

# An Elect Failure.

By

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## Dedication.

To all those within the Church of Jesus Christ, truly 'saved' and truly 'serving', yet who have always 'felt' third rate because they are not only aware of the weakness of their and our humanity but have never been allowed by some to forget their failures because others have used those failures to keep them 'down' that they in turn might feel 'up'.

God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. (Hebrews 6:10.)

## Chapter One

### An Elect Failure!

"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied." <sup>1</sup>.

Silvanus had entered the room and observed Peter staring out of the window, not even turning round to see who had come in, which was unusual for Peter whose nature was such that he had to be first to observe and know all that was going on around him. His impetuosity had been his personal nuisance all his life.

"Penny for your thoughts, Peter?"

Peter turned and saw Silvanus, smiled and said " I was just wishing that somehow or other I could leave Jerusalem for a bit and go and visit and meet all those new brothers and sisters in Christ that are increasing in numbers all over the known world."

"Why don't you?"

"Because I'm getting old and I don't have much time left before I get arrested"

"What do you mean get arrested."

"Oh! it is coming, Silvanus. You see, when I was a young man, and if my memory serves me right it was on the third occasion that I talked to our risen Lord after His death and resurrection. We were at the edge of the Sea of Galilee. I asked Him what would happen to me in the future. He stated quite clearly that while I was young I would have absolute freedom to come and go as I please, but when I would get old I would be arrested and taken where I don't want to go and be put to death for His name sake.<sup>2</sup> That was a promise from God and God keeps his promises. That promise from Him was a great comfort to me when I was young and gave me an assurance that nothing would harm me in the early years of my ministry. After all, others before me had trusted his promises, so I knew I could too. That's why, when Herod had me arrested and locked in the dungeon and guarded by 16 soldiers, I just lay down and went to sleep. I *knew* I could not die the next day as he threatened, for I was still young and HE said I would die when I was old.

In fact, I was so sound asleep that the Angel of the Lord had to shake me awake and get me out of there<sup>3</sup>. I once read of David having that kind of trust when he offered to go and fight Goliath of Gath. Everyone thought he was crazy, but he knew he was the best person to go or even send that day for he had been anointed by the Prophet Samuel earlier to become the next King of Israel. He knew he was not the King yet, he knew he would not die that day. A stone and a sling would be enough in the face of that promise. But the years have rolled past Silvanus and I know each day I awake, I am getting nearer to my arrest and death."

"Then if you are so certain you will never leave Jerusalem, why not do what brother Paul does - write letters?"

"I never thought of that. My only fear is that I will not be able to keep it simple and I don't want to end up like Paul, writing letters in which a lot of what he says is hard even for me to get to grips with"<sup>4</sup>.

"I wouldn't worry about that Peter. I will help you."

So Peter began to dictate his first letter, long after he had been an experienced Evangelist and Church Planter and Leader. Peter dictating and Silvanus writing it down.

"Firstly, I want it to be a letter for everyone. As a Christian who is a converted Jew, I want it known that what I write is without prejudice and void of any class, colour or race restrictions, so how about saying...*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, Elect....(1 Peter 1:1.)*

When Peter got to the statement regarding himself and those he was writing to that they were 'elect', Silvanus paused held up his hand and said

"Surely you're not going to start with something as theologically divisive as 'election' as opposed to 'man's free will'? Remember this is a letter, not a sermon."

"Not at all Silvanus. My 'election' to service was never to give me a 'one-upmanship' or a sense of being more spiritual than the next person it was an 'election' according to His foreknowledge. What He knew about me and I did not even know about myself was that I would be an abject failure and feel that I should never be qualified to serve Him.

And fail Him I did. Yet He never changed His mind about me, or slapped my face and walked away from me, or even cried out in disappointment - 'that does it I am finished with you'. No. He just turned and looked at me with such an intense love for me that it broke my heart and what I thought was my end was just my beginning<sup>5</sup>. Never forget that Silvanus; the Peter you know today as 'Mr. Big' in the faith was first and foremost an 'elect failure'.

He gave a little laugh and said "Didn't you know Silvanus, that 'elect failures' are a hobby with Him?"

"Name me some", he immediately retorted, as a man who always wanted the source of Peter's statements (that always came across as facts that ought not to be questioned.)

"Well, there was Abraham, the liar, who would send his wife Sarah to bed with other men to save his own skin;<sup>6</sup> thieving Jacob,<sup>7</sup> murderous Moses, who couldn't even bury the body deep enough so that it was found the next day.<sup>8</sup> There was cowardly Barak, who would only go to battle for the Lord if Deborah would go with him and hold his hand.<sup>9</sup> Doubting Gideon<sup>10</sup>, adulterous Samson,<sup>11</sup> even David and the prophets were no exception. Filthy mouthed<sup>12</sup> 'streaking' Isaiah,<sup>13</sup> hyper-emotional

and depressed Jeremiah,<sup>14</sup> and mystical Ezekiel.<sup>15</sup> They were all written off by the religious community as failures, yet God in the heavens wrote of them 'The world did not deserve them;<sup>16</sup> they were truly His successful elect failures. The older I get, the more I begin to understand it has to be that way. Did I ever tell you about my failure?"

"You? Failed?" he gasped in astonishment, "you never did tell me anything about that, so I've always imagined you couldn't and that your 'election' to service was because you were so good."

"You're right my son, I never did tell you that."

