauty that she has by nature. In that way she is so occupied by her appearance that she hasn’t got the right view anymore of who she is for the Lord. It is about the wife here as a disciple of the Lord and the question is where the heart is focused on. Is her heart focused to please Him or to please the men? She is certainly allowed to adorn herself for her own husband, but she ought not to be coquettish. She must not stand out by receiving excessive attention for her appearance. The true adornment does not lie in the appearance.

You may ask yourself indeed what people notice, what moves them, when they have come into contact with you. Do you make an impression by your appearance, or by your brown skin that is tanned by the sun or by the sunbed? Or is it your eloquent speech or your well-shaped body? Or is it the rest and the joy in the Lord that you radiate?
As means for a wife to draw people’s attention to her appearance, Peter mentions the nicely braiding of the hair, the rings and the golden necklaces that a woman wears and the stylishly or maybe even provocative clothes. He warns that this is not to be so for the believing wife (1Tim 2:9-11).

V4. All outer adornments are corruptible, transient. The inward of the hidden person, the “gentle and quiet spirit”, is not transient, but everlasting. That is precious to God and therefore incorruptible. It is about things that remain and not about things that are transient.

We live in a time wherein outer beauty is being adored. People consider the looks of a person as very important. Do not focus on a youthful beauty. That is just temporary. Try to carefully realize that the outer man will decay. By growing older all youthful beauty fades away and turns into wrinkles. Therefore it is important to realize that God sees the heart.

The most beautiful thing about a man is his inner beauty that consists of meekness and a quiet spirit. Someone’s character is much more the true man than his appearance. You can learn gentleness from the Lord Jesus (Mat 11:29). A quiet spirit is also typical of Him, Who also inwardly never resisted against the circumstances wherein He was.

V5. This imperishable adornment is not an invention for the time Peter and his readers live in. In former times this was the adornment of women who did not live in the here and now, but for the future. That means that it is about timeless matters here. These women are called “holy women”, for they lived in isolation from the world and focused on God, in Whom they “hoped” for the future.

Such a mind of separation from the world and trusting in God is still important today as it was in those days. If you possess that, it is not difficult to be submissive. Your conduct will then be determined by what God has said. He is more than worthy to be trusted by you. When He has determined your place in marriage
as a place of submission and you really take that place, the true adornment becomes visible, “which is precious in the sight of God”.

V6. Out of the ‘holy women’ from the past Peter mentions an example. He points to Sarah and says about her that she “obeyed Abraham, calling him ‘lord’” (Gen 18:12). This example is not intended to make known that the wife should address her husband as ‘lord’. The point is that Sarah did not think it was embarrassing to call her husband ‘lord’. Therefore it is much more the intention to make clear that the wife ought to adapt an attitude towards her husband, which expresses the respect that she owes to him. Therefore, the fact that she obeyed him does not mean that she was his servant.

The submission or obedience of a wife doesn’t mean that a husband ought not to listen to his wife. Wives are given to their husbands to keep them from foolishness. We also have an example of that from the life of Abraham. Sarah once told him to do something. When he refused to listen to her, God told him that he had to listen to her (Gen 21:12).

This example is an illustration of the relationships in the marriage of the Christian and here specifically of the Christian woman. When she takes the attitude towards her husband like Sarah did towards Abraham, she looks like Sarah in spiritual view and therefore can be called one of “her children”. She therefore shows her nature and mindset. Therefore wives who follow Sarah in this, will also show that by doing good. Thereby they do not have to be “frightened by any fear”, for he who does good and therein does the will of the Lord, can be sure to be guarded by God.

Now read 1 Peter 3:1-6 again.

Reflection: What do you like most about a Godly wife?
Husbands and All of You | verses 7-12

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

7 You husbands in the same way, live with [your wives] in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered. 8 To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; 9 not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. 10 For, “The one who desires life, to love and see good days, Must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. 11 “He must turn away from evil and do good; He must seek peace and pursue it. 12 “For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

V7. After the teaching for the wives, now follows the teaching for the husbands. Also this teaching starts with “in the same way” (see verse 1), for also the husband ought to be submissive. It applies to him that he ought to be submissive to the institution of the marriage and ought to take his place therein that is in accordance to God’s thoughts.

The husband has to “live ... in an understanding way” with his wife. The word ‘live’ means all his dealings with her and not only the sexual contact. In his dealings with her he is not to be led by his lusts, but by the insight he has in her person. Therefore he has to gain ‘understanding of’ her. He must be willing to invest in her, doing his best to understand her.

It is a well-known and at the same time shameful fact that husbands often have more insight in technical matters than in their wives. That’s also due to their selfishness. Husbands think that wives are like themselves and are very miserable in sympathizing with the emotions of their wives.
The wife is “someone weaker” or “a weaker vessel”. By ‘vessel’ is meant ‘body’ (2Cor 4:7; 1Thes 4:4). The wife is weaker in physical and emotional sense, but not in spiritual sense. Think of a woman like Deborah who led an army. The point here is that she is weaker of the body and the emotions that are related to it. Husbands should be aware of the fact that a woman is different therein and that’s what should determine their attitude towards them. It is not supposed to give them a feeling of superiority that makes them arrogantly look down on their wife. No, the husband has to understand that she has got a lot that he is missing and therefore he should honor her.

An extra reason to honor her and not to treat her as an inferior, is the fact that together with him she is “a fellow heir of the grace of life”. She also received part of life by grace. This life will be fully lived in the millennial kingdom of peace, which is the inheritance. God makes no difference between men and women, regarding the part of the inheritance that He has given to each of His own. Husbands often behave themselves like rulers and forget that they are the head. They also forget that ruling is still to come and that then also the wives will be ruling. If women have served the Lord more faithfully, they will receive a greater part in ruling. This is how husbands are to look at their wives, like how God sees them.

The “prayers”, that is the contact with God, will be “hindered” when the husband does not relate well to his wife. When the wife is being slighted by the husband, it will negatively affect the prayer life. Then the prayer will have no power or it will be totally ignored. That is a serious situation. It is God’s intention that husband and wife serve the Lord together, being occupied with His work, whereby each of them personally has a part. In a sound marriage they will talk together about it and pray for it. That will prevent them from living at cross-purposes. The common prayer of husband and wife is therefore of great importance.

V8. With the words “to sum up”, after the servants (1Pet 2:18) and the marriage partners (1Pet 3:1-7) the last group is being addressed. It regards “all of you”, that is the companionship of all
believers. It goes without saying that also the previous groups belong to those. All are addressed on their conduct, on how they connect to one another.

The most important thing is that they are “harmonious” or “of one mind”. The believers find themselves in a hostile world. The enemy is seeking to tear believers apart. The only way to be armed against that, is to be of one mind, which means that they all have the same goal and that is to glorify Christ. When the believers are focused on the Lord Jesus and continually seek His interests in their dealings with one another, the enemy will have no chance to succeed to sow division. On the contrary, in this way they will gain victories over the enemy.

Their mind will make them “sympathetic” with believers who are suffering and also with people who are lost. To have compassion is to sympathize with others who are in need and trying to be of support for them. That especially applies towards fellow believers. We ought to love them with “brotherly” love. It is a true joy to belong, in the midst of a hostile world where blind hatred and cold feelings determine the climate, to a companionship where love abundantly determines the atmosphere.

When believers meet one another at meetings or at their homes, they should have the same experience like one has when he is freezing outside, enters a room where the warmth overwhelms him like a blanket. This is the experience an unbeliever also should have when he comes into contact with a believer.

The companionship of believers ought to radiate ‘kindheartedness’ to anyone who is there. It is the contradistinction of an attitude that stirs up fear and rejection. It is a conduct that others feel attracted to and feel accepted.

That conduct does not fit with arrogance that makes the other person feel to be given a favor. No, kindheartedness goes hand in hand with ‘humbleness in spirit’ for a believer knows that he himself is an object of the kindheartedness of God and the Lord
Jesus. Everything that is asked here of the believers is perfectly seen with the Lord Jesus.

V9. He also did not return “evil for evil” or “insult for insult”. His response to every evil that was done to Him and all the words by which people insulted Him, was blessing. If you want to look like Him, pray to Him that He may enable you to respond like that.

An extra exhortation to look like Him in this view, is that you may know that you “were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing”. You also did not partake of that in your past. Now you do. Do you also desire that others take part in that? The Lord certainly desired that for you. Then you must follow Him in this view and wish for other people that they will also have part of the blessing of the millennial kingdom of peace, for that is the meaning of inheriting the blessing.

V10. The blessing of the kingdom of peace is not only something that we will enjoy in the future. It is now already possible to enjoy the true life and to see good days. Who wouldn’t want that? Even the unbelievers would want that. You can hear that wish in the salutation that we as people use by saying ‘good day’ to one another. In order to have really good days according to the rich content that is meant here and through which it is only possible, Peter quotes Psalms 34:13-17.

Do you want “to love and see good days”, then it is necessary that you do not use your mouth for speaking evil and deceitful things. That is quite something, isn’t it? In any case, it excludes that a man who has no new life, can ever enjoy the true life and see good days. Only those who have that new life, that is the life from God, can bring that into practice. When you stay close to the Lord, you are able to fulfill that.

V11. Also the other conditions in this section are important. They consist of something that is negative and of something that is positive. The negative thing is that you should turn away from evil and the positive thing is that you do the good thing. You see that the negative thing is followed by the positive thing. It is not the
intention that your life is marked by everything that you do not do, but that it is marked by doing what is good.

Then you read about what the good consists of. The point is that you should seek peace intensively. You are to pursue it; therefore you should fully commit yourself to do it. Peace is not only the absence of war. It is the inward rest as a result of the fellowship with God in going His way, with the confidence that He takes care of what is needed and protects against dangers. This peace is constantly under pressure, for circumstances can take away that peace from you. That’s why you are to pursue it.

V12. To encourage you in this, the quote follows that you should focus on the Lord. You may realize the fact that His eyes are always on you. He sees that you desire to enjoy what He gives to you. He also knows that there are forces and powers that threaten you and that they are much stronger than you are. When you are also aware of that, you will call on Him for help. You may know that His ears are open to your prayers. He hears you and defends you against those who seek to harm you.

Now read 1 Peter 3:7-12 again.

Reflection: How can you be a blessing to your environment?
Suffer For the Sake of Righteousness  | verses 13-18

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

13 **Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?**
14 **But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed.** And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, 15 **but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always [being] ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;** 16 and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. 17 **For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.** 18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, [the] just for [the] unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; …

V13. After the promise in the previous verse you might be thinking that nothing can happen to you. That’s how Peter also puts it in **verse 13.** As soon as you make an effort to do good (or: for the Good, that is the Lord Jesus) the Lord will stand beside you. Nevertheless it can happen that while you are doing good and are living righteously, you do not see good days. Sometimes even the reverse seems to be true from what Peter says here, for you see that people who do good are suffering and that people who do evil are going well. That has to do with the way God rules the world.

The reign of God could best be called an indirect way of reigning. That is in connection with the fact that the Lord Jesus does not openly reign yet, as that will actually be in the millennial kingdom of peace. Then He will directly judge the evil and directly reward the good. As things currently are right now, you presently live as a righteous one in the midst of unrighteous people who also are in control.
1 Peter 3

V14. It would be a normal thing that the government rewards the right and punishes the wrong. However, more often the opposite happens. You see that in this verse. But that does not mean that your fate depends on what unrighteous people do to you. Your life is in God’s hand to Whom you have entrusted your life. When you look at your circumstances in this way, you know that nothing gets out of hand, but that He is above everything.

Then it may seem that you are the loser, but you know that you belong to Him Who is the Conqueror. That will ultimately become visible. Also with the Lord it seemed like everything went the wrong way, but He has triumphed. It still does not seem to be like that when you look around, but when by faith you look up and look forward, you know that God ultimately will punish all evil and reward all the good.

After all, whatever harm men can do to you, it still only affect the body (Mat 10:28). Your soul has been bought by the blood of the Lord Jesus and that’s how you became His property that nobody can ever snatch out of His hand (Jn 10:28-29). In that sense it is therefore surely true that nothing can happen to you. You can say by faith: ‘If God is for me, who can be against me?’ (Rom 8:31).

So it can happen that you still suffer, because you live righteously in an unrighteous world. The world doesn’t want to see you live in that way, for that confronts her with her own unrighteousness. That’s the reason that she will persecute you. Then you suffer for the sake of righteousness. Do not let yourself be intimidated by God-hating people. They try to scare you, while they themselves are acting out of fear.

The world itself is afraid of what is going to happen, although people are shouting their fear down. They do that by all kinds of arrogant slogans about their own strength, with which they will defend themselves against God. The world has a reason to fear for the judgment, you haven’t. You do not need to be troubled about the course of matters in the world and in your life.
V15. Your rest does not lie in having control over your life, like the people of the world want to control their life after their own wishes. You see how things are getting out of hand with man. Your rest lies in a sanctuary outside this world and that is in Christ (see Isa 8:12-13). The Lord Christ rules over everything. When you sanctify Him in your heart as Lord, which means when you give Him the all-ruling place, you will be able to fearlessly face life in the here and now and in the future. With ‘heart’ is meant the center of your existence, the control chamber where all your motives and deeds are originated (Pro 4:23).

Your mouth follows after your heart. It is important to confess Him also with your mouth (see Rom 10:9-10). You not only ought to give account to God, but also to people. They may ask you: ‘Why do you live like that? How come that you allow people to make you suffer like that? Why do you choose to be despised?’ Then you have an occasion to testify of the hope that you have for glory after the suffering. That is what the Lord Jesus also did (Lk 24:26). Just look at Moses. Moses was expecting the reward and therefore chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God (Heb 11:24-26). In that way you may testify that it is worth it to suffer, because you expect the glory that is to come.

Giving a defense must actually happen “with gentleness” and not by threatening in the sense of: ‘My time will surely come.’ Therefore give a defense of that with “reverence”, because of your own sinful nature that is still in you. Do not boast on that great future in a way that gives the impression that you own it already and therefore you do not have to care about anything. Therefore the certainty of the hope is not supposed to make you a careless or arrogant Christian.

V16. Therefore, be sure to give your testimony “with a good conscience”, which means, with a conscience that does not blame you for not having pure motives by giving your account. When you give such a defense of the hope that is in you, those who revile you because of your “good behavior in Christ will be put to shame”. They may say whatever they want and they may speak of you as an evildoer, but there will be a moment that they will have to
admit to their own disgrace and shame that your life is related to Christ.

V17. That you live in relation to Christ must of course be the cause of their reviling of your conduct and not a wrong conduct that you may possibly show. When you suffer, it ought to be by God’s will. You don’t have to look for the suffering. But when you happen to find yourself in a situation where you clearly see the guidance of the Lord to testify of Him, then do it, even when it means that you burden yourself with defamation.

Not each testimony produces suffering. Sometimes you even receive honor for what you say and do. The point is that you should not suffer because of evil things. The only right way to suffer is because of doing good. When Christians suffer, it doesn’t happen without the will of God. When doing good results in suffering, be sure that it does not happen outside the will of God, yes, it is indeed God’s will too. Then it can only be good, for His will for us is always a blessing.

V18. God wants to bring us to Himself. With a view to that, Christ had to suffer once. The Lord Jesus has suffered and indeed the heaviest suffering. It was a suffering we never would be able to endure and also never have to endure. It is also a one-time suffering that never has to be repeated. The suffering that He went through for sins has an everlasting effect. Due to what He has suffered, the sins of all who believe in Him have forever been removed and by His sacrifice they all have been made perfect forever (Heb 10:14).

