

# Epistle of Second Peter I

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Second Peter was written because of many of the same problems that were more developed in the Epistles of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> John; and that is there was a lot of heresy going on—a lot of difficulties and a lot of problems. And I might mention that we have lived through a lot of those things today. Let's just take an overview of 2-Peter, and we're going to see a principle that always applies: *Before God starts talking about correction, problems and difficulties, He always focuses your mind on the important things concerning Christ*—and that's what he did here in the first chapter.

2-Peter 2:1 tells us what they were doing: “But there were also false prophets among the people, as indeed there will be false teachers among you, who will stealthily introduce destructive heresies...” Are they not destructive heresies? *Yes!* Of course, this is written after he verifies the Truth and power of the Word of God (last part of 2-Pet. 1; and also saying that what they were preaching was not based on cleverly concocted fables. I'm sure we've read a lot of those recently.

“[They were] personally denying *the* Lord Who bought them... [This means that it is something that they are initiating but they're also doing to themselves that has an effect on other people, as well.] ...[who are themselves] ...denying *the* Lord Who bought them and bringing swift destruction upon themselves” (v 1) Many people are going to follow what they were doing.

Verse 10 tells their attitude: “But particularly those who are walking after *the* flesh...” Note Rom. 8, about the ‘fleshly mind’ or the ‘carnal mind.’ If you're walking after the flesh and minding the things of the flesh

“...in corrupting lust... [letting the lust fully get a hold of them] ...and are holding in utter contempt *the* lordship of God...” (v 10)—over their lives. You will see the italicized words, that's what I have inserted into it to give a definition of the meaning of the words. It is *the* lordship.

“...[They are] in utter contempt of lordship of God [over one's life]. *They are* audacious and self-willed; they are not afraid to blaspheme *the* Divine powers [angels]” (v 10).

Verse 12: “But these—as irrational brute beasts, born to be caught and killed—as blaspheming those things of which they are ignorant, *and* will be utterly destroyed in their own corruption.” We can look around and we can see down through history, and contemporaneously today, that that is absolutely true.

2-Peter 3—here's something that they are also doing in addition to rejecting God; they're mocking. And we have people now in the Church of God who have said, ‘Well, you don't have to read the book of Revelation because that's really confusing, and really, we shouldn't even study it or do anything about it. Whatever is in there has already been fulfilled and it doesn't have any meaning for us today.’ There are those who are mocking.

2-Peter 3:3: “Knowing this first, that in the last days there will come mockers, walking according to their own personal lusts, and asking, ‘Where is the promise of His coming?... [Most people don't believe that Christ is going to return at all; and more and more so even in some of the Churches of God.] ...For since the forefathers died, everything is continuing exactly the same from the beginning of creation” (vs 3-4). This shows their attitude.

2-Peter 2:13 shows their immorality; shows what they are doing: “They are bringing upon themselves the reward of unrighteousness, *while* finding pleasure in satisfying *their lustful* desires in the daytime.... [This has to do with all kinds of licentiousness and sexual debaucheries, as well.] ...*They are* stains and blemishes, reveling in their own deceptions, while feasting together with you. [Their] “eyes are full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin...” (vs 13-14) and so forth.

These are the kind of people that Peter was having to confront. And what happens when you have that kind of attitude. Come back here to v 2: “And many people will follow *as authoritative*... [because you don't follow anything unless you believe it's in authority] ...their destructive ways; *and* because of them, the way of the Truth will be blasphemed.” That's what ‘evil spoken of’ (*KJV*) means. We have seen that happen in our very day today—haven't we?

Let's come back to 2-Peter 1:1 and let's see some very interesting things concerning just the opening of it. What I would like you to do is take your Bible and open it to 1-Peter 1 and we will compare that with 2-Peter 1—and we're going to see that it is a little bit different, and why it's different.

2-Peter 1:1: “Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ...” That is a little bit different than 1-Peter 1:1 where it says: “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ...” Could it be that there are others going out saying that they were Peter, and he wanted to make sure that they knew he was *Simon Peter*, the one that Jesus had chosen? *I believe so!*

Now notice the next phrase, "...a servant..." He just says in 1-Peter 1:1: "...an apostle of Jesus Christ..." Here he says: "...a servant **and** an apostle..." (v 1). I think that shows that he learned the lesson of Matt. 20: 'that he who is going to be greater among you is going to be one who is serving, one who is helping, one who is doing'—not just an apostle. Remember, Peter had to be rebuked openly by the Apostle Paul when he separated himself from the Gentiles there in Gal. 2—we won't get into that today because there's a whole lot behind that. But Peter stumbled greatly in that particular affair.

Now let's go to 1-Peter, the fifth chapter, and let's see that. I think Peter was learning the lesson here in 1-Peter. I think by the time he came to the end of his life—as we have here because he wrote this just before he died—that he really learned the lesson of the servant greater than the lesson of the apostle.

1-Peter 5:1: "The elders who are among you I am exhorting, even as a fellow elder, and an eyewitness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that is about to be revealed. Feed the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight not by compulsion, but willingly; not in fondness of dishonest gain, but *with an eager attitude*" (vs 1-2). That shows that he learned John 21 very well: 'If you love Me, feed My sheep.'

Verse 3: "Not as exercising lordship over *your* possessions; rather, be examples to the flock of *God*" (vs 1-3). I think when he wrote here "a servant and an apostle" I think that is showing a greater understanding on Peter's part of his role as an apostle and what he should do to help and serve and teach the people.

2-Peter 1:1: "...to those who have obtained *the* same precious faith as ours..." This also shows a great growth on Peter's part, because when he was there in Antioch and separated himself from the Gentiles, that gives the impression that they had a greater salvation, a greater faith than the brethren.