"Why not? Was it because of the first sin to be committed in Heaven - Pride?"<sup>17</sup>

"No Silvanus. If I had had any of that left I would have been tempted to use it. It is because of my utter shame that I have never mentioned it. But since my silence has communicated to you an imaginatory thought about how wonderful I am, I had better tell you about it.

I would never want anyone to make the mistake you have been tempted to make of trusting your imagination which is only evil continually from your youth up,<sup>18</sup> and thinking I'm a good man. Remember my son, the Word states quite clearly that there is not a just man in all the earth that doeth good and sinneth not.<sup>19</sup>

1:- 1 Peter 1:1-2. 2:- John21:18-19. 3:- Acts 12:1-11. 4:-11 Peter 3:15-16. 5:- Luke22:61. 6:- Genesis 20:1-18. 7:- Genesis 27:30-36. 8:-Exodus 2:11-15. 9:- Judges 4:8-9. 10:-Judges 6:11-16. 11:- Judges chapters13: -15: 12:- Isaiah 6:5. 13:- Isaiah 20:2. 14:- Lamentations 3:1-18. 15:- Ezekiel 1:1 16:-Hebrews 11:38. 17:- Ezekiel 28:13-19. 18:- Genesis 6:5. 19:- Ecclesiastes 7:20.

### **Dear Reader.**

For how long have you felt a failure and by your silence about it to others, have allowed them to imagine what you are saying by your silence, to the extent that they are left with an impression that you are a 'good Christian' ?

Isn't it time to release that self-imposed pressure, (for which you get no help from the Lord in maintaining such a façade,) and humbly be open about still being a sinner, though a forgiven one, and give those who are open about their weaknesses some HOPE for the first time in their lives?

## Chapter Two

### Seaside Encounter.

'From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, repent: for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand. And Jesus walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he said unto them, Follow me and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed Him.' (Matthew 4:16-20).

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Peter just stood there for a very long time. Silvanus very conscious of the fact that he was both praying and waiting for divine help to be able to do what no man had done before, bare his soul to another and especially one who until that moment had almost idolized him without question. It was hard being vulnerable; it required risk, knowing that Silvanus could use the intimate information.

"As far as I was concerned it was another day like any other day. We had been out a long time and were fishing as best we could. One of our troubles was that the area was always over fished with too many fishermen and we had to fight to get a good spot in the hope of a decent catch. We had not caught very much that morning. I was always a fighter, being the eldest. I didn't realize in those days that it was His gift to me of leadership potential. I just figured I was bigger and rougher and that circumstances made me stand up and fight for what we could get out of life for the family. I was forever driving my team and had to rule them with the fist at times. I think they would have thought it incredible that underneath my exterior there was another me that actually had feelings and that I longed to be a very different person. I even wanted at times to hug them when we had a good catch and jump and holler with excitement, but I never let myself enjoy that dignity. Instead, I lived up to the role I played. I did it so well I even began to believe I was a hard man. Of course, I never uttered that to a soul, as fishing had been in our family for generations and I knew it was my lot and that it was just a silly dream to think I could ever get out and on and up from under all that. My father did it before me and my grandfather before that and I assumed that by some sort of inherited tradition, I should reproduce just the same trait as they. I just let these thoughts be my private dream. Nice, but unreachable.

"Come on Andrew - this is no time to be quitting. One or two throws more and then we will finish before the sun gets too hot and high in the day."

Andrew knew better than to argue with me, so reluctantly but with at least an outward show of willingness, in case he made me angry, for I was prone to be angry at the slightest thing, he moved down the boat a little and helped me grab the net again and throw it out once more. We were both standing perfectly still, our backs to the shore, just watching the net sink into the blue water. It was then that we heard His voice for the first time. Why He stopped at our boat and not the others puzzled me at first. The voice we did not know but it was a very arresting voice and though gentle, had a ring of authority on it and it made us turn in unison to see who it was.

He looked so ordinary.

Yet I could tell from his build that he was used to hard work and his hands were strong hands. You could even see the calluses from where we stood. I figured he was either a builder or carpenter.

"It's the street preacher from Nazareth" whispered Andrew, out of the side of his mouth, continuing his work without a stop, "Some say He's the Messiah and He's been offering them the Kingdom of God if they will repent of their sins."

My heart missed a beat. I just hoped that Andrew never noticed. I just stood and gazed at Him. Our eyes met. I couldn't put my finger on it but there was actually power flowing from His look. I wanted to look away but I was transfixed. It was as if He knew all about me, my inner thoughts, everything I had ever done that no one but myself ever knew about. I had been troubled for a long time and haunted by my guilt feelings of the awful life and sinful things I had been doing, especially about the things that the neighbours had openly seen me do. Yes, the whole community knew about me but I found that no matter how hard I tried to change my life style I couldn't. So I had reacted by playing the hard man and covered up all my hurt by leaving the impression I was hard hearted - so much so, that folk had begun to assume I had no heart. I was so lonely and longed to be loved.

He just kept on looking at me and that look from this man seemed to break straight through my exterior and went straight to my heart with such an intensity that it was demanding a response. I didn't know what to say to the man when suddenly and sanely and calmly, He spoke again. The words were few and simple.

"Follow me and I will make you become a fisher of men"<sup>20</sup>.