He has taken the place of the unjust. He could take that place because He Himself was the Just. He did not have to suffer for His own sins, for He committed no sin (1Pet 2:22). Therefore He was perfectly suited to endure the sufferings for the sins of others. In this way He opened the way to God for sinners. He was willing to endure this suffering to bring you to God, in His presence, where you would never have been able to come or would have dared to come.
The suffering of the Lord Jesus meant to Him to suffer till death. But He did not remain in death, He was made alive again. He could be “put to death in the flesh”, because He came in the flesh (1Jn 4:3-4), meaning that He, Who is the eternal Son, became Man. God sent Him “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom 8:3). It goes without saying that ‘the flesh’ here indicates ‘the body’ and not the sinful flesh. His appearance on earth in a body has given man the opportunity to kill Him. Man didn’t want Him, Who so perfectly lived for righteousness.

God absolutely wanted Him. Due to His perfectly dedicated life to God, God could do nothing else – and it was also the joy of His heart – than make Him alive. He did that by His Spirit, the Holy Spirit (Rom 1:4). While the world doesn’t see Him anymore and thinks that He is dead, you know Him not according to the flesh (2Cor 5:16), but according to the Spirit, meaning through the Holy Spirit and in a spiritual way.

Now read 1 Peter 3:13-18 again.

Reflection: How can you suffer for the sake of righteousness?
First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

...; 19 in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits [now] in prison, 20 who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through [the] water. 21 Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.

V 19. The Jews whom Peter writes to, need to learn to look upon Christ by what the Holy Spirit is showing them (Jn 16:13-14). That Christ is not physically present, but works by His Spirit may be strange to them. But that is not a new thought. As an illustration for that Peter refers to Noah and the work of the Spirit in his time. Christ preached in the Spirit through Noah to the people in the midst of whom he lived (see Gen 6:3).

With “spirits [now] in prison” is not meant the spirits of dead unbelievers, but just simply the people who lived in the days of Noah. It is foolish to presume that Christ still has a preaching for dead people (cf. Lk 16:23-26). That there is mention of ‘spirits in prison’ means that these people were under the power of the great evil spirit, the devil. The devil was holding their spirit in prison (cf. 2Cor 4:4; Eph 2:2). He who has control over somebody’s spirit, has power over the whole person. The preaching of Noah through the Spirit of Christ was addressed to these people who were the spiritual prisoners of satan.

V20. Noah warned them of the judgment of the flood that was going to come over these disobedient people or unbelievers). Each day that his preaching lasted, was a testimony of the “patience of God”. The judgment had to come, but God was still waiting,
while the ark was being prepared, that each one that would want to come, could enter and be saved. And what was the ‘harvest’? Only “eight persons” entered the ark. Peter emphasizes the small number by mentioning again that there were “a few”, for millions of people already then lived on earth.

This all had to serve as an encouragement for the readers. They also were with a few. They could not share their faith in a glorified and also invisible Lord with the masses of their compatriots. On the contrary, they were an object of persecution and mockery of their compatriots.

The intention of this section is to encourage you when you have to suffer because of ungodly people, slanderers and mockers. Noah preached for a long time, but he did not give up. God is patient and therefore He was waiting. That applies also to you. When you suffer, you know that the reason for that is the patience of God. With a view to the salvation of the ungodly, God tolerates it when you have to suffer. If you find it hard at times and when the (apparently) easier life of the world is attracting you, I ask you if you would want to change with the ungodly. In order to make a well-considered choice you must watch the end of those who seem to be prosperous.

Asaph, who also had an inner struggle like that, writes about that in Psalms 73. Just read that psalm when you also wrestle with these issues. I can tell you that I would rather not stand on the side of those who have a big mouth now, for they will surely be judged after that and end up in hell. I would rather stand on the side of Christ and suffer, in order to be later on with Him in glory.

Noah was “brought safely through [the] water”, that is the water of the flood through which the rest of the people died. The water of the judgment was a means for him to be transferred from the old world to the new world. He was able to be saved in this way because he had a protection against the judgment and that was the ark. In such a way you have also been transferred into a new world. Concerning you the judgment went over Christ. Because you are in Him you have not died in the judgment.
V21. Of this event baptism is a type. Baptism is called an ‘antitype’, because it is a type of another type, that of the flood. Baptism and flood belong together. The water of baptism and the water of the flood have the same meaning. Both waters speak of death. We are being saved by the means of which baptism is a type: the judgment of death. How can a person be saved through death? That is possible when another person goes into death instead of him. That is what the Lord Jesus did. Through baptism you show in a type what has happened to you when Christ died for you.

Through baptism you publicly give a testimony that you have transferred from the one party, that of satan, to the other party, that of the Lord Jesus, the rejected One. The suffering that you are going through is the consequence of that. The water of baptism doesn’t give any meaning for the body as such. The question is your conscience towards God. When you are baptized, you place yourself before God and you say to Him that you want to follow the Lord Jesus. You also ask Him to keep you from doing anything that is unrighteous, because you want to have a good conscience and you want to keep it like that.

From then your way stands in relation to the resurrected Jesus Christ. You have left the world and sin behind you. They symbolically are buried in the water grave of your baptism (Rom 6:3). The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is now the connection that determines everything. Through His resurrection a new world of blessing and life has been disclosed for you. How can it be possible that you would still want to live in connection with the old world over which you have acknowledged the judgment?

V22. The fact that this is all still in faith, doesn’t diminish anything of its reality. It will all soon become visible for the natural eye too. Up till that moment you may be sure that He, with Whom you are now related, is at the right hand of God in heaven. He has taken the place of the highest authority. All things are subjected to Him. You still cannot see that around you, but you see Him to Whom all things are subjected (Heb 2:8). Is the greatest motive to endure
suffering that you sometimes may have to go through at times, not to look upon Him in all His glory and majesty?

Now read 1 Peter 3:19-22 again.

Reflection: What is the meaning of baptism and what are the consequences of baptism?
1 Peter 4

Formerly and Now | verses 1-9

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, 2 so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. 3 For the time already past is sufficient [for you] to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. 4 In [all] this, they are surprised that you do not run with [them] into the same excesses of dissipation, and they mal[ign] [you]; 5 but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 6 For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to [the will of] God. 7 The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober [spirit] for the purpose of prayer. 8 Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Be hospitable to one another without complaint.

V1. The first verse of chapter 4 is directly in connection to what is previously said. You can derive that from the word “therefore”. That word makes clear that a conclusion follows. When Christ was on earth He “suffered in the flesh”. That does not refer to His work on the cross, but to His life in the midst of people who were hostile to God, how religious as they may have been. He did not give in to their carnal desires and in no way He could be tempted to sin. The will of God was decisive for His life and to Him He entrusted Himself. The result of that was that He had to endure sufferings. He suffered, because He was fully focused on God and
did not want to have anything to do with sin. He did not want to do anything independently from His God. That is the thought you should arm yourself with.

The appeal to arm yourself proves that there is a battle to be fought. If you want to win the battle like the Lord Jesus has won, you are to arm yourself. The weapon is not a material weapon, but it consists of a thought. The content of that thought is Christ and that He has suffered in the flesh. When you are being tempted to sin, then you should take out this weapon: the thought that Christ has suffered in the flesh. He has suffered and He has endured and has overcome.

The essence of this thought is that Christ has endured the suffering in the flesh, because He lived in the full confidence of His Father in doing His will. Satan tempted Him by offering Him the kingdom without having to suffer for it (Mat 4:8-10). Men have tempted Him by trying to make Him King without Him having to suffer for it (Jn 6:15). The Lord has rejected each temptation and chose to suffer, because this was God’s way to glory.

A person who in this view looks like the Lord Jesus is Joseph. Joseph also suffered, because he did not want to have any part in sin. He was not willing to cooperate with the sins of his brothers and he neither wanted to cooperate with the sin that Potiphar’s wife wanted to tempt him with (Gen 37:2b; 39:9). Due to that he suffered like the Lord Jesus for the sake of righteousness. You are to arm yourself with the same mind, meaning that you choose to suffer instead of sinning.

The point is that you do not give in to sin, what the world continually seeks to tempt you to. When you suffer in the flesh, that is in the body, it is clear that you have dealt with sin and that you do not surrender yourself to it. When you do surrender to it you do not suffer. Enjoying sin in not suffering. You can choose to enjoy sin (Heb 11:25), but you must consider that it is a passing pleasure that has a bitter and often permanent after taste. Christ did not have anything to do with sin and due to that He suffered.
The same goes for you, who follows Him, as you have confessed, as I hope, with your baptism.

V2. With your conversion and baptism “the rest of the time” has come to live “for the will of God”. You have thrown away enough time in the past by trying to fulfil your lusts. May I ask you how you spend your time now in contrast to the past? It cannot be the case that you just go on to excessively consume movies and other kinds of entertainment, can it? You should have ceased being obsessed with sports and recreation together with the world, shouldn’t you? You are not continually occupied anymore with making your house more and more comfortable, are you?

It is not always about things that are wrong in themselves. The point is that these things determine the life of people who do not consider the will of God, but live after their own desires.

V3. You also belonged to those people in the past and you also lived the way they do. That must have changed when you converted to God and when you surrendered yourself to the Lord Jesus, hasn’t it? Since then your life has had a totally different principle and a totally different content and a totally different purpose. When that is reality for you, it will be seen by a real change in using your time.

For you have spent enough of your past lifetime in carrying out “the desire of the Gentiles”. Away with that! That is past tense now! Peter reminds us of that time. Sometimes it is necessary and useful to be reminded of the past. That is not to blame you again for your sins, but to show you from where you have been redeemed, from what kind of a horrible pit you were saved. It will help you to increase in gratefulness towards God and in your devotion to the Lord Jesus.

Just look at the will of the Gentiles, what they desire and compare that to the will of God, what He has planned for you. The Gentiles live in total rebellion against God and they fully follow their own will wherein they satisfy their lusts in the most perverted way. They do not allow anyone to tell them to do anything and they
swallow all unrighteousness like water. They surrender themselves to everything that can satisfy the physical and spiritual needs. Thereby they have no respect with anyone and they also sacrifice the health of their own body. Unlimited sex, uncontrol- lably consuming food and drink and a total surrender to demons are the ingredients of this life of debauchery.

V4. They find it strange that you do not join them in “the same excesses of dissipation”. Your new conduct is very strange and incomprehensible for those who used to be your friends in the past. Because you do not have part in their dealings anymore, they will talk all kinds of evil about you. They do not understand that God takes care of you. When you have received something they may for instance talk around that you have stolen it. Do not mind about that at all and do not worry about it.

V5. You can surrender it to Him Who judges righteously (1Pet 2:23). He is ready to “judge the living and the dead”. The judgment about the living will be carried out by the Lord Jesus when He comes to establish His kingdom (Mat 25:31). He will carry out the judgment over the dead between the expiration of the millennial kingdom of peace and the beginning of the eternal condition (Rev 20:11). Both the dead and the living will have to “give account” to Him with Whom they did not want to have anything to do and they therefore mocked, persecuted and slandered those who confessed Him.

V6. With a view to that judgment a joyful message was already proclaimed in the past. The Scripture calls that the “everlasting gospel” (Rev 14:6-7). The content of that gospel is that each one who acknowledged himself guilty before God and accepted God’s judgment over his life as a man in flesh as just, was made alive by the power of the Holy Spirit. So through all ages it has been the Holy Spirit Who gives life and in that way enables us to have part in the resurrected Christ and His future. This is an encouragement for the believers to whom Peter writes and that is also an encouragement for you who also has accepted the gospel, though it is both for those and for you in its richer form: the gospel of grace.
In verse 5 you have read that the Lord Jesus is ready to come and judge all ungodliness (cf. Jam 5:9). That means that the end of all things is near. That is already the situation when Peter writes this letter. How much more does that apply to the time we live in. That it has not been yet, is due to the patience of God, Who does not want that anyone should perish (2Pet 3:9).

V7. When you think of the end that is near, it may encourage you. It will not last long anymore and then all boasting of man will cease. Also everything, in which a man may put his hope, will come to an end. Hereby you may think of his self-made religion with his self-shaped imaged of God. Materialism and spiritualism will be judged at the coming of the Lord Jesus. Then also all slandering, mocking and persecution will come to an end for those whom have put their trust in the Lord Jesus.

When the Lord Jesus comes and when He has judged all unrighteousness, the millennial kingdom of peace can begin. When you focus on that, it will give you strength to bear and to endure what otherwise you are not able to bear and endure. Don’t allow yourself to be fired up by the news of the day, through which you may take a wrong action.

“Be of sound judgment”, respond calmly and consider. Let yourself be led by God’s Word. Keep your eyes fixed on the coming of the Lord. Then you will be able to see all things around you in its true perspective.

Be of “sober [spirit]” too, meaning that you do not allow the spirit of times to blur your view, but that it remains pure. See everything that comes towards you in the light of God and of the future, so that you may see the things as they really are and not as they seem to present themselves to you. That watchfulness does not make you overconfident, but it leads you to “pray”. The real awareness that you live in the end of times will lead you to a deep dependence on God.

V8. After having presented the relation to God like that, attention is now being paid to the relation of Christians to one another.
What is important “above all”, is that they have “fervent ... love for one another”. A real and firm relationship among Christians is especially noticeable by the interest in one another. Then you also get to know each other, regarding both the strong characteristics and the weaknesses.

In the end of times it is more than ever important that the company of believers meet and encourages one another (Heb 10:24-25). Real love seeks what is for the benefit of the other. Then they do not dig up the weaknesses and sins (Pro 16:27a), but on the contrary, they cover them (Pro 10:12). Seeing other people’s mistakes and enlarging on them is not the love of the Lord. He does not see sins anymore in those who are His, but He covers them with His love.

That does not mean that you should not call evil by its name. It certainly does mean that sin is to be judged as soon as possible and after that there is also forgiveness. Love cannot live with sin. When a person commits a sin, love will do everything to convince the brother that has sinned about that, so that the sin can be confessed and be put away (Mat 18:15). The devil will always try to cause disharmony among believers, often by using small matters. He will absolutely not succeed when we have fervent love for one another.

V9. That love will also be expressed by being “hospitable”. That is not only regarding your friends, but also and especially people who you do not know. ‘Hospitality’ literally means ‘love for strangers’. When a believer, whom you do not know, comes to you, you not only ought to offer him a meal, but also a home. Let him feel to be welcome and that your whole house is available to him. That doesn’t mean that you should be naive, but that you must have such an attitude.

It is also for a reason that Peter adds to it that you must do it without grumbling, for that can easily happen. An unexpected guest can actually disturb your program enormously. You may find it also awkward, because you may just have cleaned up and put everything in the right order and now have to fetch everything
back for that strange guest. And not to mention the costs that this visit may possibly bring. Therefore take account of this word and do not take action by grumbling or by even trying to figure things out, but show an abundance of hospitality. Invite one another, receive one another and serve one another.

Now read 1 Peter 4:1-9 again.

Reflection: What is the most important thing in the end of times?
Serve One Another As Good Stewards  | verses 10-13

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

10 As each one has received a [special] gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 Whoever speaks, [is to do so] as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves [is to do so] as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; 13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

V10. The Lord has given something to each one to serve to the other. With your gift you can serve those, who are the most important people on earth to God: the companionship of believers. What was given to you, in order for you to be able to do that, is called “gift” as a grace of God. Grace plays a major role in this letter. The Lord wants to use His own to pass on His grace to His own.

You are able to pass on the grace that you have received, to other believers. The Lord has distributed the gifts in such a way that you are able to serve all believers and that you can be served by all believers. Therefore you are not supposed to keep the gift that you have received, for yourself, but you ought to pass it on. Your gift is not given to you for your own pleasure or for your own honor or importance, but it ought to be useful and for the joy of the other. In that way there is an interaction between the believers. Each of the believers is a gift to all others (Eph 4:7).