"...obtained *the* same [identical] precious faith as ours, **by the righteousness of our God** and Savior Jesus Christ" (v 1). This means the imputed righteousness that comes from God. He learned the lesson concerning *grace*; because in Gal. 2 he hadn't learned the lesson concerning *grace* and concerning *repentance*. But he was still as the apostle to the circumcision, following along with many of the Jewish traditions. Here it shows that he learned the lesson of the *righteousness by faith*—which is by Christ Jesus.

In v 2 we get some very interesting and very important things that we need to understand concerning that: "Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the **knowledge** of God and of Jesus Christ

our Lord." *Knowledge* here comes from the Greek 'epignosis'; there is another word for *knowledge* (which is used a little bit later on), which means *wisdom or understanding*—and that is called 'gnosis.' But 'epignosis' means *the knowledge that can only be imparted to you from God spiritually*. This is something you cannot come to understand yourself unless God would give it and impart it to you. That's why it is multiplied in the "...knowledge—the epignosis—of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord." Showing again, this ties right in with the fellowship of God the Father and Jesus Christ together.

We're going to pick quite a few important things out of v 3: "According as His Divine power has given to us... [*bestowed, granted, given to us*] ...all things that *pertain* to life and Godliness, through the **knowledge** of Him... [again, 'epignosis'—which comes from God] ...Who called us by *His own* glory and virtue." Let's go back and let's look at this a little bit more.

**Divine power**—comes from the Greek word 'theios';

- 'Theios' means *Divine*
- 'Theos' means *God*

There were those who have said 'Theos' means 'Theios'—which it doesn't.

- 'Theos' means *God*—a noun
- 'Theios' is an adjective which describes a *quality of God*

Another thing that is important with this is that the mystic religion of Judaism had an awful lot to do with Divine power—or becoming Divine.

I'm reading this book *Light by Light* by John Goodenough—I think I've mentioned it before; it's a 400-page book; it's pretty detailed, and I'm wading through it page-by-page. But I did not realize, brethren, that the Jews and Judaism—especially out of Alexandria—had so paganized what God was doing, that it no longer had any relevance to the Truth of God. For example, the high priest with the *urim and thummim* that he would wear on his chest, with the 12 stones—and each one of the stones was for one of the tribes of Israel—in Judaism this was one of the signs of zodiac. When the priest acted on behalf of God, he was a divine man—half God/half man. He was considered the vice-regent of God for all men on the earth.

Now, doesn't that sound a little bit like *infallibility*? I'm beginning to understand why God destroyed that whole system. I can see more and more in the writings of the apostles, how they were fighting that system; because of what the mystic-contemplated Judaism would be: they would have steps going up the ladder of enlightenment until they

could obtain the Divine. So, here Peter is saying: “According as His Divine power has given to us **all things**... [comes from God] ...all things which pertain to life...” (v 3). There are two other places where ‘Divine’ is used.

Romans 1:18: “Indeed, *the* wrath of God is revealed from heaven upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the Truth in unrighteousness... [they are holding back the Truth, knowing better] ...because that which may be known of God is manifest among them, for God has manifested *it* to them... [not *in* them, but *to* them] ...for the invisible things of Him are perceived from *the* creation of *the* world, being understood by the things that were made—both His eternal power and Godhead...” (vs 18-20).

*Divinity*—to show that God made it absolutely clear, through the creation, that anyone who would think it through, would understand that something greater than a human being had to do it; and it didn’t just happen by itself, therefore, it had to come from Someone who was Divine. It’s talking about a quality that God has. “...His eternal power and Godhead [Divinity]...” This is all tied up with the substitution of philosophy. We’ve all gone through that recently.

Let’s go to Colossians, the second chapter, for just a minute, and let’s see how this is tied together with philosophy—because philosophy and the religion of philosophy was a way of becoming perfect—through your own *religious works* to come to the illumination, through divine mystic contemplation; of which you have today, the first step of that is yoga mediation. It’s the same thing.

Colossians 2:8: “Be on guard so that no one takes you captive through philosophy and vain deceit, according to the traditions of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ.... [That’s what they all are: just vain deceit and fables and lies and things in the name of God.] ...For in Him [Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (vs 8-9). He’s telling us several things very important here.

1. God has a body. All Divinity resides in Christ in relationship to human beings. You’re not going to find any Divinity through philosophy—but through Christ; and you’re complete in Him.
2. These things are *vain deceit*—the philosophy and things that are taught.

That’s why when you read some of these things it is confusing. They’re meant to be! That’s so you will think that someone smarter than you wrote it—but it’s the other way around.

“...according to the elements of the world,

and not according to Christ. For in Him [Christ] dwells all the fullness...” (v 8).

There’s also another doctrine of mystic religion and philosophical aspirations that they have, and that is *coming to fullness*. That’s why he’s using these words in this context. Peter is saying here that He’s given to us **all things** which means then *we don’t need to go outside what Christ has given to us* to try and discover all things related to life and the knowledge of Christ. We have to stay within Him.

Those are the other two places then where ‘Theios’ is used. And it’s 2-Peter 1:3: “His Divine power given to us, all things that *pertain* to life and Godliness...” We have here concerning the *power* of God and what He has.

Hebrews 1:1 is another one that ties right in with it. Where is Christ going to sit? *He’s going sit on the right hand of the power of God!* “God, Who spoke to the fathers at different times in the past and in many ways by the prophets, has spoken to us in these last days by *His* Son, Whom He has appointed heir of all things, by Whom also He made the worlds [ages]; Who, being *the* brightness of *His* glory and *the* exact image of His person...” (vs 1-3). This also shows that God has *image*.