I was not too sure what a 'fisher of men' might mean but the way in which He said it seemed to command an immediate response and in my usual impetuosity, acting without thinking, I gave Him that response even to my own surprise by leaving the boat and nets and walked up the beach towards him to follow Him. He stood perfectly still and let me come to Him. The only other sounds I heard were the scrunch of Andrew's feet following hard after me and the thump, thump, thumping of my heart. I was not surprised at his following, as Andrew and others always tended to follow me, even if I went somewhere I shouldn't go. I didn't know I was a leader. The simplicity with which I had obeyed Him gave me a good feeling about myself for the first time in a long time. It was frightening though exciting. I had always feared opening up myself to myself because I was never sure what I was going to find out about myself. What might come out into the open might not be what I'd like and I would then have to re-evaluate my estimation of myself and that might be downward. From that moment forward I never questioned who He was claiming to be. I immediately threw myself wholeheartedly into following Him. Of course that was typical of me. I never did things by half. It was all the way or nothing at all.

We started walking along the beach past the other boats. One or two stared at the boat and the catch we had left but soon returned to what they were doing. Then Jesus stopped and did it again. It was not an accident; it was with an air of, how shall I describe it, election, that He selected another boat and gave the two in it the exact call He gave to us. I could hardly believe it for I knew the two brothers. It was James and John<sup>21</sup>. we usually kept well clear of them for they were very bad tempered people. To even look in their direction was an invitation to a fistfight. I thought to myself

'why pick those two? If you are who you are, you should know what they are and forget them. They're bad news.' I knew I was bad, but not that bad!

However, I buried my thoughts and decided to put a brave face on it and live with it because I couldn't go back now. What would others think if I backed out so soon? I'll grin and bear it. We looked at each other and with the falsest of silly smiles said 'hi!' to each other. He just looked at us. I had a feeling He was not being fooled. We certainly weren't. We disliked each other intensely.

By the end of that first day He had selected twelve men to be His disciples. The selection was crazy. I nearly laughed out loud when I heard Him nickname James and John 'the sons of thunder'<sup>22</sup>. It taught me one thing about Him and that was that He did know what they were like and was under no illusion as to which He had chosen. Then I suddenly realized that if He knew them so well, He would know me well too, so I didn't laugh.

He turned to me and said, "I have a new name for you also Simon".

"What's that?" I replied.

"Peter"

My immediate response in my mind was - 'of course what else could it be. It is the Greek word for 'rock'. Stable and strong enough to be a foundation for others'. I began to walk tall.

As we walked along the road I thought and thought about that. A rock; such an appropriate name for me. He must recognize my stability of character.

While I was thinking like that Jesus looked across at me with that powerful loving gaze. I couldn't make up my mind as to what that gaze was trying to say to me. The best I could come up with was that Jesus was pleased with my personal sense of total abandonment to Him or was He? It was at that point I made up my mind that I would prove to Him that I was indeed a strong rock worth having on His team. He will be thankful for me one day. The thought occurred to me that since He is the Messiah He must know that I am thinking like this and since He has said nothing about my thoughts it must be because what I am thinking about me is true.

Jesus smiled at me and remained silent. For that moment I felt for the first time in years that I was walking on air. It was a good feeling. I was accepted, but then I felt that I ought to be.

20: - Mark 1:17. 21: - Matthew 4:21-22. 22:- Mark 3:17.

### **Dear Reader.**

What do you think the Lord Jesus really thinks about you and what do you think about yourself?

## Chapter Three

### Walking on Water.

'And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitude away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying it is a spirit: and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, 'Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee on the water. And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, of a truth thou art the Son of God.' (Matthew 14:22-33).

The feeling of walking on air stayed with me for a long time. Those were great days with Him. Listening, watching and learning so much from Him. Of course, I was ever watching for my opportunity to prove to Him that I was worthy of the name Peter, the rock. He not only taught truth but He lived it. So much of what He did was so contrary to what I would have done. The very first person He healed was a Roman Centurion's slave<sup>23</sup>. That hurt, but I never said so, for the man was in my eyes a rotten Roman. I had fed my soul on hate for them for years. He healed my mother in law of a fever<sup>24</sup>, cast out demons from all sorts of people<sup>25</sup> and even raised a dead little girl to life again. He even took me in to see HIM do that, I felt so special and so wanted and so close to Him.<sup>26</sup> Mind you, He took James and John in also. That irritated me. HE was always doing so much for others and had that habit of always putting me alongside those two. I made a mental note to ask HIM sometime soon to let me work alongside some of the others instead. At times I felt HE was just not noticing how much I longed to please HIM and get HIS attention turned to me for a change.

The first murmur to my heart that I was not all that I thought I was, that made me wonder why He called me Peter the rock, was when we were out on the sea of Galilee, about ten o'clock in the evening. As is customary with that Inland Sea, which I knew well to be unpredictable at times, it suddenly began heaving with a squall and rough wind whipping everything up. We were only half way across. Of course, I could take it, as I was quite used to those conditions. Suddenly, one of our crew gave out a yell that we heard above the wind. At first I thought someone had fallen overboard and we all turned to look and see but he was fixed to the spot and with fear all over his face was pointing out to sea. We followed his hand and we all suddenly saw it. It looked like a man walking on the sea and coming towards us.

It was terrifying and the terror began to grow across all our faces. Without exception we were all stricken with fear. Our only feasible conclusion was that it was a ghost but then that voice of HIS came through the wind and said 'cheer up it is ME'.

Only one man had that voice. It was HIM, Jesus.