When you use the gift that you have received from the Lord in such a way that the Lord has intended you to, you are a ‘good steward’. A steward is someone who manages something that
belongs to another person. What you have received is from the Lord and He expects you to be faithful in making use of it (1Cor 4:1-5). In future he will demand your accountability on that (cf. Lk 16:1-13).

What God has given of His grace is “manifold”. Hereby you should consider a diversity of His grace. Haven’t you already experienced in your life how much grace you have received? Has the Lord not often used brothers and sisters then?

Just try to think about everything you owe to brothers and sisters and thank God for the ways He made that all happen. Have you not often been richly blessed at the gatherings and have the meetings in the homes not often been encouraging for you?

The fact the God has arranged things like that at the same time makes clear that a ‘one-man-ministry’ in the church is not according to His will. God did not concentrate all gifts in one person, but He definitely gave a great diversity of gifts. Thereby He for instance gives to one a word of wisdom and to another a word of knowledge (1Cor 12:8-10).

VII. The gifts are divided in two main categories by Peter. The one category is ‘speaking’, the other category is ‘serving’ (see also Acts 6:2-4). First he deals with ‘speaking’. What an encouraging and edifying effect can words have on a person! This speaking for edification especially happens in the meeting. Of course it should be a speaking “the utterances of God” and not by giving one’s own opinion on certain things. It should undoubtedly be in accordance with God’s Word, but it should also be according to God’s will that it is said at the right time.

When it happens like that in the meeting it will be to a great blessing of all attendants. Each attendant will feel himself to be personally addressed. That may imply that you are comforted or encouraged or exhorted by what is said (1Cor 14:3). It is just what you need, and God, Who guides the speaker by His Spirit in speaking ‘the oracles of God’, knows that. That, however, doesn’t raise the speaker above criticism, for he remains in himself a fal-
lible person. Therefore everything that has been said must be judged whether it is according to God’s Word (1Cor 14:29).

The ‘serving’ is distinguished from the ‘speaking’. ‘Serving’ regards to the sharing with others of the material goods. We can all serve others with the means we have. That must happen with sincere motives and not for attaining a good reputation. It should not be for one’s own honor, but to God’s honor. Therefore God has to give the power to do it, He has to work in your heart.

When you are open to the will of God in both your speaking and serving, He will make clear to you what you should say or do. He gives the gifts and also the power to use those gifts. He first gives you an order to do something and then He gives you everything you need to execute that order. It is a service that in no way can happen in one’s own power, in the power of the flesh. Only then it can happen to the glory of God. The Lord Jesus is the One through Whom you are capable to do everything to God’s glory. He will give the power for that forever and ever.

V12. In verse 12 Peter comes back to the suffering. By addressing his readers as “beloved”, he makes them feel his warm love. With this word “beloved” he certainly does not only indicate his own love, but he also means by that, that they are beloved of God. They may have been doubting about that because of the persecution they have to endure.

There is still more warmth besides the warmth of love. That warmth is more of a heat. It is the “fiery ordeal” of the persecution that they are experiencing in their midst. The enemy wants to intimidate them and wants to bring them to deny the Lord Jesus as the glorified Lord. That persecution can cause them to start doubting the love of God. However, the suffering that comes in their midst, they should not see as something that accidentally happens to them and less as something that God sends in order to make their life miserable.

When people kindle a fire, it destroys everything that it comes into contact with. When God kindles a fire He also keeps it in
control, so that it only affects those matters He allows to be consumed by the fire. The fire in which the three friends of Daniel found themselves, chose, under the guiding hand of God, only the ropes of the three friends, while it did not affect the other parts of their body; not one hair of their head was singed (Dan 3:24-27).

The fire is used by God to test the believer. The test of your faith is necessary because it purifies your faith from the elements that may cloud the faith in one way or another. Faith is being clouded by, for instance, still trusting in your own power or by thinking that you need to fulfil certain conditions in order to gain favor of God. That all has to be removed, for you must learn to unconditionally trust in God alone.

The idea that as soon as a person comes to faith, all difficulties and worries become past tense, is a serious misconception. The gospel is not a success formula for a life without problems. False evangelists may want you to believe that by accepting the gospel you will be healthy and wealthy and that you will gain prosperity and a good reputation. Those are liars, who bring a message that they themselves invented. If you believe such foolishness you will surely find it strange that you as a believer still have to face suffering.

The reality of the gospel of Jesus Christ is different. If you believe in it and you desire to live in that faith, you will on the contrary have to do with sufferings. Such a life identifies you with Christ. And what was His part on earth? It was nothing more than suffering, was it?

V13. Peter is trying to encourage you. Instead of being discouraged by suffering which is your part, because of your relation with Christ, you are allowed to rejoice in it. You may share “the sufferings of Christ”, which of course only refers to the sufferings that men did to Him and not to the sufferings for the atonement of sins. Sharing the sufferings of Christ, meaning going through something of which you know He also went through, gives a deeply inward joy (Acts 5:41; Lk 6:22-23). Paul very much wanted
to share the sufferings of Christ (Phil 3:10), because he wanted to look like Christ as much as he possibly could. The more you share the sufferings of Christ the deeper you can rejoice in the joy of it now already.

This joy will extend to “rejoice with exultation” when the Lord Jesus comes in His glory. Then He will reveal Himself and will be seen by all (Rev 1:7). They will be present at that time and accompany Him with exceeding joy. The situation will be completely changed. From being suffering Christians they will be changed to glorified Christians. Though, the joy of the sufferings has not been changed, but has been expanded to an expression of a joy that in no way can be reduced. It’s an exuberant expression of joy. The time of suffering is over. The time of singing has come (Song 2:11-12). The glory has come in the Person of Jesus Christ Who reveals Himself to the world as the Conqueror.

Now read 1 Peter 4:10-13 again.

Reflection: How could you serve to others and be served by others?
Judgement Begins With the House of God | verses 14-19

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 15 Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; 16 but if [anyone suffers] as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name. 17 For [it is] time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if [it begins] with us first, what [will be] the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner? 19 Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

V14. The glory that is spoken about in verse 13 has not come yet. At present you may still be reproached “for the name of Christ”. It is the same suffering as the suffering that is called ‘Christ’s sufferings’ in the previous verse, but with another emphasis. There the emphasis is more on the suffering itself; it is a suffering that also Christ has endured for doing the will of God. It is a part of each who follows Him. With the suffering ‘for the name of Christ’ the emphasis is more on the relation with Himself.

To be reproached for His Name is a suffering that is a direct consequence of coming out for His Name in word and in deed. The world sees in the believer the representative of Christ, Whom Himself, when He was here, was the great Representative of God. Due to that He experienced: “The reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me” (Psa 69:9). To Him it was no disgrace and that goes also for you when you are reproached for His Name. Peter even says “you are blessed” when that happens.

Christ’s sufferings and the suffering for the Name of Christ are an exceptional way of the revelation of “the Spirit of glory and of God”. In the suffering you experience that the Spirit brings you
in your inner being into contact with ‘the glory’ that is His home. He is also the Spirit ‘of God’, the Spirit Who gives you the awareness of God’s full interest and support in the suffering you find yourself in.

That is without a doubt a wonderful encouragement to endure this suffering with joy. You go through an unprecedented experience of God’s presence that others will also notice, for that Spirit “rests on you” (cf. Acts 6:15). While you’re enduring suffering on earth, you possess something that comes from the glory which connects you to it. You not only have a promise of a coming glory, but you have Him Who belongs there.

I have read the biography of a Chinese church leader who had spent twenty years in detention barracks, because of his faith in the Lord Jesus. In that book he speaks all the time about God as ‘the Presence’. To him the presence of God and His Spirit was nearly a tangible reality in the midst of the suffering. They were ‘present’, he was sure of Their presence. That gave him the strength to do the heavy forced labor and to testify of his Lord and Savior towards his fellow prisoners.

V15. After presenting the privileges of suffering, because of the relation with Christ, Peter warns of a form of suffering that ought not to happen to you. That form of suffering is the suffering because of the sins you have committed. Peter mentions some of them. The “murderer, or thief, or evildoer” are people who take or damage the life or possessions of other people (materially or spiritually).

The “troublesome meddler” doesn’t look to fit into this row, but Peter still puts him next to these other crystal clear sins. The busy-body is someone who meddles unasked in other people’s affairs. Meddling limits the room for others, it takes away the freedom of others to act according to what the Lord makes clear. The busy-body is doing a work of which the devastating effects often become visible in the longer term. The world has no appreciation for it, like it has not for the other three. It is shameful when a person, who calls himself a Christian, has to endure such suffering.
V16. However, a person may possibly suffer, because he really behaves as a Christian, after the meaning of the name ‘Christian’. That is because he shows features of Him to Whom the name ‘Christian’ refers, that is Christ. The name ‘Christian’ appears only here and in Acts 11:26 and 26:28. In both places in Acts the name is used by unbelievers who refer to those who testify of their faith in Christ. Therefore it is the world that came up with that name. By what Peter writes here we see that the Spirit acknowledges this name formally.

A Christian is therefore a true follower of Christ. When you suffer “as a Christian”, thus because you are known as a follower of Christ and act as such, you do not have to be ashamed of it. On the contrary, you are allowed “to glorify God in this name”. Christ has always suffered for the Name of God and glorified Him therein. You are allowed to follow Him therein. That is a great privilege.

V17. There is another reason why God uses the suffering of the persecution on behalf of His own. The time of the judgment over the world is still to come. Peter speaks about that in his second letter. We shall see that when we read and examine that letter together. In this first letter it is about God’s reign over His children. Therefore Peter speaks now about God’s judgment over His house, which is the church, but seen as a whole that consists of all believers who are held responsible for their own behavior.

That you are a member of the church is not only a privilege, but also a great responsibility. That’s the issue here. That responsibility is greater than that of the world. The church as the people of God and the house of God, as a matter of fact, confesses to know God and to obey Him. Therefore God’s judgment has to begin here before He executes His judgment over the world (cf. Jer 25:29; Eze 9:6).

God first judges what is the closest to Him, what is most responsible (see Lev 10:3; Amos 3:2), in order to remove what is not according to His will. He wants that the wrong should be confessed and be put away. For that reason He uses the world in her persecution of His own. Therefore persecution is besides a test of faith
also a speaking of God to the conscience of His people. He wants to bring His own to have the same judgment as He has. That will cause them to judge what He judges, so that they may not be judged with the world (1Cor 11:31-32).

By speaking about “us” Peter puts himself under the judgment that God executes over His house. “For [it is] time” for that judgment while the church is still on earth. To the unbeliever the time has not come yet to be judged, but that will happen in future (Pro 11:31). The execution of God’s judgment over the world contains a serious warning for us not to catch up with her, doesn’t it? The judgment over the world is still to come and it will be terrible and definite. There will be no way to escape.

V18. You are a righteous one and just take a look at the effort God is taking to lead you saved to that final goal. In the midst of all trials He continues His work in you. He guards you from falling away and from sliding into the world and He purifies your faith, so that you continue to respond to Who He is. Therefore “difficulty” here is with regard to all efforts of God in order to lead you safely through all dangers to finally give you the inheritance that He reserves for you (1Pet 1:4-5). That is a great encouragement.

To the world it is a great warning. That is embedded in the question “what will become the godless man and the sinner”, thus those who live without God and only for themselves. The answer to that question is: they will appear before the great white throne to be judged there according to their works (Rev 20:11-15).

V19. If you are aware of the previous you will be able to understand the admonition to, when you are suffering to God’s will, entrust your soul to the faithful Creator. You will surely not think of escaping the suffering by adapting yourself to the world and entrust your soul to her. The world, consisting of the ungodly and sinners, speeds to meet the judgment. Therefore it is not wise to take refuge in the world in order to escape the suffering. You speed to meet your inheritance. Therefore consider that the extent of suffering is the basis for the joy that you will have when
you can take possession of the inheritance at the revelation of the glory of Christ (see verse 13).

The “faithful Creator”, your Maker, He Who completely knows you and knows how you feel, guides everything to the goal for which He has created all things. He is faithful and will achieve His goal with the world, with the inheritance and with you. On the way to His goal you are allowed, by doing good, to show that you have entrusted your whole life to Him. You do not seek to adapt yourself to the world, but you neither rejoice in the judgment that will come over the world. As long as you are here you are allowed to seek the good for the people in the world, so that, through your good works many more will get to know Him on behalf of Whom you work.

Now read 1 Peter 4:14-19 again.

Reflection: What does your suffering as a Christian consist of?
1 Peter 5

Care For the Flock of God | verses 1-5

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as [your] fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, 2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to [the will of] God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; 3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. 5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to [your] elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

V1. When Christians live in a time of persecution and suffer because of that, a lot depends on how the relationships are among them. Therefore Peter continues his teachings with admonitions for elders (verses 1-4) and younger people (verse 5). When there are frictions between both groups, they will be an easy prey for the enemy who threatens them from the outside.

There has always been the danger of frictions between older and younger people, but in our time it is greater than in former times. In the past the authoritative relationships were clear and they were generally also respected. Nowadays authority is an almost ‘dirty’ word. Autonomy, the free will of man, seems to be the most valuable asset, also to Christians.

Changes in authoritative relationships are taking place rapidly. Younger people increasingly see older people with their opinions
as old-fashioned and liberty limiting. Older people have the opinion that younger people only want to be revolutionary, without any respect for the good achievements of the former generation or generations. Each proposal for a change is being rejected in advance, because it is experienced as a threat for the old achievements to which they want to hold on to. When we are willing to listen to the teaching of Peter, then the frictions mentioned or even collisions and divisions will have no chance to have a detrimental effect on us.

Peter starts with the elders, thus with those who have the greatest responsibility. When it comes to the relationship between elder people and younger people, the heart of the fathers must first be brought to the children and then the heart of the children can be dealt with, in order to bring them to the fathers (Mal 4:6). Although Peter speaks as an elder and therefore speaks with authority, he at the same time speaks as an elder to his fellow elders.

The term “elders” is not a title for a special class of people with an official position in the church that are appointed by others. An elder is somebody who by age, experience and wisdom of life is able to lead believers. The word ‘elder’ therefore does not indicate an official position, but it indicates an older person. That also appears from the contrast with the ‘younger people’ in verse 5.

That doesn’t mean that each believer has the same responsibility. There are older believers who by their conduct win authority (that is totally different from demanding authority!) and who take the care of the church to heart. Those are the ones who Peter addresses. He not only does that as a “fellow elder”, but also as somebody with two special characteristics, namely as a “witness of the sufferings of Christ” and as “a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed”. Peter can testify of the sufferings of Christ that came over Him when He was on earth (Jn 15:27). He is also a partaker of the glory of Christ that He will have in His kingdom, for he has foreseen that on the mountain of transfiguration (Lk 9:28-31).

V2. As an elder and due to his education for his ministry, Peter fulfills the order of the Lord to take care of His flock (Jn 21:15-17). Firstly he does that by the means of this letter to the whole flock.
In the second place he does that also by transferring his care now to the fellow elders or anyway by involving them in the care. He points out to the elders that it is about the flock of God. It is in no way their flock, as a church leader sometimes speaks about ‘my’ church.

It is also the flock that is among or with them and therefore not a flock that is below them. The elders themselves are also a part of the flock. A flock forms a whole. This is how it is with God's people. The task of the elders consists of their supervision over the whole flock (cf. Acts 20:28) and not giving some sheep a preferential treatment and neglect other sheep. The ‘shepherding’ of the flock consists of the preservation of dangers. Hereby you can think of the shielding from false doctrines. “Exercising oversight” actually implies that the flock is being provided with nourishment, with what is encouraging and empowering to move on.

It is important that elders exert their spiritual authority in the right way and in the right mind. That will be the case when they fulfil the three conditions that Peter mentions. They are to do it “voluntarily” and “with eagerness” and as “examples to the flock”.