In philosophy God does not have *image*. God is what they say is *incorporeal*; means *He doesn’t have parts*. We’re *corporeal*; we have parts. What did Jesus say when Philip said, ‘Show us the Father’? He said, ‘Go look at the glob, stupid.’ NO! **He said, ‘If you’ve seen Me, you’ve seen the Father.’** Christ is the expressed image of His person, and the *Geneva Bible* says the *engraved representation of God, made exactly as He is*.

“...and **upholding all things by the Word of His own power...**” (v 3). That’s the Divine power that God is using to give to us. Christ has that power to uphold everything *by the Word of His power! His Word!* How powerful is the Word of God? *By His Word He can close down the whole universe—BAM!* Remember when we went over the creation and God said, ‘Let there be light, and there was light’? If God said, ‘Let the world come to an end’—it’s ended!

“...upholds it with the Word of His power when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at *the* right hand of the Majesty on high” (v 3). That’s the kind of Divine power that God has given to us, that we are dealing with and that we can call upon.

2-Peter 1:3: ...that *pertain* to live and Godliness, through the knowledge [‘epignosis’] of Him Who called us by *His own* glory and virtue.” God is the One Who has to call, as a Divine intervention into your life, by the greatest and

highest Power that there is in the universe, because God the Father Himself loves you. It's His own choice. And by *His power* and by *His wisdom* and by *His goodness* He has called us.

Verse 4: “Through which... [through the *calling*, through the *knowledge*, through *Divine power*] ...He has given to us the greatest and *most* precious promises... [The greatest that can be. In the Greek, these words are so super-abounding that it's the highest level of expression of the greatest that can be.] ...greatest and *most* precious promises, that through these **you may become partakers of the Divine nature...**” There it is again, Divine power, Divine nature. “...**you may become** partakers of the Divine nature...” And that, of course, is going to be *at the resurrection*—that's correct! Right now we have the earnest with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13; 2-Cor. 1:22), the earnest, the begettal, the down-payment until the ‘redemption of the purchased possession.’

What Peter is doing is the same thing that the Apostle John did just before he got into some very heavy correction in 1-John 3. This is also a good lesson for us: when things get difficult, when things get tough—which they're going to be—when the ‘beginning of sorrows’ really takes place and isn't anything that's going to work out right, *you've got to have the hope and faith that comes from God*. That will always work. The love of God never fails! **Absolutely never!** John was doing the same thing when he wrote where it shows what this Divine nature is going to be: ***we will be as God!*** That is not a doctrine of Satan the devil. The doctrine of Satan the devil to become God is contained in philosophy; how you go through degrees until you come to the final enlightenment. That's what Satan means ‘to become gods.’ What God says:

1-John 3:1: “Behold! What *glorious* love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God! For this very reason, the world does not know us because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be; but we know that when He is manifested, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him exactly as He is” (vs 1-2). This is the greatest and most tremendous promise it could possibly be—that

- we could have eternal life
- we could have a Divine nature
- we can live with God the Father and Jesus Christ and all the saints in heavenly Jerusalem

—and that's the whole setting and meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles—is it not? *Yes!*

Peter starts out here because some of the things that he's going to bring out a little later on are

pretty heavy, indeed! Just like John did here in v 3: “And everyone who has this hope in him... [Faith, hope and love overcomes every difficulty that there is—always will!] ...purifies himself, even as He is pure.” You can't get any purer than Jesus Christ. Again, the imputed righteousness of God makes that possible. This is really a tremendous thing that He has given to us.

Let's go to Ephesians, the third chapter, here is what God can do. When we think about God and some of the things don't come out right—and I've had that happen; you've had that happen—the promises that are given...

Ephesians 3:19: “And to know the love of Christ, which surpasses *human* knowledge; so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” That's a tremendous and great and exceeding marvelous promise—isn't it? *Be filled with the fullness of God!* Have you ever sat down to just contemplate what that means? To be filled with the fullness of God? That's really something!

Verse 20: “Now, to Him Who is able to do **exceeding abundantly**... [same word that's in the Greek, as great and precious promises] ...above all that we ask or think, according to the power that is working in us.” God is able to do that! That is tremendous! Brethren, God has given these promises, these are so fantastic! These are just so marvelous! I don't know what it's going to be like to be a spirit being, but I can tell you what, the older I get I know that human life is not going to have it, I can tell you that. This is going to be so great, ***to become partakers of the Divine nature***.

2-Peter 1:4: “...that through these you may become partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust.” When we receive the Holy Spirit of God we are released from the dominion of the ‘law of sin and death’ in us, which controls us unto death. We still have it there, but it doesn't have its iron-tight grip upon us; we're to overcome it.

Now I want to focus in on the word *become*. Let's go to the Gospel of John, the first chapter—*become: to be made or become, or created into* ‘e-entos’

John 1:1: “*In the beginning* was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... [showing individuals] ...He was in *the beginning* with God. All things came into being through Him, and not even one *thing* that was created came into being without Him. In Him was life...” (vs 1-4).

Verse 14: “And the Word **became** flesh...” What God is showing us is this: here is God Who was Logos; Who created everything that there is;

and in Him was life inherent and He *became* flesh to *show us that we can become God*.

Christ became flesh "...and tabernacled [dwelt] among us... [the Greek there means 'tabernacled'—so this has to do with the Feast of Tabernacles; Christ living on the earth] ...(and we ourselves beheld His glory, *the* glory as of *the* only begotten with *the* Father), full of grace and Truth" (v 14).