I immediately thought what an opportunity to impress HIM and be one up on the others. I determined I would live up to my new name, Peter the rock, so I yelled out to HIM that if it was HIM, HE was to tell me to come and walk to Him on the water. What a chance to prove myself to Him. I would show Him - and of course them (I took a side glance to see if James and John were noticing me) that I was even prepared to do the impossible to try and please HIM, even if it meant walking on the water. Of course, as soon as I had thought these thoughts and said what I said I wished I hadn't for Jesus said I should come. The others were still terrified. I went to the edge of the ship. I still don't know how I got my legs over that edge, they were shaking so badly and as I slid down the side, still clinging on by my cold fingertips my whole mind telling me that I was crazy, I stuck my feet onto the water. Yes, I was staggered. I thought they should go into it, not onto it but onto it they went. The Sea was like liquid, yet not liquid. I slowly stood up and I still don't know how I did it but I was determined to show HIM and the others that I would go all the way for HIM, even if it meant trying the impossible to please HIM. I desperately clung to that obsession. I took a step and then another and began to go towards Him. I looked back to see what the others thought of me now and at that precise moment, horror overwhelmed me.

Now, when I think of it, I really thought I was doing great and that HE would be delighted. Suddenly my rational mind came into action and with the wind in my face and the noise of the water all around me, I said to myself

"I can't do this".

I began to sink and all the self-confidence went out of me and I yelled out to HIM to save me. HE caught a hold of me and held me up and walked me over to the boat and we both clambered on board. If HE had just left it at that I would have been fine, but HE was always so open and straight with all of us and in front of them asked me why I possessed such little faith and was full of doubt. I looked at them for understanding and praise but they were all looking at HIM and worshipping HIM and praising HIM but something had happened to me. My best effort to show HIM that I would do anything to please HIM even if it was to try to do the impossible had backfired on me and I looked so stupid in front of the others. Why did HE call me Peter the rock when I was so weak? I had failed. That was the first of a chain of events that brought me lower and lower as each day passed. I should have heeded the signal that event gave me but I was stubborn as usual and did not want to believe that I could be that weak. After all it was an extremely unusual event. I would have other chances to prove I was not as bad as HE or they thought me to be. How wrong I was and how soon I was to learn that. Yes, I had been walking on air emotionally and it only took a walk on water to bring me down from my airy height. I was confused and embarrassed.

23:- Matthew 8:5-13. 24:- Matthew 8:14. 25:- Mark 5:12-13. 26:- Mark 5:39-43.

**Dear Reader.**

How long have you been trying to impress the Lord Jesus and others by doing all sorts of things even as far as trying to attempt things outside the limit of yourself in the hope of obtaining His and others' attention and praise? Been trying the impossible lately? Have you ended up confused and embarrassed?

## Chapter Four

### Getting Lower.

I was still hurting inside without showing it and if HE knew, HE never mentioned it. Besides HE was too busy and sometimes the business was defending us, HIS disciples, who seemed to cause him uncalled for problems.

One day we sat down to eat and had no sooner got stuck in when Pharisees sitting nearby came up and asked him why we disciples were bad mannered because we had forgotten to keep the tradition of washing our hands before we started to eat<sup>27</sup>. I was livid and embarrassed. We fishermen, typical rough men that we are, often have to eat on the job, seldom bothered to even think about niceties like that. We just never thought about it. I was about ready to explode, when Jesus seemed to take up their point and used it to get at them and show them that though they wash their hands, they had never washed their hearts and that their hearts were rotten<sup>28</sup>. They cleared out pretty quick.

It was a great feeling seeing them slink off having been put down. I remembered saying with glee that HE had really upset them when HE turned and said to us 'every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up. Leave them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.'<sup>29</sup> . It sounded great but we all looked at each other and I sensed that we were all pretending to understand what HE was talking about. Honestly, though, I hadn't a clue what HE meant. It suddenly crossed my mind that here was another opportunity for me to make an impression on Jesus and get HIM to notice me. I decided I would not be as hypocritical as the others are and would come right out into the open and show HIM that I didn't know what HE meant. However, at least I would show HIM I was open to admit it and to let HIM see I was willing to be taught. So I said to HIM 'Declare unto us this parable'<sup>30</sup>.

Once again HE just made me angry.

He replied "Are you also yet without understanding"<sup>31</sup>. It came across to me as though HE was saying 'do you mean to tell me Peter, that you can have an immediate total commitment to forsake all and follow me. To even have the experience of walking on water and listen to all my teaching first hand but that none of these things have in themselves added any spiritual insight to your darkened mind and that you are as blind as the rest?"

Whether that is what HE meant or not it was what my heart was interpreting HIS reply to mean. I thought I had some pretty big 'feathers in my cap' - totally committed to serve Jesus, willing to do the impossible to please him and being open to be taught, only to find that these things in themselves added nothing to me. I don't know if the others noticed and HE said no more, but inside I was getting lower and angrier with myself and depressed. Would it ever end? Through it all, I kept asking why HE called me that name Peter the rock. More and more I began to feel even that name had a meaning that I did not yet understand. Maybe I wouldn't understand. I really felt like quitting. After all, daddy still had the boat and I could go and fish again. Funny thing though, that in spite of those inward thoughts, I prayed for God to give me some light, for my tunnel was dark.

27: - Matthew 15:1. 28: - Matthew 15:2-11. 29: - Matthew 15:13-14. 30: - Matthew 15:15.  
31: - Matthew 15:15-16.