Each of these conditions is in contrast to something of the flesh. ‘Voluntarily’ is in contrast to “compulsion”. An elder must not be forced to do his task. To act compulsively or against your will is not fitting to a task of care, for then there is no love for the flock. It is about a service out of willingness. That is after God’s heart, for He also did not act out of compulsion, but out of love when He gave the Lord Jesus as the good Shepherd. God loves the joyful shepherd (cf. 2Cor 9:7).

The shepherd is also not supposed to do his work for sordid gain. The sheep are not for him, but he is there for the sheep. Unfortunately you see that the church has become a house of trade. Some church leaders cry out for money and promise a lot regarding health and prosperity. The gain that shepherds are striving for may also lie in the increasing of their status. The rulers and pharisees in the days of the Lord Jesus were seeking that, while they also sought financial profit. They wanted to enrich themselves as much as they possibly could to the detriment of the sheep. Those were shepherds
who were shepherding themselves (Eze 34:2). The opposite of that is the shepherd after God’s intention. Such a shepherd is willing. Willingness is the attitude to help whenever it is needed, even when it is not asked with words. When a sheep deviates, he will go after it and bring it back. He is willing to forsake his own rest to succeed.

V3. Elders are also not people of power. One may possess his own possession and exert power, but the church is not in possession of a man. Instead of ruling with severity, in order to make the flock behave in a desirable way, the shepherd will show how a sheep ought to behave itself. After all, the shepherd himself is a part of the flock. Spiritual authority lies in the example, not in the words that are spoken. Following the Lord does not mean commanding, but showing in practice what that means. The shepherd after God’s heart doesn’t shout the command: ‘Go forward!’ from behind, but he shouts: ‘Follow me!’ and he himself is in the front.

V4. The prospect of a great reward is presented to the elders for their work. Their eyes are focused on the coming of “the Chief Shepherd”, that is the Lord Jesus. Peter is drawing the attention of his fellow elders to that, so that they may be encouraged to faithfully continue to do their often difficult and heavy task. It is a heavy order that can only be carried out with the view to the coming of the Lord and the reward that He has for those who have served in that way. All who have taken the lowest place on earth, will soon take the highest place with Him, distinguished from all others. Then they will be handed out “the unfading crown of glory” by the Chief Shepherd.

This particular encouragement for this often thankless task is certainly justified. Ministering to the believers is often heavier than preaching the gospel to the unbelievers. Still this task is of great importance. Therefore the Holy Spirit led Peter to write these words. Let each older believer who has a task as shepherd be sure to be encouraged by that and that he may persevere in fulfilling his duty until the coming of the Lord in glory.

V5. After this exhaustive word to the older people Peter addresses the younger people. He tells them that they must submit them-
selves to the older people. A lot will depend on the attitude of the older people. In order to develop themselves spiritually sound, the younger people need older people to submit themselves to, because they give the good example to the younger people. Though also older people are not perfect people. Younger people are inclined to use the mistakes of older people as an excuse not to submit themselves. But that is not the right attitude.

Each authoritative source that is established by God must be acknowledged. That doesn’t mean that they should be obeyed without consideration, but it means that there must be an attitude of submissiveness with those who are under this authority. The Lord Jesus submitted Himself to His fallible earthly parents (Lk 2:51). It is an exercise for younger people to follow Him in this and to deal with the older people submissively.

The enemy will do his utmost to cause a division between younger people and older people. He will try to cause them not to understand one another. But younger people and older people need each other. Older people need to serve the younger people. When they do that, the younger people will want to submit themselves to them.

The appeal that is made for both parties, is that it is necessary to be humble, which also applies to all. When you are clothed "with humility", thus when humility is your power of living, you will experience the blessing of it. He who is humble doesn’t pretend anything and due to that he will not encounter conflicts with someone else and definitely not with God. With Elihu you see a beautiful example of a younger man who takes the right place towards the older Job and his friends (Job 32:1-11).

However, when you resist and try to fight for your own rights, God will resist you. A spirit of pride is a direct attack on God’s right over man.

Now read 1 Peter 5:1-5 again.

Reflection: How do you as a young believer, look at older believers?
The God of All Grace | verses 6-14

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, 7 casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. 8 Be of sober [spirit], be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 But resist him, firm in [your] faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. 10 After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen [and] establish you. 11 To Him [be] dominion forever and ever. Amen. 12 Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (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! 13 She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and [so does] my son, Mark. 14 Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace be to you all who are in Christ.

V6. In the test of your faith you can notice the powerful hand of God. Instead of resisting that you have to submit yourself. That’s what He is looking for. Humiliation is an indication that there was pride, like pride goes before destruction (Pro 16:18).

Though, you ought not to humble yourself under the hand of men, but “under the mighty hand of God”. When you’re facing difficulties, even when those difficulties are caused by men, then it is still His hand that you feel. Behind the hand of men you may see the hand of God. Behind the humiliation you may see the exaltation that will be your part at God’s time. That will happen when the Lord Jesus comes. Then you and all other believers will become rulers from being subjects.

V7. It doesn’t mean that everything will be easy. Therefore God gives you a great encouragement: you are allowed to cast all your care upon Him (Psa 55:22). He will take over your whole burden.
The only thing you’ve got to do is to cast that burden of care upon Him. When you have done that, you’ve got rid of them. He has taken them over and will take care of you further. When you keep on carrying this burden yourself, you will be absorbed by it and you will not see God Who loves to take care of you.

The fact that God is taking care really means that He has great interest in each detail of your life. He not only wants to be involved, but He wants to take over your need. He brings you into tests and trials, so that you may learn to take it out of His hand and to put it into His hand (Psa 10:14).

V8. With this view you have the privilege to accept all tests out of the mighty hand of God and to submit everything to Him that goes together with it. Nevertheless you should not neglect that the devil also plays his part. To trust in God doesn’t mean that you have got rid of your responsibility and can therefore allow yourself to be passive. You always need to be “sober”, therefore not naively think that you can do everything without being bothered by the devil. He absolutely is a defeated enemy, but only for those who go their way in the confidence of faith in God. Keep your eyes widely opened for the dangers that surround you. Sleepiness and laziness are an invitation for the devil to attack you.

The devil is called your “adversary” here. With everything that is in him he is against you, because you belong to the Lord Jesus. There is nothing in the devil that in any way can be beneficial to you. He “prowls around like a roaring lion”, searching for a prey. He is cruel, powerful and merciless. With his roaring he tries to frighten you. Be sure that you do not come into his power. His only goal is to “devour” you, which means that he wants to completely destroy you.

V9. Don’t let him intimidate you when he comes your way. Do not turn your back on him, but resist him. You have to flee when he comes your way in the form of seducing you into sin in case you encounter something that addresses your flesh, in order to stir that up. That regards to fornication, idolatry, money and the lusts of the youth (1Cor 6:18; 10:14; 1Tim 6:11; 2Tim 2:22). When
the trial comes from the outside, when the devil wants to frighten you and wants to cause you to deny your faith, you must resist him. You should not avoid the suffering, but you ought to endure it, steadfast in the faith for the sake of the Lord, looking upon Him in the confidence that He supports you.

You are not the only one who has to face this suffering. It is the experience of all with whom you form “the brotherhood”. The brotherhood embraces all believers and therefore not the limited circle of believers whom you regularly are in contact with. The brotherhood is not a part of the world, but it finds itself in the midst of it. The brotherhood and the world have nothing in common. The world may be very friendly at times, but as soon as it is confronted with the control of the Lord Jesus, their tolerance directly turns into threat and hatred. Then the world reveals its true face and that is that it hates all of those who belong to that brotherhood and everything that is theirs.

V10. But there is a mighty fortress that repels all the attacks of the roaring lion. That fortress is “the God of all grace”. All believers know the God of all grace, meaning that God’s grace is experienced in all kinds and at all times. That also applies from the beginning to the end of your life and in all circumstances. All grace comes from God, any which way it comes.

He has called you “to His eternal glory in Christ”. Your future is totally fixed in God’s plan. The future is His and you are His. Nothing and nobody is able to make a change in God’s call. Who could that be? It must be something or someone who is stronger than God. Would you know who that could be? There is not even one to be compared with Him, not to mention that there would be something that could possibly be above Him.

When He has called you for an amazing future related to Christ, then you will also have a part in that (see Rom 8:30). At the same time and contrary to that there is “a while” of suffering. In that while He is preparing you for that future with Christ.
There will be no lack or shortage of anything anymore.

He will also "confirm" you through the suffering, meaning he will make you stand steadfast.

Thereby He will inwardly "strengthen" you, so that there will be no weakness anymore.

Finally He gives you a firm foundation, on which He will "establish" you.

You see that God makes an end to all that is out of balance and that is weak and instead he gives a new situation in which absolutely no change can be possibly made or done.

V11. This all will end up in His glorification. From the mouth of all the redeemed the praise will sound that ascribes to Him all glory and power. There is no glory and power beside Him. The proofs that He alone possesses it, are abundantly delivered and seen in all the redeemed together. With an ‘amen’ Peter concludes this praise. Each believer will wholeheartedly agree with that. That’s how it is and there is nothing else.

V12. Peter still has some personal greetings. In order to deliver the letter to them he gave it with Silvanus, after he might have possibly dictated it to him. Silvanus is the same as Silas, the journey companion of Paul. This Silas was familiar with suffering, He and Paul were scourged in Philippi and were thrown in prison (Acts 16:19-23). Maybe Peter knew that and he therefore asked him to take his letter with him. Peter must have known him, for Silas was a leader among the brethren in Jerusalem (Acts 15:22), where Peter also had served the believers.

To introduce Silas to the readers of his letter, he says that as for him, Silas is a faithful brother. He tells his readers what his impression of Silas is, without arrogating himself a definite judgement about the faithfulness of Silas. Peter is aware of his own
unfaithfulness. That’s what makes him careful. After all, the judgment about faithfulness is up to the Lord (1Cor 4:1-5; Mat 25:21,23).

He has written a brief letter, but its effect is definitely great and long lasting. It is to make them understand what “the true grace of God” is. By that Peter says that grace is the true nature of Christendom, that it is based on grace and not on the law. In that grace they must stand and hold on to and in no way should be drawn away from it.

That also goes for you. By grace you are saved (Eph 2:8) and you stand before God (Rom 5:2). That grace ought to characterize your life. If you have understood anything of what grace is, you will not be willing to place yourself under a law again or would want to participate in outwardly formal services. Grace means putting your whole life in God’s hand and to be guided by Him.

V13. Peter also conveys the greetings of the “chosen together with” them. He may possibly refer to his wife by that, whom he took with him on his journey (1Cor 9:5). He is writing from Babylon, where big Jewish community was and where he had worked. After all he is the apostle of the circumcision (Gal 2:7). He also conveys the greetings of his son Mark, the evangelist. Mark is probably his spiritual son.

V14. Finally Peter gives them the order to assure one another of their love to one another by greeting each other with an intimate greeting.

While Paul often concludes his letters with a wish that they may experience the grace of the Lord Jesus, Peter wishes his readers “peace”. Peace is the great character of the kingdom over which the Lord Jesus will reign and it is therefore also called ‘the kingdom of peace’. Peace is also the great blessing for the believers in their dealings with one another. The pleasure of that peace is only possible when each believer himself is aware of his position in Christ, is living up to it and also sees the other one in that position.
I heartily wish you that too in your relation with Christ and in your dealings with fellow believers. Amen.

Now read 1 Peter 5:7-14 again.

Reflection: Just explore how often God has already revealed Himself to you as the God of all grace.
The Second Letter of Peter

Introduction

In the second letter that we have from Peter in the Bible Peter addresses the same believers as in his first letter. We can derive that from verse 1 of chapter 3 of this second letter. Just like in the first letter ‘the government of God’ is the central thought in this letter. The difference is that in the first letter it is about the government of God over the believers, while in this letter it is about God’s government over the unbelievers.

God rules. He is sovereign and He has firm control over the world, although it seems to be totally different to the natural eye. Therefore you should not judge the things as they present themselves to you, but you should see them all in the light of God’s Word. That’s why this letter is also of great importance for not allowing yourself to be confused by the actions of the ungodly who even seem to have the right on their side. That is just an appearance and appearances can be deceiving.

Peter writes this letter as his spiritual testament. His departure is coming soon. In his first letter he encouraged the believers with a view to the persecutions and the sufferings they were enduring. In the kingdom of peace it will not be like that at all. That’s where he has drawn their attention to, over and over again. His second letter is full of warnings with a view to the destruction that is worked by the deceivers.

This is a character of other ‘second letters’, like the second letter to the Thessalonians and the second letter to Timothy. Then the point is not that much about dangers from the outside, from the world, but more from the inside, within Christianity. You are also to be kept from the deceivers.
In both letters the coming of the Lord will change everything. Also in his second letter Peter refers to that coming. Thereby he even goes further than the coming of the Lord to establish the kingdom of peace. He writes about the eternal condition of the new heavens and the new earth. That is a great encouragement to be faithful and to see to it that the deceivers will get no chance to undermine the faith of God’s children.
Salutation and Blessing | verses 1-2

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: 2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; …

VI. The letter has been written by Peter. He is its sender. Unlike in his first letter, he calls himself here “Simon Peter”. ‘Simon’ is the name that his parents gave him. It is, you could say, his old name. The Lord Jesus has given him his new name ‘Peter’ (Jn 1:43; Mt 10:2; 16:18). That Peter introduces himself by his double name, is remarkable. It says, I think, a lot of his spiritual mind. He is at the end of his life. He knows who he is in Christ. Still, he has not forgotten his origin.

Further on in verse 9, he reminds his readers that he, who forgets what he was in the past, is blind and shortsighted. The longer a person goes on his way with the Lord, the better he will know the Lord Jesus, but also the more he will understand what he himself is by nature. That will only make his awareness of grace increase. By introducing himself as Simon, he says to his readers that he is not better than they. By introducing himself also as Peter, he indicates that he addresses them as a brother among the brothers.

But he comes on behalf of another, on behalf of “Jesus Christ”. He is His “bond-servant”. What he has to say, he says because the Lord Jesus orders him to. He is completely subjected to His authority. That is not a burden, but a pleasure. He loves to call himself like that. There is absolutely nothing more wonderful than being a
bond-servant of Him Who has redeemed you from the power of sin and has liberated you from the death and the judgment afterwards (see Heb 9:27), right?

Peter, however, is not only a bond-servant, he is also an “apostle”. That means that he speaks with authority. He not only comes because he is a bond-servant, but he comes also with the authority of the Lord Jesus and speaks in His Name. Therefore, what he has got to say was mandated by the Lord Jesus and he passes that on with the authority of His Sender. Ultimately it is not Peter who addresses you, but the Lord Jesus. That will on the one hand prevent you from reading this letter as a human writing and on the other hand impress you of the power of God that speaks from this letter.

Peter addresses his letter “to those who have received a faith of the same kind of ours”. He mentions thereby that he and they owe that to “the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ”. The faith is precious, it is of special value. Here it is not so much the fact that you believe – thus your personal faith – but more about what you believe, about everything that the faith contains. What faith contains, are all blessings that are given to you in Christ. Those blessings are not only a part of an elite, a special group of privileged believers, but they are the part of all believers.

Peter especially addresses the Jews. They are raised with the thought that their own righteousness, the fulfilment of the law, gives the blessing of everything that God has promised. They have committed themselves to that as a nation at the Mount Sinai (Exo 19:8). But on that basis they lost the blessing and each entitlement to it forever by their disobedience and the rejection of the Lord Jesus. That blessing is now only to be obtained by faith in the rejected and glorified Lord. In what Christ has done, the basis has been laid for God to still give all the promised blessing to everyone who believes.

It is His righteousness, which means His righteous dealings, in response to the work of His Son, to give the opportunity to everyone who believes in the Son to obtain a part of the valuables
of all that faith contains. Therefore Peter speaks about the “righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ”. When you think about ‘the righteousness’ of our God, you may also consider that He is faithful to the promises that He has made to the fathers of Israel. In His righteousness He will fulfil all His promises.