So, when it says that we will become partakers of the Divine nature that then is the reciprocal of it. When we understand what Christ did to become a human being, carry the 'law of sin and death' within Him and yet, never sin and be that perfect sacrifice for all human beings, then when He says 'we will become partakers of the Divine nature'—that means a lot! That is tremendously inspiring and those are the great and precious promises. And, brethren, don't let anyone ever take that away from you. You can have the world fall all around you, but if you have that hope and you understand that faith, and if you love God, ***no one can take it from you!*** That's going to get you through everything.

2-Peter 1:5: "And for this very reason also, having applied all your diligence besides..." What Peter is doing, he's doing what God wants him to do, and that is to inspire him to inspire the brethren. You work and you accomplish when you're inspired. When you're hired, you punch the clock and you watch it, and you do what you have to do to meet the production, and you punch the clock and you go home. But God has called us to the greatest cause that there can be and Peter is inspiring us to be diligent in what we are doing because we love God and we want to do those things.

"...having applied all your diligence besides, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, **knowledge**... ['gnosis'—which then is discernment and wisdom and understanding] ...and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, endurance; and to endurance, Godliness; and to Godliness, brotherly love, and to brotherly love, **the love of God**" (vs 5-7). The *King James* has it 'charity'; but that is really quite a poor translation of it. It really means *the love*, 'the agape'; which is *the love* that comes from God.

I find it very interesting how that many times 'the last will be first and the first will be last.' Well, we find this is the same case when we compare this with Gal. 5. Paul does this a little differently. Peter ends up with love and Paul starts out with love.

Galatians 5:22: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love... [Peter is talking about the same thing, that you have to also work at—which is a work of faith—is not a work that you can do, but Christ in you, can.] ...joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness,

goodness, faith, meekness, self-control; **against such things there is no law**" (vs 22-23). Let's analyze this a little bit more concerning faith. Faith actually comes down into three distinct categories within the New Testament.

1. The body of beliefs—*the* faith
2. Your personal belief—from which then we have healings and so forth
3. Christ's own faith

—and you actually need all three of these for salvation. So let's look at them.

### 1) **Body of beliefs**

Romans 1:5: "Through Whom... [It talks about Christ, the Spirit of Holiness by the resurrection from the dead.] ...we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to **the faith**..." That means a set of *beliefs based upon faith*, which then is based upon Scripture. And by the way, the Feast of Tabernacles is not *feast of faith*—it is the Feast of Tabernacles. But *we do keep it by faith*.

"...among all the nations..." (v 5). That's very interesting—isn't it? You look at that statement and it's almost contradictory for those who fight against *works* and *laws*—correct? Between grace and law; and faith and law; and works and gifts. 'Obedience to the faith' shows that if there is faith, then you have to be obedient to it. This is the set of faith that comes as a *set of beliefs*.

Ephesians 4:4—this is interesting. How many faiths are there, as far as *a set of beliefs*? Well, Paul makes it very clear: "*There is one body*... [which means there's only one true spiritual body of Christ] ...and one Spirit... [which comes from the Father] ...even as you were also called in one hope of your calling... [some are not waiting the resurrection; some are not going to heaven, etc., etc. There's one hope.] ...one Lord, **one faith**... [and isn't it interesting, there's] ...one baptism" (vs 4-5). Not many, **one!**

Some are not buried in water, and others are sprinkled—you're buried in water-immersion for the death of the old self to be raised in 'newness of life.' This one body is where Christ sees that the Church is. It's not restricted to any human, corporate organization. That's how God is viewing it. And ***it's by one spirit that you're baptized into one body***. That's why Paul is writing it there.

Let's go to Colossians 2:6—let's see something else. "Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, be walking in Him; being rooted and built up in Him, and **being confirmed in the faith**... [that is the *set of doctrines of belief*] exactly as you were taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving" (vs 6-7).

Let's go to 2-Corinthians 13; let's see something about this, which also begins to lead into the next one: whether you have faith; whether Christ is in you. This can be applied both ways: your personal belief; set of beliefs; and Christ's faith in you—so actually all three could apply here.

2-Corinthians 13:5: "Examine yourselves *to see* whether you are in the faith; prove your own selves. Don't you *of* your own selves know that Jesus Christ is in you? Otherwise, you are reprobates." There are kind of all three of them tied together in this one verse. Jesus made a profound statement, you can just put this in the margin of your notes—Luke 18:8, He said, "When the Son of man comes, will He find faith on the earth?—and that is *the faith*." That is the doctrines, *the correct doctrines of belief*.

2) **Faith as a personal belief**—as something that you act upon because you believe it. The kind of faith then which motivates you to do those things. Remember, you have to be obedient to *the* faith, which then is *the doctrine of beliefs*. But then if you have the faith, then you're going to have *works of faith* like Abraham had—because he believed God; then he had works of faith.

Romans 1:8: "First, I truly thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, for your faith is spoken of in the whole world." This means they're a living, believing kind of faith in Christ Jesus is spoken of and well known.

Verse 17: "For therein *the* righteousness of God... [herein is the Gospel] ...is revealed from faith unto faith..." Christ's faith to you; you're faith back to Christ—and the Greek means *into*—so it is a spiritual interchange.

(go to the next track)

This kind of faith is we end up with the faith of Christ in us, because

1. we believe
2. we follow the set of beliefs
3. we grow in grace and knowledge in the Spirit of God, and we begin having more faith because of that
4. then the very own faith of Christ then becomes a part of us

Here Paul shows that it is from faith to faith: "...according as it is written: 'The just shall live by faith.'" That is the trust, the belief, the hope, the love in God. They shall *live by faith*.

Romans 4:1 is talking about Abraham, and Abraham *believed* God! It 'was imputed to him for righteousness' because *he believed* and he acted upon that belief. "What then shall we say *that* our father Abraham has found with respect to *the* flesh?