**Dear Reader**

Have you ever felt that you are confused in your relationship with Him and that everything you try your best at never seems to be understood by the Lord? Tell Him so right now; pray and press on. Light will come.

## Chapter Five

### My First Light.

I definitely felt lower, but one thing that was new that came out of all of this, was that I had begun to pray.

That was a new experience for me. Funny thing, when all is well I never think about praying; only when things go wrong do I do it. It almost makes me begin to think that the adversities of life could be friends after all, as they did teach me to pray. The surprising thing was that whenever I prayed I never seemed to get an answer, yet this time I did and it came so soon after I had prayed. It was within a day or two that we all found ourselves at a quiet spot by the river at Caeserea Phillipi<sup>32</sup>. We had walked far that day and since we were having a break from the usual crowds that followed HIM, we had a moment to chat for the first time in days.

He asked us a question. That always amazed me. HE did more asking of questions of us, to make us think, than simply telling us what to believe. His question was "Who do men say that I the Son of Man am?"<sup>33</sup>

They all started in at once, not only with their own thoughts, but also with all that they had been hearing from folk in the crowd. They told him that there were many different opinions as to who HE was. Some said HE was John the Baptist, another group opted for Elijah, and some said Jeremiah and then followed an offering of all sorts of suggestions<sup>34</sup>.

Throughout all of this I had remained silent, which was new for me as I am usually pretty consistent in opening my mouth first and saying what comes off the top of my head only to find that I had once again put my foot in my mouth.

He interrupted the offerings of their opinions by suddenly narrowing the conversation down to the present and us, by asking

"But who do you say that I am?"

HE was actually asking for our own personal opinion of who we thought HIM to be? HE was and making us make up our own individual minds about it. We all sat stunned at first and while I was waiting for others to say something, I was saying to myself "what shall I say?" for here was another super chance to impress HIM and wipe out all the previous backfired efforts I had made to get HIS attention. My mind was working overtime when suddenly a great thought leapt into my mind - he was the Christ, the Son of the living God. That sounded great to me. No one had ever testified, to my knowledge, of such a statement about HIM. I felt so clever and decided to pluck up the courage to express the thought "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God"<sup>35</sup>.

They all turned and stared at me. It was a great feeling. This time at last I should earn the 'feather in my cap'.

Jesus turned and looked at me with those eyes of his and with a smile on his face that lifted me up for the first time in weeks, said,

"Blessed art thou, Simon Bar Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto you, but my Father which is in heaven".<sup>36</sup>

I tried to smile to hide my feelings, for all elation had gone already. That is the thing about feelings, they are so temporal, Here one minute and gone the next. In just a few words I was depressed again, but I was determined not to show it because I was so conscious of James and John standing nearby and felt they were laughing at me.

He had not called me Peter the rock this time but Simon Bar Jonah. I hated that surname for it reminded me not only of the original Jonah but others always remembered it too and being the impetuous character with the kind of fast mouth I have they often called me a Jonah. I was so conscious too of the fact that the first Jonah was also called to be a preacher but quit and run for the nearest boat and was full of anger. We were so alike.

It was like HE was counteracting the revelation HE said I got from HIS Father with new revelation to me of myself. Even the word Simon came fresh to my mind for it meant 'hearing'. Yes, I was a good listener but my capacity to hear and observe truth was being hindered by the Jonah type of trait I knew I had, of being angry enough to quit and head for my boat again. I began to realize HE was indeed who HE said HE was and knew everything I was thinking. HE had just squashed my latest attempt to achieve something for HIM by giving the credit for my statement to HIS Father in heaven. I hadn't even thought that out for myself. Of course I knew I could not flatter myself, for demons had already yelled out in public through the demented people they possessed that HE was the Son of the Most High God<sup>37</sup>. HE had always rebuked those evil spirits and told them not to run around saying that. I had heard everything HE said and just like Jonah, felt like running away at that moment. But HE said to me in front of them all,

"And I say unto you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."<sup>38</sup>

We all sat there dumb. I didn't know what to say next. For one thing I didn't know what HE meant with that new word HE used - Church. He had never used it before and I never heard him using it again. We were all puzzled when he threw in another comment that we should never tell people that HE was Jesus the Christ.

I did not see the sense in that at the time, but now I realize that a little knowledge is good but it can also be dangerous. After all, had I run to Jerusalem that day and grabbed the High Priest by the beard and told him that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ of God, he probably would have said "oh how nice and what does he do?" I would have been at a loss after that, for what could I reply? He had not yet died for sin or risen again from the dead, so that it was good news but without an outcome. So once again my eagerness to prove something to HIM had failed and I was so confused that I dropped the matter.

Even that knowledge was no help to me or had any changing affect on me, for a few minutes later HE was telling us how that HE would go to Jerusalem and would be made to suffer many things and be put to death.

The thought of that shocked me and I immediately displayed my old true impetuous self by rebuking HIM and telling HIM that I would never let that happen to HIM. Wow, that did it! I had never seen HIM angry before but HE spun right round on me and said "Get thee behind me Satan: you are an offence unto me: for you do not prefer the things that be of God but those that be of men."<sup>39</sup> It seemed that every time I thought I had made a great leap forward I took a bigger leap back. That was when HE announced to us for the first time the real cost of discipleship for HE said "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."<sup>40</sup> I couldn't see what HE meant by that either. What a mess my mind was in. I had some sort of keys to a kingdom, called a Church, with authority in it but with a devil hanging around me. However, I had a feeling there was some light at the end of the tunnel.