Because Peter speaks about ‘our God and Savior Jesus Christ’, you see that God and the Savior Jesus Christ are One Person (cf. Tit 2:13). This Name relates this verse with the Old Testament, which those to whom Peter is writing, know so well. God calls Himself ‘Savior’ in Isaiah 45:15. He does that with a view to the approaching end of Israel. A Savior or Redeemer is needed when the end of the existence of a nation or of a man comes into view. Therefore this name is fitting in this letter in which we read about the end of everything that has been created (see also Lk 1:47; 1Tim 2:3; 4:10; Tit 1:3; 2:10; 3:4; Jude 25). This name also shows that the Lord Jesus is both Savior and Jahweh of the Old Testament.

Therefore when He is presented by Peter as the origin of the precious faith, it also reminds them of the faithfulness of the God of Israel, Who has granted this faith to His people. This faith is not related with God’s earthly people anymore, but with God’s heavenly people, wherein we find the things that God gives. In Christendom they have been revealed as truths. It is a great grace to be able to see that.

V2. Peter concludes his introductory words by wishing his readers “grace and peace”. He actually does that in a penetrating way. He is aware, and he therefore wants to make his readers aware of it too, that those who live by faith, will have to face heavy times. While great dangers are appearing and increasing (Mt 24:12), he is very much aware of the equally increasing grace and peace. Where the threat appears to be that great, grace and peace increase much more (cf. Rom 5:20b).

Therefore Peter speaks about a ‘multiplication’ of grace and peace. He wants you to be more and more aware of the grace that is available to you to enable you to live your life in this end time. You do not need to make it through by your own power and
with your own means. You will not be able to manage like that anyhow. Entrust yourself to the grace of God. You have learnt to know Him as “the God of all grace”, haven’t you? (1Pet 5:10)? Therefore you will also be able to endure the toughest circumstances with an increasing peace in your heart.

Peter relates this blessing to “the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord”. Here you have the firm foundation to experience the fulfilment of the wish of Peter. By your personal relationship with God and with the Lord Jesus you will learn to know Them better and better. You gain that knowledge by reading and studying God’s Word. That’s what you are doing now and that is a good thing. God and the Lord Jesus reveal Their plans in the Bible. When you know that, you will not easily be led into confusion and despair.

By reading the Word the Holy Spirit will show you everything what God’s plan is with the Lord Jesus. Christ is the center of all God’s thoughts. When your thoughts are focused on the same center, you will find the support and nourishment for your faith there. Your faith will develop itself and expand itself further and further in that knowledge. This is how the multiplication happens that Peter wishes you on behalf of Jesus Christ.

Now read 2 Peter 1:1-2 again.

Reflection: Which encouragements do these verses contain?
First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

...; 3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. 4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of [the] divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. 5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in [your] moral excellence, knowledge, 6 and in [your] knowledge, self-control, and in [your] self-control, perseverance, and in [your] perseverance, godliness, 7 and in [your] godliness, brotherly kindness, and in [your] brotherly kindness, love.

V3. Everything you have received and that has been summarized in the expression “faith” (verse 1), has been granted to you by “divine power”. You have in no way delivered any contribution or even paid the slightest to that. What you have received has been really “granted” to you. That is all a gift of God.

What is it that you have received? He has delivered you from the power of sin and has given you the forgiveness of your sins. He has given you free access to the sanctuary, in His presence. You are allowed to come there to worship Him and ask for His help. He has given you the Holy Spirit and His Word. He has provided you with the prospect of an inheritance. These are just some blessings that have become your part, because He has given them to you.

Nobody has been able to keep Him from doing that. Everything that God has given you by His power is fully fitted to enable you to live the life that is only worthy of living. That is a life to His honor, a life in holiness and devotion to Him. It is a life that is entirely focused on God alone, a life that shows true godliness,
a life in holy respect for Him, which He values and in which He finds His pleasure.

You can only live to His honor according to the extent of the knowledge you have of Him, Who has called you. Divine power doesn’t become visible in your life by signs and wonders that you could possibly accomplish, but through your actions in accordance with the knowledge that you have of Him. What do you know about Him? You know about Him according to what you have seen of Him. Thereby it is important how you have come to know Him; your first encounter with Him. He called you at the beginning of your life as a believer. You have come to Him, because He has called you.

And how did He call you? It is said here “by His own glory and excellence”. You were living in your sins and you were not able to save yourself. Then God revealed Himself to you in His “glory”. Such a great power came from that, that you as it were, were drawn to Him. Abraham had such an experience. He saw the God of glory and forsook the idolatrous environment where he was dwelling (Jos 24:2-3; Acts 7:2). Also Paul was completely changed from his course by that glory (Acts 22:6-11). It is inevitable that you have seen something of God’s glory, for nothing else could cause you to forsake the world.

“Excellence” here indicates something that exceeds everything. God has a glory and excellence that completely fades every kind of earthly glory and excellence. The power of your call is also related to ‘excellence’. He who sees the glory and excellence of God, if the eyes have been opened for it, experiences an irresistible power of attraction.

V4. By His glory and excellence He “has granted to us His precious … promises”, which are promises of great value. They are also “magnificent” promises. Those promises that are all “yes” and “amen” in Christ (2Cor 1:20). Like that you have received the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of the promise that you will receive the inheritance (Gal 3:14; Eph 1:13-14). Another promise is that you are now already allowed to have eternal life, while the full enjoyment
of it will be given to you when you are in the Father’s house (Tit 1:2; 1Jn 2:25; Jn 17:3). Aren’t they “precious and magnificent promises”? First, before you go further, just take a moment to thank the Father for this.

All those promises for which you have just given thanks, show that you are a partaker of the Divine nature. Without the possession of God’s nature, in other words, without life from God, you would neither have possessed those promises nor would you have been able to enjoy them in fellowship with God.

What an enormous contrast the Divine nature and all that you are able to enjoy due to that cause with the life you formerly lived. Everything you formerly longed for was related with the world and with destruction. Your lusts were fed by the world and could only end up in destruction. It was all filthy and unclean and only focused on satisfying your own lusts. You did not care at all about what you did to yourself and others and above all that, even God. You didn’t care about the fact that because of that you were heading for the eternal judgment. Now you have escaped from all that. You have fled from that and by Divine power you have been taken out from that atmosphere. That’s also something you may thank Him for.

V5. Besides a reason to forever thank Him for, it is also an exhortation to make efforts to seek God’s honor in all things. His Divine power should make you to diligently make use of it. If you think that everything is all right, it may prove that you are not a partaker of the Divine nature. For the possession of the Divine nature will make you conscious that you live in a world that seeks to eradicate your testimony. A person who really is a partaker of the Divine nature, which is given to him by Divine power, will desire to do everything that glorifies God, Who has blessed him abundantly. He will exert his best efforts to bring that about.

Then Peter demonstrates the seven phases that activates faith to the highest level. “Faith” is the faith in the Divine power and in the glory of Christ Who will be revealed. That is not a dogma, not a doctrine, but the reality which is the fundamental point. We go
our way in that confidence of faith. That confidence of faith has to be deepened.

1. Therefore ("for this very reason") "moral excellence" must be supplied to the faith, which is your trust in God, "applying all diligence". When there is real faith, our confidence of faith will surely be tested. We will then not be scared by that, on the contrary, that will only be an occasion for us to show, especially then, spiritual courage and power. The hardships will be overcome instead of giving in to the pressure of relinquishing the faith.

2. The hardships will drive you to God. You will seek and experience the fellowship with Him and in that way gain more knowledge. Therefore "knowledge" follows after showing spiritual power. When knowledge is not being added, the tests will only turn into emotional events, whereby you run a great risk to show it off. Excellence, or courage and power, can only function well when there is knowledge of God’s intention with the test of faith. By growing in the knowledge of God’s will, you will rightly use the spiritual energy. In that way knowledge will become a guide for your conduct. It leads you to a deeper familiarity with God that works in your heart and that is seen in your conduct. It prevents you from errors.

3. V6. Knowledge must function in the right way. Therefore "self-control" must be added to knowledge. You may grow in the knowledge of God, you may get to know Him and His plans better and better, but then the issue is that you make use of that knowledge in the right way. The intention is not that you should think that with all the knowledge you’ve gained you should serve God unrestrictedly and that wherever you go you see a reason to do that. Real knowledge will focus your heart on Christ. He always perfectly faithfully did the will of God and He did that in perfect rest. He never allowed Himself to be overwhelmed or to be rushed to do something. His life was led by the knowledge of God’s will.
4. When you intend to do the will of God in this way you will surely face resistance from the world. The Lord Jesus also had to do with that, but in no way did He let Himself be drawn away from the path of obedience to His God. He went on with perseverance. That goes also for you. Therefore you should add “perseverance” to self-control. The reason why self-control and perseverance are asked of you, is because you have an old nature and because you live in an environment that seeks to draw you away from God and His matters.

5. It goes without saying that you must persevere in the good things and that you must also bring them into practice in the right way. You could easily persevere in meaningless things. Therefore you should add “godliness” to it. Godliness is the consciousness of living in the presence of God. From there automatically as it were, the next aspect flows out.

6. V7. When there is godliness, when your heart has such fellowship with God, then “brotherly kindness” will not be a difficult task. It will not be difficult to love all who are partakers of the same Divine nature. You will love your brothers and sisters with a love that will only increase the more you are in fellowship with God.

7. Brotherly kindness ultimately leads to “love”, that is the highest love, the Divine love. With brotherly kindness you may find that there are things that make loving one another easy. Divine love goes much further, for God also loves even when there is nothing worthy of being loved. It is the source, the revelation of love at the highest level. If this is the way you love, then you are in relation to eternity and therefore you are able to resist the spirit of the age.

Now read 2 Peter 1:3-7 again.

Reflection: Make a list of some blessings that Divine power has given to you. What can be expected from you as a result of that?
An Abundant Entrance | verses 8-15

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

8 For if these [qualities] are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these [qualities] is blind [or] short-sighted, having forgotten [his] purification from his former sins. 10 Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; 11 for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. 12 Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you [already] know [them], and have been established in the truth which is present with [you]. 13 I consider it right, as long as I am in this [earthly] dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder, 14 knowing that the laying aside of my [earthly] dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. 15 And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind.

V8. In the previous verses you saw the seven steps of the spiritual growth of your faith. You have seen that your faith grows when you add in the right order the following aspects: virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, Godliness, brotherly kindness and finally love. The one follows the other. You cannot delete or displace one of them, for if you do, the growth will stop right there. When all these aspects in the growth of your faith have the right place, the result will be that you will get to know the Lord Jesus better and better. The more you know of the Lord the more you will love and serve Him.

The presence and efficacy of these ‘nutrients’ are the crucial condition to grow. When they are there and are working, they prove their efficacy in the fruit that they produce. That fruit is a life wherein the characteristics of the Lord Jesus become visible and in that way the Father is being glorified.
V9. When these things are absent, there will be no spiritual activity and no fruit. It proves that you are “blind” and “short-sighted”. I do not think that this applies to you, but still it is important for you to see the danger of it. To be blind means to be without the insight of God’s thoughts about the Lord Jesus. He who is blind has not grown to maturity. He who is shortsighted can only see things that are very close. To be shortsighted means that only the present time is being considered, the here and now, and not the future, the kingdom to come. There is no panoramic view. A person who is blind and shortsighted is therefore blind for the heavenly things and is shortsighted as far as it concerns the earthly things. He does not look any further than the here and now.

The cause of that is that he has “forgotten [his] purification from his former sins”. Indeed he is converted, for otherwise there could be no mention of cleansing. A person who is not converted has never been cleansed from his sins. However, he is not to be distinguished from the people of the world, for although he is converted he lives as somebody of the world. Did not Peter himself have such an experience? Was he not blind for his own weakness in the night that the Lord Jesus was delivered? Was he not shortsighted when he thought of having to defend the Lord? Was he not in the company of the world when he was standing with the foes of his Lord to warm his hands at the same fire? Had he not forgotten his old sins when he betrayed his Lord?

What happened to Peter can also happen to you and me. Fortunately, as far as Peter is concerned, everything has turned out right and he has been recovered. Therefore there is also hope for everyone who has forgotten the cleansing of his former sins.

V10. In order to be kept from such a situation, Peter appeals again to be diligent. Brothers and sisters have a collective origin. They are called and elected by God. This awareness is a positive exhortation to be diligent. When you know for sure that you are being appealed and elected, it will stir you up to be diligent in making your “call and election” sure. The point is that you for yourself unshakably hold on to what has been unshakably fixed with God. God has called you in the time. There is no doubt that God has
called you. That He would call you was already fixed in eternity, for He had elected you before the time. Also your election by Him is not to be doubted. God’s call and God’s election are unshakably fixed.

From God’s side everything is fixed, but you still have to implement your position. As far as your responsibility goes, you are to implement your position, you are to hold on to it and you are to live up to it. God wants to see people who recognizes His rights in their lives. Here on earth, where the Lord was rejected, God longs to see people who remind Him of the Lord Jesus. Such a life also prevents you from stumbling. You do not have to be afraid of false teachers who could possibly draw you away from the path of faith, the path that leads to the eternal kingdom.

V11. When you make spiritual progress, it does not only give security, but it goes together with a promise. That promise is “the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”. Each believer will enter that kingdom, but not each believer will do that in the same way. Peter speaks about an entrance that is “abundantly” for those who make their call and election sure. The “eternal kingdom” is the kingdom of God in its eternal form. The Lord Jesus will reign a thousand years over the kingdom of God, but also thereafter that kingdom will not cease to be God’s kingdom. As a matter of fact, it will change in form when eternity will begin, whereby there will be a new heaven and a new earth (2Pet 3:13).

The government of the Lord Jesus is an everlasting government (cf. Rev 22:5). Terrestrial kingdoms come and go. That is absolutely not the case with the kingdom of “our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”. The moment it begins it remains forever (cf. Dan 2:44; 7:14; Lk 1:32-33). When He has established His kingdom He will reign over it with all His own who have accepted Him in the time of His rejection. He will give each of His own a task in His kingdom, according to the faithfulness with which they have served Him in the time of His rejection.
He will abundantly supply entrance to all who have made efforts to get to know Him better (verses 5-8) and who have diligently made their call and election sure (verse 10). In that way He will especially honor those people in contrast to those who have lived after their own insights, though were saved, yet as through fire (1Cor 3:14-15). I hope that you will make your best efforts to gain that abundant entrance.

V12. It was not the intention of Peter to proclaim new things. God has not recorded his letter in His Word in order to reveal something to you that you did not know yet. The importance of this letter and of other subjects that are being dealt with more than once in God’s Word, is that you do not forget them. Repetition is often also intended as a confirmation, to give security (Phil 3:1). To assume something to be familiar, is not a reason not to talk about it. It is important to keep the truth in remembrance (2Tim 2:14; Tit 3:1; Jude 17).

The value of repetition is often being underestimated. There are, I believe, not many people whom, by reading or hearing something once, never have forgotten it. Of course there are some particular things you read or hear, that are unforgettably engraved in your memory, but those are exceptions. You need repetition to remember and work out everything that God’s Word is telling you. Therefore you have to read it continually. People who say that they have read through the whole Bible once and therefore know what it says, have no relationship with God and no self-knowledge.

By faith in the Lord Jesus you know “the truth which is present with [you]“ (cf. 1Jn 2:20-21). ‘Present truth’ means ‘the truth where there is mention of’. You have been confirmed in the truth that Peter is talking about here, by the teachings that you have already received on that from him.