For if Abraham was justified by works, he has a basis for boasting, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? 'And Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness'" (vs 1-3). So you are motivated by this belief. You act upon this belief. Let's see

- how this belief is
- how we're to do it
- how Paul did it
- how our faith should be
- who we should rely upon
- how we should apply it

1-Corinthians 2:1: "And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with superiority of speech or wisdom, in proclaiming the testimony of God to you. For I decided not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And I was in weakness and in fear and in much trembling *when* I was with you; and my message and my preaching *was* not in persuasive words of human wisdom; rather, *it was* in demonstration of *the* Spirit and of power; so that your faith might not be in *the* wisdom of men, but in *the* power of God" (vs 1-5). That's what God's Divine power is to do to us to give us that kind of faith.

Now let's carry this just a little step further, Let's see something else here. How do you grow in faith? The apostles wanted to grow in faith; they had the same thing. 'Boy, I need the kind of faith; wooo I need more faith.' We'll see what kind we're going to be dealing with here in just a minute, and what Jesus said about it.

Luke 17:5: "Then the apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith.' But the Lord said, 'If you had faith as a *tiny* mustard seed, you might say to this sycamine tree, "Be rooted up, and be planted in the sea," and it would obey you" (vs 5-6). I don't know of anyone who's done that in my lifetime. This kind of tells us what kind of faith we all have—how much if you want to measure it. Then he goes on to explain something else which is important for us to realize.

Verse 7: "But which of you having a servant plowing or shepherding will immediately say *to him when* he comes in from the field, 'Come and sit down *and eat*'? Rather, will he not say to him, "Prepare what I may eat, and gird yourself, *and* serve me while I eat and drink; and afterwards you may eat and drink"?.... [No union there! I tell you what, this is bad news for any union.] ...Is he thankful to that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. Likewise you also, when you have done all *the* things that are commanded you, say, "We are unprofitable servants, because we have done that which we were obligated to do"" (vs 7-10).

That is a tough saying; that is a tough, *tough*, *tough* saying—isn't it? When you consider all that you do, you consider all that God has commanded; and when you've got it all done and finished, if you don't have faith, hope and love, you just say 'you're an unprofitable servant.'

Let's see something else concerning that; Matthew 17 shows a way, hopefully, a way out of the dilemma here. This gets into healing, and we'll cover some things concerning healing, here in just a minute. They came down off the mountain—this was after the Mt. of Transfiguration—they saw Jesus transfigured before them; they came down and the disciples were not able to cast out this demon out of this little boy.

Matthew 17:14: "And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him, and saying, 'Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is insane and suffers miserably; for he often falls into the fire, and often into the water. And I brought him to Your disciples, but they were not able to heal him'" (vs 14-16). Quite a set of circumstances! This put everybody in a bad light. What did Jesus say?

Verse 17: "Then Jesus answered *and* said, "O faithless and perverse generation... [Who was He talking to? *His disciples!* That's who He was talking to. They hadn't come out of the world enough to really understand.] ...How long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you *in your unbelief?* Bring him here to Me' And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it departed from him; and the boy was healed from that hour. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately *and* said, 'Why were we not able to cast it out?'" (vs 17-19).

Very important question—right? There're some things that come along that are difficult to do: difficult healings, difficult mental problems, difficult physical problems. We just have to admit that maybe some of us are in the same category as the disciples—maybe we're kind of faithless. We're not all as faithful as we think we really are.

Verse 20: "And Jesus said to them, 'Because of your unbelief....'" They probably went up and said, 'I wonder if we can do this?' You're through already; because they couldn't do it in the first place. ***It's what God will do!*** That's why when you're anointed claim the promises of Christ. No minister has an inherent thing within him that can heal anyone. God has given us some very simple things to do: anointing, laying hands on, praying and anointed cloths; and we've had some tremendous healings. We will have more in the future. We've had some that haven't been healed; and not every time are you going to be healed.

Sometimes God allows—just like with the

Apostle Paul—a 'thorn in the flesh'; or in the hip or in the back or in the neck. Sometimes God just does that! But it doesn't make any difference, because the Apostle Paul said Christ told him his 'grace was sufficient.' So, if you have grace unto salvation and you're bearing around a little problem. Don't worry about it! God will take care of it. If He doesn't, flesh is going to rot anyway. Are you going to live forever in the flesh? *No, you're not!*

Verse 20: "And Jesus said to them, 'Because of your unbelief, for truly I say to you, if you have faith as a *tiny* mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, "Remove from here," and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you. But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting'" (vs 20-21). That shows when you pray and when you fast and you go before God, it's not for your own; it's not to make you some great thing—but it is so that you're going to ask God to grant you His faith, His trust, His ability, because whatever is done is done in the name of Christ.

Let's go to Acts, the third chapter here, and let's see something that happened afterward. Did Peter and did James get the point? *I guess they did!* There's a time when God pours out miracles. There are other times when He doesn't. Remember the account of the Apostle Paul? How that one of his helpers was sick unto death? And they prayed and prayed and prayed, he says God 'spared him from death and had mercy on me.' But here in Acts, the third chapter, we have a tremendous miracle that was done. Here is the man who was sick from his mother's womb, lame:

Acts 3:2: "And a certain man who was lame from his mother's womb was being carried, whom they placed daily at the temple door which is called Beautiful... [he was put there right at the door so he could be healed] ...to beg alms from those who were going into the temple. When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. But Peter and John, intently observing him, said, 'Look on us.' And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, 'Silver and gold I do not have; but what I do have, this I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarean, rise up and walk.' Then taking him by the right hand, he raised *him* up; and immediately his feet and ankle bones were strengthened. And leaping up, he stood and walked..." (vs 2-8).