32: - Matthew 16: 13. 33: - Matthew 16:13. 34: - Matthew 16:14. 35: - Matthew 16:16. 36: - Matthew 16:17. 37: - Mark 5:7. 38: - Matthew 16:18-19. 39: - Matthew 16: 18-23. 40: - Matthew 16:24-25.

### **Dear Reader**

Have you ever been in just such a situation where you feel so full of great spiritual thought about the Lord and HIS Word one minute and so full of contradiction the next? Peter was, So be encouraged. It is not the end and rejection, but the beginning and acceptance. Press on into the light.

## Chapter Six

### My First Visual Experiences.

Six days is a long time. Especially when everyone is staring at you and is as mixed up as yourself. One minute the keys of a kingdom and the next minute satanically inspired behaviour. That went through me day after day. I felt the others' antagonism. Oh! With the Lord Jesus around it was never voiced but I could feel it especially from James and John. If they had had a vote, I would not have even made their short list of nominees.

I thought a week of internal torture was an eternity.

HE broke that.

HE walked in when we were all sitting around and he said "Peter, (that rock name again), James and John I want you to come with me."

"Where?" I asked at once, just being the usual me.

He continued, "Peter, Peter, always so full of questions. How about just obeying me by faith for once without any more questions."

We went out and followed him. Nothing much was said and we had quite a journey, mile after mile. I didn't mind that, but it was such a silent walk. After all, look at the company: The Lord who was silent and three of the most unlikely characters by HIS side. I had thought that at last HE was tired of me and had those two to be HIS witnesses as HE told me I was no longer wanted. Truly the scripture has stated that man's imagination is only evil continually from his youth up.<sup>41</sup> But mile after mile we trudged through the countryside. I knew HE was not rejecting me for HE could never be that cruel as to walk me all day and fire me. Besides, there was not a cruel streak in him. Firm, disciplining but not hostile or cruel. We finally came to the highest mountain in the area. It was a long, slow, steep climb to the top. He walked on slowly before us. John and James were trudging behind me. We were so winded and short of breath as we trudged on that we had no time for the scenery. All I could see in front of me were his feet. It crossed my mind that life is a bit like that. We are so caught up in the struggle for the next step to get to the top, that we do not even stop to examine the panoramic vista before us. Our world at times is as small as the next step. Yes, step by step, looking at our feet, thinking inside ourselves, so concentrating on where we are going and getting there, that we enjoy nothing on the way.

We were all out of breath as we began to level out on the top. HE was as well. That puzzled me. Surely, if HE were God HE would not be tired and yet HE was. I had seen HIM like that once before when we went through Samaria and stopped by the well of Sychar<sup>42</sup> and HE was so tired on that occasion that HE sat down weary on the well. If that had been me, I would have been trying so hard to impress anyone following me, that I would have suppressed my tiredness in an effort to prove that I had unlimited strength from God. I had only thought of that again at this precise moment, as I had wanted to forget the previous time because after going all the way into town to get HIM food, HE refused it when we got back<sup>43</sup>. Also while we had

been away HE had been talking to a prostitute. That angered me. We had seen her on the way into town and had kept our eyes front and not said a word to her in case HE saw and thought the worst of us. Besides that, we were concentrating on trying to be so separate from the world and its lures just for HIM. And there HE was talking to her and she rushed past us with a satisfied grin on her face. When there is something I do not understand I just shut it out. Now I remembered it all and especially HIM being tired. It was as if HE, as God, wanted to understand and feel everything that our weak bodies have to go through.

It was at this moment in my solitary thoughts, that I thought my eyes were playing tricks on me. As I watched HIS feet in front of me, they seemed to be giving some sort of light out. I became aware that James and John had stopped also. They had seen it too. We slowly followed HIS figure up the full length of HIS back. HIS entire body as well as HIS clothes were white and glistening.

We just stared and probably would have continued to do so when our eyes were diverted by movement to our side. Two figures were approaching HIM. Neither James or John or I were introduced, yet we knew without being told that it was Moses and Elijah. I could hardly believe it but it was really those two men and they were talking away to HIM as if they'd met often.

"Wow! " I thought, "wait 'til I get down from this place! Can you imagine how I'll feel asking others if they have ever seen Moses or Elijah? I mean, this is real. It is a genuine experience", I said to myself. I'll ask others if they have had my experience and it will be great telling them that if they had my kind of faith-experience, they would be as spiritual and near to God as I have been.

They were talking about HIM dying at Jerusalem and that it would be an accomplishment.<sup>44</sup> They seemed to be so thrilled with the whole idea of HIM dying at Jerusalem. 'Accomplishment' - how could death be an 'accomplishment'? Death was so feared; death was so final; it was so humiliating. Why, many a time in my own bed I have wakened up and heard my heart beating and was convinced it was beating all wrong and that I would die any minute and was so full of that kind of fear. Their conversation left us on the sidelines in our own thoughts and ignorance. If there is anything I hate, it's being in a group but left standing on the sidelines like a little schoolboy who should be seen and not heard. I decided I wanted to meet those two. I mean, what an opportunity. I decided to get in on the scene.