V13. But Peter doesn’t think that his work is finished yet. He has concluded that it is necessary to go on to remind about that as long as he lives. With “this [earthly] dwelling” or “tent” he means his body, with which he serves the Lord on earth. At the same
time ‘tent’ indicates that it is a temporary dwelling place (cf. 2Cor 5:1-8). He faithfully has achieved the task that the Lord has ordered him to do, until the end of his life. ‘Retirement’ and taking it easy are out of the question with him. He wants to continuously exhort his brothers and sisters, the lambs and sheep that were entrusted to him by the Lord, for living a life wherein God is being glorified.

V14. He knows that he has not got much time to live anymore. He knows that, because “our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear” this to him. By that Peter refers to what the Lord said in John 21:18-19. It is not that certain whether he has been given another special revelation about his end of life besides that. In any case, the Lord told him that he would be imprisoned and that he would meet a painful, violent death.

V15. Instead of worrying about that, he is making his best efforts to leave a permanent remembrance with his beloved brothers and sisters, regarding everything that he had shared with them. That’s the reason why he writes this letter. He knows that the truth will survive the death of the servant. Therefore, in view of his death, he reminds them of the truth of the coming glory of Christ and the life of faith of the Christian who is looking forward to that. He does that diligently, in spite of his already very advanced age.

His efforts to share these things with them and to permanently draw their attention for it, is a proof that there is no apostolic succession. Everything that God had thought of to be significant for all His own through the ages, He has written down in His Word. There these things are recorded in indelible writing. This is why you can still read, so many ages after Peter’s death, his encouraging words. You should profit from that!

Now read 2 Peter 1:8-15 again.

Reflection: Why is Peter so anxious to remind you of what you know?
The Prophetic Word | verses 16-21

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

16 For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. 17 For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased” — 18 and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. 19 [So] we have the prophetic word [made] more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. 20 But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is [a matter] of one’s own interpretation, 21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

V16. Peter does not allow any room for any misconception that the coming of the Lord in majesty is a reality. He radically suppresses each doubt that could arise about that. That doubt could possibly be spread when his readers would listen to the false teachers who claim that that coming is a fable. There are also today many Christians, also leading scholars, who relegate such a coming of the kingdom to “devised tales”. Make sure that you do not allow yourself, in one way or the other, to be fooled by such people who are inspired by the devil. Listen to Peter. Then you listen to a man who is completely rightly minded and who is able to tell you about what he himself has experienced.

He is not a follower of a fata morgana, an illusion. What he has told them about “the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”, is not a story that he had made up, but he was one of its “eyewitnesses”. He is not an eloquent fantasist, but a sober realist. He and the other apostles (for he also speaks on their behalf – that is to be derived from the word “we” – were one in their testimony. It is not
just the testimony of one single witness, but of several apostles. What they have made known is based on their own observation.

They have seen the Lord Jesus in radiant glory and majesty. That happened, as he says in verse 18, “on the holy mountain”, that is the mountain of transfiguration. There he and James and John were given, as it were, a foretaste of the appearance of Christ in glory and of the power that goes together with it. That glory and power will characterize “our Lord Jesus Christ” during the millennial kingdom of peace, when He will be reigning on earth.

V17-18. After referring to the visible testimony, the testimony that he has seen with his own eyes, Peter then speaks about the audible testimony. He and the two brothers have heard what God the Father testified of His Son. Peter still remembers exactly what God the Father said. In what He said, the Father gave honor and glory to the Son. Peter must certainly have remembered how he proposed to build three tents, one for the Lord Jesus, one for Moses and one for Elijah and how as a response to that, the Father only gave all attention to His Son.

Nobody can stand in His shadow. He alone is worthy of receiving all honor and glory. The Father did that, in order to prevent any misunderstanding that His Son would be possibly put on a par with even the greatest men from His people (Mt 17:4-5). Out of His wonderful dwelling place the Father spoke out His undivided pleasure in His Son. He has granted honor and glory to Christ (Heb 2:9).

In the voice that they heard, the pleasure of God in His Son was echoing. That voice came from “the Majestic Glory”, that is the cloud as the symbol of the dwelling place of God. This cloud was above the tabernacle as the visible sign of God’s presence among His people. That cloud overshadowed the three disciples. Out of the cloud “such a voice” came. The pleasure that came from “the Majestic Glory” in that voice to the Lord Jesus, was the expression of that glory. He was the Object to Whom the Father had given honor and glory.
The whole scene there on that holy mountain was shining of glory. And Peter and John and James were also there. That scene made a permanent impression. They had believed that Christ was the fulfilment of the prophecies.

V19. Through what they have seen and heard on that separated mountain, they have “the prophetic word [made] more sure”. Peter expresses himself in the most forceful words, in order to take away every doubt concerning the coming of the kingdom. Then he puts the emphasis on the prophetic word. You “do well to pay attention” to it. You heed it when you consider it, when it determines the direction of your life. The prophetic word is “as ... a lamp” (Psa 119:105). In its light you are able to see how everything develops in the direction of the fulfilment.

You need that lamp, because the world is “a dark place”. The world is saying that it is enlightened, but without Christ it is really only darkness (Jn 1:5). The translated word ‘darkness’ actually means ‘filthy’, ‘dirty’. The world with all its splendor and magnificence is according to God a filthy place and that’s how it is also to the Christian who is taught by God. The only light that shines through this filthiness, is the light of the prophecy.

The people of the world imagine that they are able to transform the world into a kingdom of peace. It is an illusion that they can cherish till the Lord Jesus comes and will judge all unrighteousness. The prophecy foretells His coming in many ways and with His coming the end of the day of man.

When you really heed the prophecy you will surely want to study the prophecies diligently. That will prevent you from the foolishness to cooperate with the world in its search for a world peace. You will separate yourself from the world and point out to the people in the world at the coming of the Judge, so that they may convert from their sins, in order to escape from the judgment. You know that His coming is near, that He will come as “the sun of righteousness” (Mal 4:2). After exerting the judgment He will establish His kingdom of peace, the eternal kingdom. Then the day of Christ will come, the day of His glory, and then the lamp will
not be needed anymore. Then the prophetic word will be fully fulfilled.

Peter however, does not speak about the sun, but about the “morning star”. Before the dawning of the day, the morning star rises. With the morning star the Lord Jesus is also meant (cf. Rev 2:28; 22:16) and indeed as the One Who brings light. The morning star appears when it is still dark, but actually at the moment that the day is dawning. The appearance of the morning star announces the rising of the sun.

Therefore Peter says that the morning rises in your heart, which means that, while there is darkness around you, your heart is focused on the nearby coming of the Lord Jesus. In that way you live as if the kingdom has already come and you now already consider the rights of the Lord Jesus, like it will soon happen over the whole earth. You are, to say it with another word of the Scripture, ‘a son of the day’ (1Thes 5:5), that is somebody who now already has that day in his heart.

V20. For a sound study of the prophecy, Peter gives some more significant instructions at the end of this chapter. In the first place (“know this first of all”) you should not see a prophecy separately, but you should see it in relation with other prophecies. In this way Peter passes on the significant rule that you should always compare Scripture with Scripture. If you don’t do that you will manipulate the prophetic word and shape it into your own image. You will then interpret it as it best suits you. But the fulfilment of the prophecies happens in the way it is written in the Word and not according to your own ideas. The key for the right understanding of the prophecies is Christ, His suffering and the glory thereafter. The testimony of Jesus is after all the spirit of the prophecy (Rev 19:10b).

V21. It is of great importance to bear in mind that prophets have not spoken by their own will, but out of God. The origin of God’s Word in its whole, amongst them the prophecies, does not lie in the will of man. It is to be compared with the new birth that also
absolutely comes out of God alone, without any contribution of man (Jn 1:13).

God the Holy Spirit has used men to have His Word to be written. Those men were ‘holy’ men, because God had set them apart for this service. They indeed wrote on their own initiative, but at the same time they were “moved” or ‘led’, ‘carried’ by the Holy Spirit (2Tim 3:16). In that way they did not write down their own thoughts, but what God wanted them to. Not the authors were inspired, but what they wrote was inspired. Here you see what inspiration is: the efficacy of the Holy Spirit in the Bible authors at the moment of their writing.

To sum up, you learn from what Peter says here that there are three elements in the inspiration:

1. The Divine authorship of the Bible. God has ‘breathed out’ His Word; it comes from Him, it is not a writing about God, but from God.

2. The human instrument. Men were ‘sanctified’ by God, meaning set apart, in order to write down what was ‘breathed in’ by Him, according to His will (which did not happen at the expense of their own style, for they were not just ‘type writers’).

3. The written result. The product of the ‘breathing’ of God and of ‘being driven’ by the Spirit of the authors is the Word of God as you now may have in your hands.

Now read 2 Peter 1:16-21 again.

Reflection: What is the importance of the prophetic word to you?
2 Peter 2

Examples of God’s Judgment | verses 1-6

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. 2 Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; 3 and in [their] greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. 4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment; 5 and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; 6 and [if] He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing [them] to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly [lives] thereafter; …

V1. In contrast to those who were driven by God, the genuine prophets, Peter now refers to the prophets who are being driven by the devil, the “false teachers”. Everything that comes from God, which is therefore good, is being copied by the devil. The false prophets are the weed that looks very much like wheat (Mt 13:24-25). They are among the people of God, among whom Peter has his ministry. He warns the believers of them. False prophets and false teachers are not a new phenomenon. They were also there among God’s people in former times (Jer 23:11-21). They proceed their work in the false teachers, who in the meantime have populated Christianity.
Today there is quite an amount of people who pose as prophets, whereby they also pretend to be teachers. False teachers have been able to enter the Christian company, because God’s Word is not being read or is scarcely read. That is because many Christians have no life out of God and those who have, find it hard to read God’s Word. That especially applies to the prophetic word. That’s the reason why they do not carefully pay attention (2Pet 1:19).

He who does not know what God’s Word says about the future, is an easy prey to false teachers who surely know how to picture a beautiful future. They let themselves be paid for that too (Mic 3:11). False teachers twist God’s Word and give another meaning to biblical words. They say things that people love to hear (Jer 5:31). Their message is completely in line with people who only live for the here and now; they love to hear that (2Tim 4:3-4).

These false teachers seek to “secretly introduce destructive heresies” (cf. Acts 5:17; 26:5; 1Cor 11:18). Their teachings always sow conflicts and division, because they never point to the Lord Jesus, but they always seek their own honor and glory. They look for unstable souls and win these souls for their destructive teachings. In that way they gather people around themselves and separate these people from the fellowship of believers of which they first were a part. Forming a sect is a work of the flesh and not of the Spirit (Gal 5:20). Within this work is the seed of destruction.

False teachers do not openly operate, but they do that secretly. That proves that they are doing works that belong to the darkness. Such works cannot stand the light. Therefore, be alert as soon as you notice that a person is secretly trying to win your support for his ideas, for instance about forming a church. Try to discern what comes after you from God’s Word.

Ask yourself whether the proposal is doing justice to the authority of the Lord Jesus. Another character of a false teacher is namely that he will deny the Master by Whom he was bought. He first pretends to be doing what the Master says, but soon it will become apparent that he does not consider Him at all.
That he has been bought by the Master does not mean that he is a believer. He has indeed been bought, but not redeemed. The Lord Jesus is the Owner of the universe and everything within it, including the people. Through His work on the cross He has bought the world. He bought the world to possess the treasure that was hidden there (Mt 13:38,44). In the same way He has control over all flesh, that is all people. He uses that power to give eternal life to those whom were given to Him by the Father (Jn 17:2).

The authority of the Lord Jesus is unlimited, but these corrupted people do not consider that. Their corrupt actions will quickly and unexpectedly bring an appropriate judgment of destruction over them. It is a destruction which they have prepared for themselves (Rom 9:22). They actually draw the judgment towards themselves. He Who will judge them is the One of Whom they now deny the rights that He has over them.

V2. They are dragging “many” in their slipstream on the way to destruction. Their lawless view of life and their way of living is very attractive for the mass of people. If you follow them, you do not need to take anything into account. You can follow your lusts without restraint. That is what the false teachers prove as an example. This is the way they love to hear and experience the truth. Away with that narrow-minded thinking of petty Christians who take the Bible as an enslaving principle for their lives. They too can read themselves and they cannot read anywhere that God forbids you to delightfully go wild yourself. Love is after all from God and is to be enjoyed limitlessly. Limitations are invented by man. A human being is a free creature.

The fact that by this way of thinking and acting “the way of truth will be maligned” (cf. Rom 2:24), does not arise with them or they refuse to have anything to do with it. With ‘the way of truth’ the whole Christian truth is meant, both in teaching and in life. Because Christians who speak of principles and values at all costs, disregarding God’s truth, unbelievers refuse to have anything to do with God’s truth and are mocking it.
V3. Their lawless life comes forth from their “covetousness”. Not only their deeds are corrupted, but also inwardly they are full of corruptness. They seek to take money out of their followers’ pockets. Through their wonderful speeches and argumentations that they completely invented themselves, they make their victims. These naive people are being systematically robbed from their identity and property.

As far as the false teachers are concerned, there is no humanity in them. They are predators who see humans only as merchandise, in order to earn money. In Babylon the Great, which stands for the roman-catholic church in the end of time, the predator has come to full maturity (Rev 18:12-13). The judgment has already been established a long time ago and will definitely happen. There is absolutely no mention of slumbering or dozing off, as if it will turn out better and will probably pass by.

V4. The fact that God will absolutely judge the destruction, is illustrated by Peter with three examples from the past. The first example is with regard to the angels who have sinned. I think, that by comparing Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7 with Genesis 6:2 the sin of the angels is the sin that is described in Jude 6. These angels have adopted human stature and have had sexual intercourse with women. In that way they abandoned the place which was given to them by God. That is a terrible disobedience that God had to punish. Therefore He did not spare them.

He who falls away from God, deliberately and purposefully proves to go against Him and to defy Him in His Being. He was indebted to His righteousness to cast these angels “in the bottomless pit”, away from the earth and away from heaven. They had chosen for the darkness and that they received as a prison. Till this day they find themselves in secure detention at the access point of hell, in anticipation of the final sentence. This will be executed at the end of the millennial kingdom of peace when all evil will be forever locked up in hell, the lake of fire.

V5. The second example is the flood that came over the “ancient world”. God could neither spare the ancient world. The cause is
the persistence of man in his wickedness. Man continuously invents evil, until the whole earth has been completely filled by it (Gen 6:5-12). God actually has been very patient for a long time, no less than one hundred and twenty years (Gen 6:3). In those days God warned men in His mercy.

Through Noah He revealed His righteousness to men that He has to judge sin. At the same time he gave the way for salvation in the ark that Noah was to build. Each blow of the hammer was a warning for a coming judgment. Unfortunately, the preaching of Noah remained without result, without any change in the content of his message. The proof, the flood, came. Noah, together with his household that also entered the ark (Heb 11:7), was the only one who was protected against this disaster that destroyed everything.

V6. The third example is the judgment over the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. These cities were full of the most horrible sins. The life of the people in these cities consisted of satisfying all of their physical needs and lusts, from eating and drinking till a general experiencing of homosexual intercourse (Lk 17:28-29; Gen 19:4-5). This deeply depraved way of living cries out for God’s judgment over it. God’s action in judgment is most emphatically mentioned in the judgment over these cities (Gen 18:20-21; 19:24).

Also the radicalism of the judgment is impressive. Peter speaks about a point of “being burnt into ashes”. It is in no way possible to make something from ashes. God also reversed these cities. These cities had reversed God’s order of creation by their homosexual conduct and they therefore received an appropriate punishment.

There is another aspect attached to this judgment and that is that it serves as a deterrent example for each who would consider to live such an ungodly life. You sin against your own life when you follow the life of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in their sinful practice of life.

I think that the city of Amsterdam breathes the spirit of Sodom and Gomorrah and that the whole Dutch society is heading fast
in that direction, because it is infused by that spirit. Let yourself be warned by this example and remain faithful to God and His Word.