Never walked before because he was there in that condition from the day he was born. Now God has created some people that way just for a purpose of a miracle like this. Just like the man who was born blind for the purpose that very day that Jesus healed him.

"...and he entered into the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. Now, all the

people saw him walking and praising God” (vs 8-9). All the people saw it and they knew who he was and then they wondered how this happened.

Verse 12: “And when Peter saw *it*, he answered to the people, ‘Men, Israelites, why are you wondering at this? And why are you looking upon us so intently as if by *our* own power or Godliness *we* have made him to walk? The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His Son Jesus, Whom you delivered up, and denied Him in the presence of Pilate, after he had judged to release *Him*. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and requested that a man *who was* a murderer be granted to you; and you killed the Author of life Whom God has raised from *the* dead, whereof we are witnesses. And **through faith in His name**, this *man* whom you see and know was made strong in His name; and the **faith that is through Him**’...” (vs 12–16)

***The very name and power of God through faith in that, belief in that.*** No faith on the part of the man there—right? He didn’t have faith. He didn’t say, ‘Oh, heal me in the name of Jesus.’ Peter and John just stood there and looked at him and Peter said, ‘Rise and walk in the name of Jesus Christ. So, when things are done in the name of Christ then we have to ask God to help us increase our faith. Now, how is that done?’

In Mark 11 we’ll see something very interesting, and this comes back and starts tying in together with the faith of Christ in us. So, our faith, and Christ’s faith in us, overlaps. And the longer that we are in the Church the more it should be Christ’s faith in us being our own faith—because you grow in that. Here’s where He cursed the fig tree and then He came on back, and they came on back the next morning and saw that it withered up from the roots.

Mark 11:20: “And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from *the* roots. Then Peter remembered *and* said to Him, ‘Look, Master! The fig tree that You cursed has dried up.’ And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Have faith *from* God.... [If you read that in the Greek it means *have God’s own faith*. Did Christ have God’s own faith in Him? *Yes!*] ...For truly I say to you, whoever shall say to this mountain, ‘Be taken away and be cast into the sea,’ and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he said will take place, he shall have whatever he shall say” (vs 20-23).

Most people when we do this—and I include myself—we get down on our knees and we ask God for something and then the first thing we say is: ‘I wonder if God’s going to do that?’ *You’ve already lost it!* We have to have faith that God is going to do what is best in His will. God is more interested in

other things.

That’s why He says, v 25: “But when you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, **forgive**... [What do we do when we go pray? What’s one of the first things that we do? *When we pray we ask God to forgive us our sins*—right? We desire that—correct? I know I do; I’m sure you do. There’s another kind of forgiveness that comes along with it.] ...when you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, **forgive** so that your Father Who *is* in heaven may forgive you your offenses” (vs 25-26).

Why does God require that? *That is so you can have a Godly attitude*—that’s why! Can you ask God to bless you and curse your enemy? *You can!* Why not just let the enemy be taken in their own devices. Is God able to handle the enemy? As we read there in Zech. 15—is God able to handle them? So, they come along and do whatever they do to you—can you change that? *No, no you can’t!*

Matthew 5:23, let’s see something here that’s very important. “For this reason, if you bring your gift to the altar... [Is what you’re doing—when you come to God to pray and offer the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and fasting and praise and thanksgiving—asking forgiveness.] ...and there remember that your brother has something against you... [this is your brother; this is someone that is close to you] ...leave your gift there before the altar, and go *your* way; first be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (vs 23-24). Why? *Because that puts you in the right frame of attitude and the right mind, and puts you in the right circumstances so that God can bless you!*

Verse 43—this is the hardest, hardest, hardest, hardest one! You can’t just read this and say, ‘Oh now, these are wonderful words’—which they are—and just expect to go out and do them instantly; it is difficult. “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy’.... [I tell you what, that is tough! That is hard! Especially when your enemy is despicable—right? *Yes!*] ...But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who despitefully use you and persecute you, so that you yourselves may be *the* children of your Father Who *is* in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *on the* good, and sends rain on *the* just and *on the* unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not the tax collectors practice the same *thing?*” (vs 43-46).

This quite a requirement; this is a lifetime requirement, brethren—lifelong. I find myself, many times, just doing the opposite of what this says. But I do know this: When I forgive my enemy and get the thoughts out of my mind, then



I have peace of mind—I can tell you that; and just leave them in God’s hands. What if he can’t go to them and try to resolve the matter that way? What if they’ve just shut the door and they won’t even listen to anything? Then you still forgive them in your heart and mind, put them in God’s hands, and let God take care of it. Is God able to take care of it? *Yes, He is!* A lot of people have said, concerning the troubles in one of the big Churches of God, God will work it out. Yes, He is! What is happening? *You just look!* That’s why, in some cases, when there’s no change you have to leave—let God work it out! I just hope that there is repentance involved that’s coming along. If not, then I’m afraid that it’s going to be bad news. I don’t think there’s going to be repentance coming, because there have been many, many warnings on down the line.

That’s all a part of it. Now then, when we come here to the prayer, notice Matthew 6:9: “Therefore, you are to pray after this manner... [this is the outline prayer] ...‘Our Father Who *is* in heaven, hallowed be Your name; Your kingdom come; Your will be done on earth, as *it is* in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors” (vs 9-12). There it is all right there, that’s all part of faith; all a part of healing.