But how could I do it? Then I suddenly remembered that Moses built the Lord a Tabernacle, a temporary dwelling place in a tent. What a good and practical idea for the day was getting on and it would soon cool down. I would show the Lord and Moses and Elijah and of course them (James and John) that there were those of us in the new generation that were keen to serve HIM. If Moses was a worker I'd be a better one. So in I went, full steam ahead and interrupted them and said the first thing that came to my head because I didn't know what to say.<sup>45</sup>

"Lord, it is good for us to be here: if you would like it, I will build three tents, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." <sup>46</sup>

There was a tremendous silence, broken only by my own inner elated, happy voice cheering me on to another feather in my cap. Suddenly a bright cloud rolled in and

stood stationary above us.<sup>47</sup> Everyone just looked at me while we were scared stiff and then we heard it. The very voice of the Almighty God Himself addressing me.

"This is my beloved Son in who I am well pleased hear ye him." <sup>48</sup>

We collapsed with absolute fear. Funny, I had always thought that if I ever saw God or heard HIS audible voice, I would be thrilled to bits and be a better believer. That wasn't so and I fainted at HIS feet. Of course, I should have known that, for the scriptures show us that clearly. Most of our forefathers fainted when in close contact with God and even the Nation of Israel told Moses himself that they never wanted to see or hear HIM personally again; it was too terrifying.<sup>49</sup>

I don't know how long I had been out, but Jesus touched me and I was conscious again still shaking with fear and knowing I had failed again. The only consolation this time was that we were all shaking and HE simply said "Arise, and be not afraid."<sup>50</sup>

We got up and looked around and we only saw HIM.

We began coming down again and I was all shut up inside myself I had done it once more - failed. I had opened my big mouth and put my foot in it again. Me and my big ideas of telling everyone of my personal experience on the Mountain Top. HE even knew I was thinking about that for HE stopped and turned to us when we were within sight of the bottom.

"Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be raised from the dead." <sup>51</sup>

I said within myself, "don't worry." I have no intention of telling anyone of my Mountain Top experience because I was coming down the mountain as weak and powerless as I was when we went up. I walked on down and down into the reality of my emptiness. However, I knew I still loved HIM and was no longer afraid and knew that I had had a command to hear HIM and was determined that I would shut up and start listening more.

41:- Genesis 6:5. 42:- John 4: 43:- John 4:31-34. 44:- Luke 9:31. 45:- Luke 9:33. 46:- Matthew 17:4. 47:- Matthew 17:5. 48:- Matthew 17:5. 49:-Deuteronomy 5:22-28. 50:- Matthew 17:7. 51:- Matthew 17:9.

### **Dear Reader.**

Have you been busily presenting your experiences of Christ and spiritual things lately as though they were in themselves foundations for evaluating both yourself and your spiritual value as a Christian? Could it not be time in the face of the inner failure you know to be the true case, to take a little while out to be silent and hear HIM?

## Chapter Seven

### I'll try harder.

For me being silent is tough but I was determined to do it. We had no sooner got off the mountain when a man came asking Jesus to deal with his demon possessed son.<sup>52</sup> HE did it. Just like that. HE did it. No fuss, no bother. HE just did it. Me - I was all action and never did a positive thing. Imagine calling me a rock and saying I would have keys of the kingdom. In my inner silence I thought, "Huh, I will probably forget where I put them".

When he had dealt with that I walked on in my new spiritual silence. This time, one of the others spoke. Funny though, he asked the question I was dying to ask. Why, when we try to do that, can't we do it?<sup>53</sup> HIS reply was that we were in unbelief. I wanted to yell, "I believe you". We believe you. Why do you think we are following you all over the place? However, HE insisted that if we had faith we could move mountains and that nothing was impossible for us. I roared with inward laughter. Move mountains! It was killing me to control my tongue and impetuosity. I didn't want faith for a mountain-moving job. I wanted faith to control me.

I could see that the others were now as silent and embarrassed as I was but this time I was going to keep my big mouth shut. We were all powerless.

Eventually we reached Capernaum again. It was quite a journey and hard for me in my new 'keep my mouth shut' attitude, to give the impression I had changed, for on the way those two, James and John, began to argue about which among us would be his immediate right hand man in the kingdom. I had failed and here they were talking as if they would be due for promotion since I had blown my chances with my satanic behaviour.<sup>54</sup> I refused to be intimidated and had to keep that mouth shut. Jesus, who had not been walking beside us when it happened, asked us, when we were finally relaxed in the house we were lodging in, what the discussion was on, the way there. For once I was glad I was out of it. I waited to hear what they would say and would you believe it? They wouldn't open their mouths either.

It came as quite a shock to us all to discover that HE knew what the discussion was all about. For without even mentioning it, HE dealt with the issue by putting one of the children that happened to be playing around our feet in the middle of us. He then suggested that the greatest in the Kingdom would be those who would be as innocent and trusting as the child and prepared to be a servant to everyone. I thought what a funny Kingdom where you don't become the big man at the top but a servant to everyone in order to be at the top. This man's thinking at times really confused me.

I nearly caved in and opened my mouth and broke my self-promise to keep my mouth shut, so I went out for a long walk. When I came back, I was going down the street towards the house when a couple of local tax collectors stopped me,<sup>55</sup> pulled me aside and said they wanted to talk to me.

"What is it?" I asked.

"This Jesus of Nazareth, who is your boss. Does he pay his taxes?"