Now read 2 Peter 2:1-6 again.

Reflection: What is it that Peter is warning about?
The Way of Balaam | verses 7-16

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

…; 7 and [if] He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men 8 (for by what he saw and heard [that] righteous man, while living among them, felt [his] righteous soul tormented day after day by [their] lawless deeds), 9 [then] the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment, 10 and especially those who indulge the flesh in [its] corrupt desires and despise authority. Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties, 11 whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord. 12 But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed, 13 suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong. They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you, 14 having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children; 15 forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the [son] of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; 16 but he received a rebuke for his own transgression, [for] a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet.

V7. The same God Who brings judgment over the ungodly, is the God who delivers the righteous. If you know the history of Lot as it is described in Genesis, then you must be rubbing your eyes to make sure that you’re not mistaken about what is said of Lot here: that he was “righteous”. It is even said three times.

He was everything but a Noah, who preached righteousness. The righteousness of Lot had not become visible, it was not reflected, neither in his words and nor in his deeds. Still he was a righ-
teous man and indeed inwardly. Therefore we had to be informed by the Scripture itself, for else we would have never known. Of course it does not do credit to Lot. It also would do you no credit if nobody knows that you are a believer or if other believers have to put a question mark on your faith, because they do not see anything of it.

V8. That Lot was certainly a believer, appears from the fact that he was truly suffering by what he saw around him. He saw immoral people living in lawlessness. He dwelled in their midst and came into contact with them day after day. He heard their dirty talking, he saw their filthy behavior and that all sliced through his soul. He was filled with disgust by what he saw and heard. In that respect he is an example for Christians who are saying that it doesn’t affect them when they for instance watch sexually oriented scenes in a movie. Does it also slice through your soul when you see the immoral signs on the billboards along the road or when you hear filthy speech around you?

V9. The examples that Peter has mentioned make clear that the Lord knows how to distinguish between “the godly” and “the unrighteous”. That appears from His dealings with them. His dealings with the Godly appears from their deliverance. His dealings with the unjust appears from the judgment that He brings over them.

He knows the trials that people are facing, who have respect for Him. These trials are tests of faith: outer circumstances wherein believers may find themselves, through which their faith is being tested. The Lord knows how to deliver His own from them. He is able to change the circumstances or to help them through these circumstances, or even, like the case of Lot, to take away the believer out of those circumstances.

The unjust are reserved for the judgment. None of the unjust will escape the judgment. Nobody can run away from God. For those who do not want to bow before God, blackness of darkness will be reserved (verse 17). This forms a great contrast with the believ-
ers who are reserved for the inheritance, while the inheritance is reserved for them (1Pet 1:4-5).

V10. After the examples that have demonstrated the inescapability of God’s judgment, Peter continues to expose the false teachers. Among them there is a category that operates more depraved than the false teachers already do in general. It is a category of men who surrender themselves to the filthy lusts of their flesh and who, in limitless arrogance, treat all authority given by God with contempt. Those people especially will be struck by God’s judgment.

Today it is about ‘Christian’ teachers who, in order to satisfy their own dirty lusts, teach that you are allowed to have sex with whoever you want. In order to succeed they know how to manipulate the truth of God’s Word in such a way that they convince others of their freedom and that they can to live out their lusts in that way.

They find the nerve to defy every authority that gives them the feeling of imposing limitation on them. They are that arrogant and proud that they feel no hindrances to blaspheme and reject God’s authority. Blaspheming is falsely accusing and deliberately evil speaking of something or somebody, in order to make the other despicable. An example of that you find in the feminist theology that rejects and disempowers God’s order of creation and refuses to speak about God as Father.

V11. In their recklessness and arrogance these kind of people go that far, that they exalt themselves above the mightiest angels. Angels who in power and holiness go far beyond these void and through and through depraved people (Psa 103:20; 2Kgs 19:35), do not dare what these people dare (Jude :9; Zec 3:2). Their big words and blasphemy are proven to be completely reprehensible by the conduct of these powers that are many times greater.

V12. The people who are guilty of that, are unbelievers who arrogantly call themselves Christians. They behave like” natural brute beasts” and therefore they are classified in line with them. Balaam
is even classified below the beasts, for he is lectured by a beast (verse 16).

As less able as natural brute beasts, false teachers are able to ponder on these things with insight. They do not simply realize what they are talking about, even though they use such scholarly words. Just as natural brute beasts are destined to be caught and killed after their nature, false teachers are being caught and destroyed. They are acting after their evil nature and receive the result of their actions.

They are not created for destruction as if they were destined to, but they perish “in their own corruption”. They bring themselves under the corruption. In that way a person, who practices a sexually free way of living, may be infected by AIDS and in this way receives the wages that goes hand in hand with his life in unrighteousness.

V13. They exercise their activities for wages and this is the way that God will repay them. By that I do not mean that all people who for instance have AIDS, have received this disease as wages for their life in unrighteousness. A person can also suffer this disease by an inaccurate action of others. I heard about someone who was infected by a transfusion of contaminated blood. A person can also suffer this disease through patients with this disease. “A pleasure to revel in the daytime”, when normal people are working, is the highlight of pleasure for them. Instead of being generous they are greedy and gluttonous. And consider thereby that Peter does not talk about their behavior in the world, but in the midst of the Christian company. They carouse “with you”. They succeeded in taking their place in the midst of Christians to mingle with them. There they take part in eating and drinking in a way that it reveals where their life consists of.

Exactly because of this kind of people, separation is needed. If we allow them to act their way freely, they will ‘blemish and spot’ the Christian community. “Blemishes and spots” are no adornment,
but taint what is beautiful and clean. That’s why they are to be
removed as soon they become visible.

V14. While they are feasting, their eyes go restlessly to and fro,
in order to lustfully look at beautiful women as much as they can
(cf. Job 31:1). In their mind they commit adultery (Mt 5:28). They
have no restraints on their consumption and no restraints on their
sexual lusts. People who cannot control themselves, regarding
eating and drinking, are often also not able to control themselves
in other areas. They are constantly sinning, without any moment
of pausing.

They seek how they can entice “unstable souls”, those are people
who are not steadfast in the Scripture (cf. Col 2:7), in order to
profit from them. This behavior comes forth from “a heart” that
is trained “in greed”. They have developed a sense through which
they exactly know who they can make prey of their covetous de-
sires.

Peter briefly and fervently calls them “accursed children”. They
come forth from a curse and are a curse for all who come into
contact with them. Their end is in accordance to that, for the Lord
Jesus will refer them to the eternal fire as accursed (Mt 25:41).

V15. False teachers have known the right way (cf. 1Sam 12:20-24;
Hos 14:9), that is the way of obedience to God and His Word, but
have abandoned it. Then they also distort the right ways of the
Lord (Acts 13:10). After the error of Balaam (Jude :11) and the doc-
trine of Balaam (Rev 2:14) they will end up on the way of Balaam
and will follow his way.

By speaking about “the way of Balaam” Peter sets Balaam as the
great example of going a way that makes religion a merchandise.
You find his history in Numbers 22-24. There it appears that he
presented himself as a prophet of God, while he was planning to
curse God’s people, because he was offered a lot of money to do
so. That is considered by God as “wages of unrighteousness”. It is
wages that is earned by doing evil works.
V16. In a special way God hindered the foolishness of the prophet to curse His people. He gave the “mute donkey” that Balaam rode on, the ability to speak “with a man’s voice”. The donkey reprimanded Balaam for his own lawlessness. He hit the donkey three times, while the donkey only carried him and protected him against calamity (Num 22:22-33). He proved by that that he was blind to the warnings and persistently continued his own way. By letting the donkey speak to him, God made clear how foolish the prophet was. In connection to that God allowed Balaam to continue his way, while He forced him to bless His people.

Also today God has His methods to speak to false teachers and He often does that in a way that makes false teachers, who are persistent and greedy for money, despicable. It would be a good thing if they want to listen for their own well-being, otherwise they will take part in the fate of Balaam (Num 31:8).

Now read 2 Peter 2:7-16 again.

Reflection: Which characteristics of false teachers are given in these verses?
First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

17 These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved. 18 For speaking out arrogant [words] of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, 19 promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved. 20 For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. 21 For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. 22 It has happened to them according to the true proverb, “A dog returns to its own vomit,” and, “A sow, after washing, [returns] to wallowing in the mire.”

V17. False teachers are like “springs without water”. They promise refreshment to people who need it, but instead they give bitterness. It is no living water that comes from the well that they pretend to be, but it is death. That is in direct contrast to the well of living water which is the Lord Jesus. He gives water that in each that receives it, becomes a well of water with which they can refresh others (Jn 4:14; 7:38-39). From that well false teachers have never drunk, for they refuse to believe in Him Who is the well. They are to be compared with broken cisterns that can hold no water (Jer 2:13).

These people are also to be compared with “mists driven by a storm”. When someone is shrouded in clouds he does not know where he is and he also is in no way able to show somebody else the way. Clouds can in no way offer any guidance and orientation. Therefore their use of language is foggy, their statements are woolly, the tone ingratiating. They appeal only to the emotion. They are mercilessly and restlessly being driven by higher, slip-
pery powers (cf. Jam 3:4). You can be kept from being tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine when you heed the teaching of the gifts that are given by the Lord to His church (Eph 4:14-15).

The clouds in which the false teachers are shrouded and in which they shroud others who listen to their doctrines, will transfer in a complete “black darkness”. They have shrouded themselves and others in the clouds, the black darkness is reserved for them by God. That is where they will end up too, because God will bring them there.

It is the place where all light is absent. God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all (1Jn 1:5). In the black darkness even the smallest trace of God’s presence is missing. There is nothing worse for a person than when God has abandoned him and has totally delivered him to what he has chosen.

V18. False teachers talk a lot but their talk means nothing. It is a load of hot air: arrogant, hollow and without content. Countless people allow themselves to be fooled by them and trust and build on those empty words. Their speech is full of words that activate the “fleshy desires”. Their false doctrine intrigues people because it gives them the nice feeling that they can satisfy their sexual lusts in a lawless way and that they can also limitlessly surrender themselves to all kinds of evil.

Their words gain entrance in those who are still seeking the true meaning of life, because they did not find it in the company of wanderers to which they first belonged. In their search they also listen to these false teachers. Because they themselves have no handhold at all on the truth of God’s Word and are also naïve in their personal examination of it, they are caught by the greedy hands of these wicked people.

V19. The bait that the false teachers present to the unstable souls, is the promise of “freedom”. Freedom in every view is the highest goal for the self-contained man. People also think that in the church of God there should be liberty. We should not be slaves
of traditions. You are to be allowed to give substance to the life with God in your own way. It is nobody’s business in what way you do that. You do not acknowledge authority, you determine for yourself whatever you want. That message is swallowed like sweet cake. There is no requirement to take responsibility. It is all about pleasure, about my pleasure of course.

But people who are preaching this are “slaves of corruption” themselves (Jn 8:34; Rom 6:16). They are “overcome” by the devil and brought into bondage. They allow themselves to be used by him, but they are blind to the fact that they are nothing more than his accomplices. In their loud proclamation of liberty they do not realize that they are the voice channel of the devil as his slave.

However, you have become a slave of God (Rom 6:12-14), because God has overcome you by His love. That has brought you into true liberty. True liberty means that you are under the obedience of God with thereby the new nature that wants nothing more than being obedient to Him. As long as a person is not under the control of the Lord Jesus, he is not free, for the Lord Jesus alone, can indeed make free (Jn 8:36).

V20. Therefore it is about those who first have been going the way of the Christian, but have become an apostate. They first confessed to be Christians, but they turned back to the outward uncleanness of the world, “the defilements of the world”, from which they, by becoming a Christian, escaped (2Pet 1:4). It is evident that with the people who are the issue here, everything turned out to be only appearance. Their knowledge seems to be no more than only outward, rational knowledge.

People may come to the conclusion, that of all the world religions, Christendom has the best credentials. It is a religion of tolerance and loving care and liberty. That may be appealing and win a person to be a supporter of it. There is nothing of conviction of sin and repentance of it; there is no mention of any necessity of conversion to God and of salvation by the blood of Christ at all. Inwardly nothing has changed, actually.
What has attracted them in Christendom, is experienced only in the selfish sense: others must tolerate me, others must make sure that I lack of nothing, I am free to do what I like to do. They confess Jesus as Lord and Savior, but not in the way that the Bible instructs us to. Their confession that He is Lord, is just a lip confession (Mt 7:21-23; Lk 6:46). Their confession that He is Savior, is nothing more than the confession that He is a ‘Whole-Maker’ (that meaning also lies in the word ‘Savior’) of situations they do not know how to deal with.

As soon as such people come into contact with false teachers, they seem to be highly susceptible to the nonsense that these people rave about. The false idea that they have of the Lord Jesus, is a perfectly prepared basis for receiving more corrupt ideas about Him. Once they find themselves in the slipstream of the false teachers, they are irresistibly dragged to “the defilements of the world” where they formerly were stuck into and are now again “entangled” in. Once they got entangled they cannot resist anymore and are “overcome” by it. The world completely has caught hold of them again. This time their situation becomes worse than when they outwardly were converted (cf. Mt 12:45).

V21. The greater the privileges that a man has, the greater is his responsibility to live according to that. Therefore a person who has known the will of God and didn’t do it will be beaten with many stripes (Lk 12:47-48). It may seem like it is dangerous to know much of God’s Word and that it is safer to pretend that you know nothing of it. Such a perception, however, does not testify any love for the Lord Jesus and the Word of God.

Peter is saying this with a view to those who complacently present themselves as Christians who know everything and where everyone can get satisfaction concerning the teaching about the truth. Of course you have to pay for it. Such people are more responsible than people who were not raised with the Bible. They have no regard for “the holy commandment” of the Lord, that is the word of the Lord to be holy (1Pet 1:16). They were just outwardly holy, without possessing the holy nature as a result of conversion and faith.
V22. He who has been familiar with the meaning of Christendom and has even joined that company for a while, but yet again chooses the pollutions of the world, looks like a dog and a sow. Peter uses a proverb or a metaphor with two images that are both a truthful expression of what happens when a person has confessed the Christian faith and then returns to the world.

The first image is that of a dog. A dog is an unclean animal that, without any emotion, gluttonously and shamelessly fills his stomach with whatever he finds or gets to eat (Isa 56:11). A dog knows no measure. When he has eaten too much, he vomits it out. When he gets hungry again, he eats his own vomit. This image is applied to people who first said goodbye to the world and, by the influence of false teachers, return to it. They did not find inward satisfaction in the world and abandoned it. Now they still go back to it. This proves that they inwardly have not really changed. The dog remained to be a dog.

They not only inwardly returned to the world, the vomit. It is also to be seen in their life. Outwardly they are like the sow that returns to wallowing in the mire. You may wash a sow and make him smell nice, but as soon as he gets the chance to wallow himself in the mire, he will do that. He feels at home in the mire. That is the big difference with a sheep that is an image of the believer. A sheep may fall into the mire, but it doesn’t feel at home there and will try to get out of it.

Now read 2 Peter 2:17-22 again.

Reflection: What kind of people is this portion dealing with?
First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder,
2 that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior [spoken] by your apostles. 3 Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with [their] mocking, following after their own lusts, 4 and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For[ever] since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.” 5 For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God [the] heavens existed long ago and [the] earth was formed out of water and by water,
6 through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water.
7 But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. 8 But do not let this one [fact] escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. 9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

V1. After the false and corrupted doctrine of wicked people in chapter 2, Peter counters to the unbelief in this chapter which denies the return of the Lord. That denial is formed on the basis of their meaning that in the visible creation everything remains as it was from the beginning. In saying this he addresses the genuine believers and clarifies to them what the meaning of true prophecy is. It is necessary to emphasize that, because unbelief manifests it-
self all the more strongly and scoffs the faith. Therefore he points out again the importance of the written Word (see chapter 1:20).