Now let’s look at some other things that Jesus did in the way of healing, and the faith that was accomplished. Let’s go to Mark, the second chapter, because we will see that healing requires the faith of both:

- the faith of one who is asking for the healing
- the faith of one who is called upon, in the case of an elder, to do the anointing

In this case, Christ! Did Christ have perfect faith?—*absolutely!*; had no problem whatsoever with it.

Mark 2:1: “And after *some* days, He again entered into Capernaum, and it was reported that He was in *the* house. And immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer any room, not even at the door; and He preached the Word to them. Then they came to Him, bringing a paraplegic borne by four *men*” (vs 1-3). In other words there were four men carrying the stretcher and a man was on it. They couldn’t get in. Well, they used a little initiative—didn’t they? What did they do? *They climbed up on the roof!*

Verse 4: “And since they were not able to come near to Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was; and after breaking *it* open, they let down the stretcher on which the paraplegic was lying.... [he comes down right in the middle of them all; interrupted a meeting] ...Now, when Jesus saw their

faith... [it took some work; it took some action] ...He said to the paraplegic, ‘Child, your sins have been forgiven you’” (vs 4-5). This is where we know that sickness is a result of sin. Whatever it was; it doesn’t tell us what it was. Sometimes it’s a sin that someone else has committed against your body. Sometimes someone sneezes on you and you get a terrible virus. It’s still a sin—physical sin!

Verse 6: “But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, ‘Why does this *man* speak such blasphemies? Who has the power to forgive sins, except one, *and that is* God?’ And Jesus immediately knew in His spirit what they were reasoning within themselves, *and* said to them, ‘Why are you reasoning these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paraplegic, “Your sins have been forgiven you”? or to say, “Arise, and take up your stretcher and walk”? But in order that you may understand that the Son of man has authority on the earth to forgive sins’... [I’ll bet they were astonished at that.] ...He said to the paraplegic, ‘I say to you, arise and pick up your stretcher, and go to your house.’ And immediately he arose and, after picking up his stretcher, went out in the presence of them all; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, ‘We have never seen the like!’” (vs 6-12).

Tremendous thing! Whenever we see something like this: when someone is sick with the palsy or something like that, immediately we try to figure out how it was that way and whose fault it was; and then we make a judgment in our mind and we were off base the first time around. If we can help them, and if they can explain to us some things, maybe we can help them. But, it isn’t going to do any good going around and accusing them of different things when maybe it wasn’t even their fault. But anyway, the point is here, He had faith, they had faith and God healed them.

Let’s go to James, the fifth chapter. I’ll let you read any other examples of healing. There’s an example of the woman who had the issue of blood for 12 years and came and touched the hem of His garment, and immediately she was healed and Christ said, ‘Go your way, your faith has healed you.’

Here’s something that’s most important and something we need to understand; and something that we need to realize from an elder’s point of view, that our prayers have to be also the prayer of faith. And if someone is not healed, we should not immediately say, ‘You did not have faith’ and accuse the other person. Maybe it was the elder who did not have faith—could be. But notice here:

James 5:14: “Is anyone sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him after anointing him with oil in the

name of the Lord.” I know the first time I read that I thought, you get anointed, they’re going to lay you on a table and cover you with a sheet and just pour this oil all over you. I thought, oh my, I don’t want anything to do with that. But that isn’t what it is. It’s just a very simple thing.

Verse 15: “And the prayer of faith...” Who’s going to do the prayer? Who’s going to pray? *The prayer of faith of the elders!* The one coming should have faith. But are there times when God heals just because of the faith of the elder? *Yes!* That’s how the man in Acts 3 was healed—because of the faith that Peter and John had. It was their faith. And I know when I anoint, I pray and claim the promises of Christ, because I know that in me there is nothing that resides in me that’s going to cause anybody to be healed—*except the faith that comes from Christ.* We don’t go demand of God: ‘God, You have to do this; You have to do that.’ *No! God doesn’t have to do a thing!* We come to God and ask for His grace and His mercy. Come to God and claim His promises, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. That’s the *prayer of faith!*

Verse 15: “And the prayer of faith shall save the sick one, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, they shall be forgiven him”—because *there is a sin not unto death*—they shall be forgiven.

Verse 16: “Confess *your* faults to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. *The* supplication of a righteous man prevails much, being effective.” Then he gives the example of Elijah. And you know, Elijah’s prayer was really not very much—was it? What was his prayer? Remember that—the showdown between the prophets of Baal and Elijah? Let’s go back and look at that. Long, long prayers don’t necessarily make it.

1-Kings 18:17: “And it came to pass when Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, ‘*Are you he that troubles Israel?*’... [Isn’t that always the way it is? The one who’s causing the problem looks at someone else and says, ‘you’re causing it.’] ...And he answered, ‘I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father’s house have in that you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and you have followed Baalim. Now therefore, send *and* gather to me all Israel to Mount Carmel, and four hundred and fifty of the prophets of Baal, and four hundred of the prophets of Asherah who eat at Jezebel’s table.’” (vs 17-19). Jezebel was the daughter of the high priest of Phoenicia—so he was a Canaanite and this was Baal-worship. She was Ahab’s wife. Did that cause problems for everybody? *Yes!*

Verse 20: “Then Ahab sent to all the children of Israel and gathered the prophets together to mount Carmel. And Elijah came to all the people and said, ‘How long will you vacillate between two different

opinions?’...” (vs 20-21). That’s what’s happening today.

When you’re holding two opinions, you’re in bad shape, just as Jesus said, ‘No man can serve God and mammon. No one can serve two masters. You either love one and hate the other; cleave to one and despise the other.’ You can’t do it both.

James 1:8: “*He is* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.” That’s why Christ told the Laodiceans that ‘I would you were either hot or cold.’ God wants it one way or the other. He doesn’t want double-minded duplicity. As some people have said, ‘Where were you on this?’ *I’m right down the middle!* When that is said you know you’re in trouble—immediately! When you’re halting between two opinions, you’re unstable—spiritually speaking.

Here’s the solution, 1-Kings 18:21: “...If the LORD *is* God, follow Him. But if Baal is God, *then* follow him.’ And the people did not answer him a word. And Elijah said to the people, ‘I, I alone... [and Handel wrote a real good oratorio for this—how many have heard Handel’s *Elijah*? Pitiful way that he sung it.] ...remain a prophet of the LORD. But Baal’s prophets are four hundred and fifty men” (vs 21-22).

So, you know what he did. He said: ‘All right, let’s do this, we’ll take a couple of bullocks and we’ll let the prophets of Baal start out early in the morning, put it on their altar—they can do all they need to do.’ So they prayed all morning, and then, at noon, Elijah got up and said, ‘Hey, maybe he’s sleeping; maybe he’s on a journey—you better shout a little more, you better make a little more noise.’ So they got up on the altar, jumped up and down, slashed their bodies—drew blood—to try and make Baal answer them. He didn’t answer. They wailed and said all day long (vs 26-29 *paraphrased*).

So then the time of the evening sacrifice, Elijah said, ‘All right, now build the altar, put the wood on it, put the bullock on it, douse it with water—do it again, do it the third time—the water was running. Here, in the middle of a drought, water is precious! (vs 31-35 *paraphrased*). And then, here’s Elijah’s fervent prayer:

Verse 36: “Now, it came to pass at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said... [I want you to notice how long this prayer is. It’s not the length. It is *the heart*, and it is *the faith*.] ...‘LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that You *are* God in Israel, and that I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You *are* the LORD God, and that You have turned their heart back again’” (vs 36-37). That was it! God answered immediately. Fire came down,

consumed the whole thing. So that's why James says, and gives the example of Elijah. It was *'a fervent prayer of a faithful man, a righteous man does much!'* So in healing that's important!

### 3) Christ's own faith

Let's come to Galatians 2—very important for us to understand, one of the key fundamental things concerning Christianity. Yes, we have things to do as we read there in 2-Pet. 1—'give all diligence to do these things'—that's correct. We are to give diligence to do the things and built the spiritual character.

Galatians 2:16: "Knowing that a man is not justified **by works of law**..." All through Galatians, the definite article *the* works of *the* law—both of *these* are not in the Greek. It is **by works of law**—because this gives you the implication that it is commandment-keeping. If you are keeping the commandments of God in faith, **is it your work?** *No!*

"...but through *the* faith of Jesus Christ... [this means Jesus' faith] ...we also have believed in Christ Jesus in order that we might be justified by *the* faith of Christ..." (v 16). How do you know your sins are forgiven?

- You **believe** God
  - You **believe** that Jesus is the Savior
  - You **believe** that He died for your sins
  - You **believe** that He was resurrected from the dead
  - You **believe** that the commandments of God are those things that you are to keep
  - You **believe** that Christ will put you in right standing with God—**by faith**
- ✓ You can't see Christ
  - ✓ You can't see God the Father
  - ✓ But you **believe by faith**

"...and not by works of law; because by works of law shall no flesh be justified" (v 16). There's nothing you can do to forgive your sins—**except repent!** Once something is done, it's done. Who's going to make it right? **Only God! God alone can make it right.**

Verse 17: "Now then, if we are seeking to be justified in Christ, *and* we ourselves are found to be sinners, *is* Christ then *the* minister of sin? **MAY IT NEVER BE!**.... [No! The 'law of sin and death' is what's making him do it. Christ is not motivating sin.] ...For if I build again those things that I destroyed, I am making myself a transgressor. For I through law died to law, in order that I may live to God.... [Because what? 'The wages of sin—which is *the transgression of the law*—is death.'] ...I have been crucified with Christ, yet I live. *Indeed*, it is no

longer I; but **Christ lives in me**.... [the 'eth' there in the *King James: is living in me*] ...For *the life* that I am now living in *the* flesh... [because he's still in the flesh—and this is for us today] ...I live by faith—that *very faith* of the Son of God... [Now what does this mean in the Greek? In the Greek it means *he lives by the Son of God's own faith in him, spiritually*. So you come to have Christ's own faith within you. So it starts out by having a body of belief that you believe in, then it is faith that you're believing in God and trusting in Him, and then it is Christ now—what is He doing?—*trusting in you by giving you His faith*. Now, think on that!] ...Who loved me and gave Himself for me" (vs 17-20).

Let's look at it again. We have two places where it is: Rev. 13 & 14. This is talking about the end-time. Here's the patience, or the endurance, of the saints. Revelation 14:12: "Here is *the* patience of the saints; here *are* the ones who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." Jesus' own faith! That's the kind of faith we are to grow into. Then we can do the things that Jesus spoke of, if we have 'faith as a grain of a mustard seed.'

Over here, Revelation 12:17: "Then the dragon was furious with the woman and went to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Or that is the very testimony of Christ Himself within them. That ties right in with the faith, the faith that comes from Christ being in us. So this is what we need to grow into, brethren.

### 4) Virtue

We are to add to our faith. Here's what we are to do when we grow into this kind of faith and this kind of knowledge and this kind of understanding. We are to add to it: **virtue!** And virtue is then—it's only used four times—means *moral uprightness*. It means *good living*. **or** It can mean that you have *conduct worthy of praise by God*, because it's motivated by God's Holy Spirit. This is something that takes place when you have that kind of living faith.

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- ✓ Exception: 1& 2-Peter, from *The Seven General Epistles* by Fred R. Coulter

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