He wrote both of his letters in order to remind you that a “sincere mind” is the crucial condition to understand God’s Word and to apply that in your life. A sincere mind appears from the attitude which you adopt towards the Scripture. Do you unconditionally agree to it when the Scripture speaks, or do you have objections to it? Without a complete subjection of yourself to the Scripture you will not learn to know the truth and you will drown in speculations of people who think to know better than God.

V2. You are to test everything that comes to you by the Scripture. That’s what Peter is referring you to. That alone will give your heart steadfastness. He does not refer to new apostles or elders. Still less he refers to the church as if she would be able to teach anything and exert authority. He refers to the Word of God that approaches you in both the writings of the Old Testament and of the New Testament. For the content of the Old Testament he reminds us of “the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets”. For the content of the New Testament he reminds us of “the commandment of the Lord and Savior [spoken] by your apostles”.

The holy prophets of former times have spoken on behalf of God, in order to get them back to the obedience of the law and to warn them for God’s punishment when they persevere in their disobedience. Their message completely opposes that of the false teachers of the previous chapter. The commandment, which comes from the Lord and Savior, expresses the will of the Lord that comes to you by the apostles (cf. Mt 28:19c). All of that you find in the written Word of God. The big question is: how do you stand towards the authority of the inspired Word. The answer to that question determines whether you are able to resist the opponents of the truth or whether you are overcome by them.

V3. It seems that Peter, when he comes back to the theme of the true prophecy, is directly aware of the great resistance of the enemies of God and His Christ. The proclamation of the truth and holding on to God’s Word always stir up resistance. Opponents
do not reveal themselves as long as the lie is being preached. But as soon as the light of the truth comes shining through, they will appear and let themselves be heard. And mind you that these are no incidents. With the words “knowing this first” Peter emphasizes that you need to seriously consider that such people will manifest themselves more and more “in the last days”.

It must be an extra proof to you that the end of all things is near (1Pet 4:7). As soon as you speak about the coming of Christ for the judgment, they point their finger at their forehead and declare you to be out of your mind. They will not listen to you and will ridicule you with their mockery. They express themselves like that, because they walk after their own lusts. They want to live on like that. The thought of a coming Christ as a ‘joy killer’ does not fit in there.

V4. In order to prove their allegations, they refer to what in their eyes has always been an unchangeable standard practice “since the fathers fell asleep”. By speaking about ‘the fathers’ you see that you have to do with people who consider themselves as God’s people. Applied to our times, it is therefore about people who find themselves within Christianity. It is precisely the Christian theologians who mock with what faith embraces. They know the statements concerning the coming of the Lord, but they ridicule it. They ask what has happened with His coming that already has been announced for such a long time ago.

However, it is not a fair question, but a mocking question. They do not believe it, because they are modernists. It does not fit to their perception of the laws of nature. Scientifically, it is absolutely not possible that a dead person becomes alive, goes to heaven and then comes back. They indeed speak about “the beginning of creation”, but it is still the question if they also mean to say that God has created the earth in six days. By that they can just as much mean that God has let the universe exist through evolution. The foolishness of men who refuse to bow their knees to God’s Word, knows no limits.
V5. Peter exposes the hidden cause of this ignorance. There is malevolence involved in this. These people are not willing to be familiar with God’s actions. It is a guilty, deliberate ignorance. They are, as it were, seeking a visible proof with their eyes closed. Foolish as they are, they deliberately distort the truth of how creation began. In their foolishness they try to explain the origin of life by the development of things. Ultimately, a little bit of common sense must absolutely lead to the conclusion that creation has been created by Someone outside and not by itself. Nevertheless, man seeks an explanation for the existence of the universe with the exclusion of God.

To the faith it is simple. Creation has come into being by an action of God and indeed by His Word (Heb 11:3). He has spoken and it was done, “for He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast” (Psa 33:9). His Word is His power. By reading Genesis 1 you see that the earth was called by God to appear and then it exists in the midst of the waters.

V6. The same Word of power that created the worlds, called the water to appear, in order to destroy the earth. Those same waters that surrounded the earth, came again over it through the flood. Also then there were mockers. Noah could say what he wanted and warn of the coming flood as an expression of God’s wrath, but also then the people waved his words aside. They simply did not believe in the possibility of an intervention of God in judgment and they mocked Noah because of his words. They did that “until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all” (Lk 17:27). That was the end of their laughter. This is also what will happen to those who mockingly respond to the warning that another judgment is on the way. Christ will come to judge the world.

V7. Peter even goes further and refers to the definite judgment. He points at the destruction of heaven and earth and the perdition of ungodly men. The former world was flooded with water, the present world will be destroyed with fire. For this definite judgment “the present heavens and the earth ... are being reserved for”.
The doom of the world is not worked by man, although men and their behavior form the cause. The world is preserved by the same mighty word of God as with which He has created the worlds. He is reserving everything until the day of the judgment. When unrighteousness has reached its peak He will execute the judgment. Nothing and nobody can prevent that.

V8. The day of the judgment comes after the day of the Lord, meaning the whole period that includes His appearance for the judgment and His government during the millennial kingdom of peace. The time for that has not come yet and sometimes it seems that the mockers are right. But mind you that the aspect ‘time’ for God is not the same as it is for you and me. God surely takes our perception of time into account. He knows the duration of a day. Therefore He for instance shortens the days of the great tribulation that His own will have to suffer (Mt 24:22). But to God time doesn’t exist. With Him one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. ‘Do not forget this one thing’, Peter says. If you consider that, it will give you courage to persevere. Look at how God has worked through the ages. He sees the end from the start and that’s where He is up to.

V9. The first argument, that it has always been like this and that therefore the promise of His coming cannot be true, has been refuted by referring to the flood. The second argument, that it already had been going on for so long, also has been refuted by referring to the ‘timeless’ God. But that is still one part of the response. The judgment is not only being delayed because time does not count for God, but also because He is patient. It is absolutely no “slowness”, as some mockingly claim. Mockers have no idea that God for their sake has not sent the Lord Jesus yet.

People mock the love of God, while precisely that love restrains Him from judging them. Look at yourself. I do not know how old you are and for how long you have known the Lord Jesus. But assuming that you’ve known the Lord Jesus for three years already, just consider carefully where you would have been if the Lord Jesus had come four years ago. Aren’t you overwhelmed by the patience of God? He did not want you to be perished, but
that you’d come to conversion. That same patience is what He is showing again and again towards people who would perish if the Lord would come now.

Now read 2 Peter 3:1-9 again.

Reflection: What is it that appeals to you in these verses?
Grow In the Grace and Knowledge | verses 10-18

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. 11 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! 13 But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. 14 Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. 17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

V10. When you read here about “the day of the Lord”, it is not meant a period of twenty-four hours, but a longer period of time. A little further you read about “the day of God” (verse 12) and in the last verse of this chapter about “the day of eternity”. Needless to say that by that not days are meant as we know them. ‘The day of God’ is the period wherein God is in control and ‘the day of eternity’ is the day without an end. ‘The day of the Lord’ is a period wherein the Lord is in control.

At present man is still in control. That’s because satan is still the chief of the world and has power over man. There will come an
end to that period and that end is very near. The day of the Lord begins when He appears on the clouds and radically beats down the resistance of man against Him and the henchmen of satan will be thrown in hell (Rev 19:11-21). Then satan will be caught and thrown in the bottomless pit where he will be locked up for a thousand years (Rev 20:1-3). In that time the Lord Jesus will be reigning in righteousness and peace (Rev 20:4-6).

The dawning of the day of the Lord will be completely unexpected and also undesired to the mockers and all godless people, just as it applies to the visit of a thief (see also Mt 24:43; 1Thes 5:2,4; Rev 3:3; 16:15). That day will end with “intense heat” by which “the elements will be destroyed”. At the end of the millennial kingdom the great white throne, on which the Lord Jesus will be seated, will be established. When that happens, the earth and heaven will flee from Him (Rev 20:11). That will not happen noiseless, but with “a roar”.

All the elements of which heaven and earth were consisted and secured its existence, including all works that were ever done by people, will melt with fervent heat. Everything that man has built for his own glory and comfort, will appear to be fuel for the fire of God’s judgment. Nothing will remain hidden, nothing will remain unfindable for that fire. All wicked works and all wicked things “will be burned up” (cf. Jn 3:19-20). Everything that the flesh has ever put its trust in, will disappear forever.

V11. If you read it like this and make yourself aware of the content, it will activate you to a “holy conduct and godliness”, which is a life of Godliness. What Peter has just pictured is no more than a stirring up of a desire to live like that already, that sin in no way has any grip on any part of your life. Besides, it is not a request, but you, who confess to be a child of God, ought to.

If everything dissolves (and that’s what indeed happens) what are you then living for? A holy conduct is a conduct separate from the world. Godliness means that you are focused on God’s honor in your life. Of course, there are a lot of things in life that are pleasant to do or to have. The world knows nothing better and
cannot do any better than seeking for those things. Your position in this is being determined by your view on the future. Is it like Peter presents it here? Is it a reality for you that the day of the Lord is at hand (*Jam 5:8-9*)? The answer to that is not to come out of your mouth, but by your way of living.

**V12.** Your life on earth and the things on earth are temporary. The things on earth will dissolve, but your life is standing in the perspective of "*the coming of the day of God*". On the day of God there will be nothing else to be seen than God and everything that’s His (*1Cor 15:28*). You can expect that day. Your holy conduct and your godly life will stir up resistance and hostility of the world. That can only increase your desire for the day of God. You can reach out for that day, you can expect it.

Peter even speaks about the ‘hastening’ of that day. The exact meaning of that is not quite clear to me, but I have some thoughts about it. It may be that by looking forward intensely to that day, it will come sooner. The more you live in connection with God and doing His will, the sooner time will pass and in that way that day will also come sooner. Another thought is, that it may be that by your testimony people will come to conversion, whereby the last one will soon be added to the church. When the church is complete, the Lord Jesus will come and then the fulfilment begins of everything which Peter has talked about.

By itself, the moment of the dawning of the day of God has been established in God’s counsel (*Mt 24:36*). In His sovereignty, God also has determined in His counsels a place of the life of His own. It is the same as with praying. You may say that praying is useless, for everything happens anyway like God has determined it. Nevertheless you read several times that God answers prayers and grants pleas (*Ezra 8:23*). God has a place for the prayer of His own in His counsels. Therefore, in the same way you can, I think, help in hastening the day of God by your way of life.

God Himself will let that day come by putting the heavens on fire and making the elements be melted. Still, you do not look forward to the final judgment, but to the day of God. It is neces-
sary for the judgment to have taken place, so that the day of God may come.

V13. What you of course are looking forward to and what you are expecting is the fulfilment of the promise that there will be “new heavens and a new earth”. That is the moment that sin will be taken away from the world (Jn 1:29). Everything that reminds us of sin will then be removed. There will be absolutely no remembrance of that anymore. Everything will then completely be made new (Rev 21:1-5). Then “righteousness” will “dwell” there. That means that righteousness has come to rest, for there is nothing more left for which justice needs to maintain.

Also in the millennial kingdom of peace there is a new heaven and a new earth (Isa 65:17-18). The curse will then be removed from creation which was brought on it through the sin of man (Rom 8:19-22). “The face of the ground” has been renewed (Psa 104:30). There will be peace everywhere, for the King of peace will be reigning ( Isa 9:5-6). Many prophecies speak about it (e.g. Isa 11:6-10; Isa 35:1-10). Still it is not the perfect condition. People can still sin, which will then directly be punished with death (Isa 65:20; Psa 101:8). When the Lord Jesus reigns, righteousness reigns.

V14. If you look forward in that way to the new, the desire will be there to be diligent to meet the Lord in a condition that is in line with His heart. “Spotless” means that nothing of the old life, that is your life in sin, is to be found with you anymore. It is about you who do not maintain any old, sinful habits anymore. “Blameless” means that other people cannot blame you for anything anymore. Briefly said it means that the Lord Jesus is to be seen in your life. He was and is the perfect One without spot and Who is blameless.

Your efforts to meet the Lord like that will give you inner peace. Then He will not find you in a condition where you are quarreling with others. You will, as much as it depends on you, live peaceably with all people (Rom 12:18).
V15. “The patience of our Lord” is not slackness or forgetfulness. He will really return. You do not need to think that He will forget you when He delays His coming for a longer time. Consider that His patience is “salvation”. You may keep in mind that as long as He doesn’t come He is seeking the salvation of sinners (see 1Pet 3:20). When He comes to fetch you, then the time of grace will be definitely over.

To underline his teaching, Peter appeals to “our beloved brother Paul”. It is wonderful to see that Peter writes about Paul like that. You may recall that Peter once had been openly admonished by Paul (Gal 2:11-14). That did not cause Peter, as it appears here, to have any sense of a grudge or bitter feelings towards Paul. Paul was a wise admonisher and Peter had an obedient ear (Pro 25:12; 15:31).

Peter reminds his readers that Paul too had written to them about patience. He probably means the letter to the Hebrews. Also in other letters Paul wrote about it. He did that, Peter says, “according to the wisdom given him”. He fully acknowledges the ministry of Paul as a ministry that was given to him by the Lord. It is important that you too acknowledge each ministry that the Lord gives to another person and that you also see the wisdom of the Lord in them carrying out that ministry.

V16. Peter also takes note that “all letters” of Paul “speaking in them of these things” are a part of the Holy Scripture. With the words “as also the rest of the Scriptures” – which are the Scriptures of the Old Testament – he puts those letters on par with them.

Not everything that Paul has written is easy to understand. Even Peter had some difficulties with some things. What is hard to understand is therefore not untrue. That must never cause a person to justify his ignorance about the Word of God. Even more so, it must not cause anybody to “distort” it. Nonetheless it happens and indeed by “the untaught and unstable”. An ‘untaught person’ is somebody who has not learned, because he presumes to know everything better. He who trusts in himself is stupid. He is also ‘unstable’. Such a person has no security at all and wobbles
through life. He is in fact very dangerous, for he is very eloquent and pretends to know everything. Such people are trying to get hold of you.

V17. But you are warned. You know everything “beforehand”. ‘Beware’, watch over yourself and over what you have become and have got in Christ. If you are not steadfast you run a great risk to be “carried away”. The “unprincipled men” are erring because they do not take account of God and His Word. Keep them at a distance. Do not consult them with your cares and need. They will only drag you away into their corrupt view on things with the result that you lose your “own steadfastness”. You will then wobble together with them and you will end up in destruction if you do not by mercy go back to God.

V18. In order to be kept from that you ought to grow spiritually. ‘To grow’ means to become mature and strong. You must grow “in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”. It is about you becoming more and more aware of the “grace” of the Lord Jesus, understanding it better and living in it more and more. Just consider it often that He is your Lord and Savior and how that did happen. To succeed in that you should read God’s Word. By reading God’s Word you also learn to know Him better, for also by growing in “knowledge” it’s all about Him, “our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”.

He alone is worthy of all glory, “now”, on earth in your life of suffering, and soon it will be “the day of eternity” that is when the everlasting perfection has come.

Now read 2 Peter 3:10-18 again.

Reflection: What efforts do you take to be found without spot and blameless when the Lord comes?
Other Publications

On the website [www.oudesporen.nl](http://www.oudesporen.nl), Main Menu, English publications Ger de Koning, more Bible commentaries and publications that have been translated into English are available and will become available. They can be downloaded for free as PDF and e-book.

The original publications have been written in Dutch. These and other Dutch publications are available under Main Menu, Publicaties Ger de Koning.

Some publications have been translated into other languages than English. You can find them under ‘Other languages’.