In a flash, knowing that I was on my own and no one else around, I thought that since he knew what we thought, here was a big chance to let Jesus see that even if HE was not around I do believe in HIM. HE would also know that I have faith in HIM and would at all costs defend HIM. Away with this silence, here was a great chance to try harder to prove that I was worthy of those keys. I looked them straight in the eye and said "yes". I knew I did not know whether HE did or didn't pay HIS taxes but I was on HIS side and would defend HIM. They turned and left. I went into the house with the intention of casually sitting down amongst them and waiting to see if HE knew what I had done and would thank me, but as I went through the door he was already making for me. I hoped the others were watching and listening for my first words of thanks and praise from him for my courage to defend him.

I never got that word of thanks. Instead he asked me a question in front of all of them. "Simon, who do Kings collect taxes from, their children or from everyone else?"

My heart sank to my boots. I felt my face redden but his question demanded an answer and I said quietly "from everyone else".<sup>56</sup>

"Then are the king's children free from paying any taxes?"

I never knew that my mind could think and talk to me so fast. I had been inwardly yelling that I believed in him and was entitled to the keys of the Kingdom he promised me, but that would mean he was a King. King of the whole earth and therefore he should not be paying anything, nor should I for that matter. I had no sooner thought that, than he went on.

"Notwithstanding, in case we upset the local government, go down to the sea and cast a hook into it and the first fish you catch, open its mouth and you will find a piece of money in there, take it and go pay the local taxes for you and me."<sup>57</sup>

That was a lonely fishing trip. I sat with that hook dangling in the water and as usual had plenty of time just sitting watching it and waiting for that fish to bite. It gave me lots of time to think. I had tried so hard again and once again, true to form, I had failed. I felt like forgetting the fish and throwing myself in the sea and never coming up again, when I suddenly felt a tug at the line. I laughed. Even a fish on a line was enough of a gift from God to make me change my mind and stay alive to catch that fish. I landed it and quickly opened its mouth and sure enough it was there, stuck across its throat. I remembered he once said that before we ever ask for anything, God has already answered.<sup>58</sup> I wondered when and how that fish had swallowed a piece of money someone had dropped in the water and it had darted at the shimmering silver descending in the sea. God seemed to have more control over other men and fish than me. I was deeply depressed. Would there be no end to my failure? I resolved to kick the depression in the only way I knew. I would keep trying harder and harder.

52:- Matthew 17:14-18. 53:- Matthew 17:19. 54:- Mark 9:34. 55:-Matthew 17:24. 56:- Matthew 17:25. 57:- Matthew 17:27. 58:- Matthew 6:8.

### **Dear Reader.**

Have you been trying hard to be a better Christian for Him recently?

## Chapter Eight

### He's not fair.

With my recent failure still eating away inside me which I was determined not to let the others know about, life went on. We traveled all over the place and the crowds got bigger and bigger. In fact we used to try to count the heads but now we gave up. There were multitudes. The ordinary poor folk listened to HIM gladly, but there were always the self-righteous, religious groups coming around and trying to pick holes in HIM. It was masterful to watch and listen to HIM. HE was so unlike us for HE never argued. HE seemed always to counteract a question with a question and the question was always one that shut them up.

Shortly after my last debacle we were with HIM on a hillside and HE was teaching a vast crowd, and the Pharisees came up in a group. I always disliked them. Their standard of religious behaviour was tremendous and they did actually commit themselves to evangelism and going round the world if necessary to turn pagan Gentiles to believing in the God of Israel. In fact, within a few days I was to hear HIM saying to a great crowd that every sermon the Pharisees ever preached, the people should hear it and go and do it as there wasn't one word wrong with their theology or preaching.<sup>59</sup>I really hated them because I had once thought of trying to be as holy as they were because I was fed up with my own sinfulness, but it only lasted until lunchtime on that occasion, so I quit and did not try again in the afternoon. They had more laws than God ever gave to Moses. Where they got them from I don't know, but it almost made it impossible to become one of them.

On this occasion Christ showed them that they were under the impression that they were entitled to the Kingdom of God because of who they were in their self righteous holy condition. HE squashed that idea flat.<sup>60</sup> HE had made it plain that they would only get in on the basis of who HE was. They had tried to trap HIM with a question about divorce and HE responded by exposing their ignorance and making it plain that once married always married. HE left a deep impression that once a man married, if he found out two weeks later he had got a 'pig in a poke' that man had to settle down to enjoy pork the rest of his life. "Wow!" the marrieds began to scream, "you're unfair!"

I felt for the singles that were standing there who were furious at the marrieds for thinking like that, for they had one prayer on their list daily and that was that they should get married. In some cases of the men standing there, they were eunuchs. Sterile men who in some cases had been emasculated and would never get married and have kids. They were inwardly screaming "unfair" as they heard the married ones wanting out of marriage. I thought, life is so much like that, very unfair. Marrieds want unmarried, singles want married. Why the very next thing HE did was play with children - the offspring of marriage. Now both the marrieds who produced them and the singles that wanted them were trying to get them to go away and let them have Jesus to themselves and HE told the adults to let him have time with them. Now all the adults were inwardly screaming "you are unfair!"

Almost right after HE got rid of the Pharisees, and inwardly I was cheering HIM as they slunk off like dogs with their tails between their legs, when up came a local young Businessman. Everyone seemed to know him<sup>61</sup> I could hardly believe what he

did, right out there in the open in front of all the neighbours that knew almost everything about him. He knelt in front of Jesus. Me, I might have done it in private but not in public, but there again, I was angry because I had never done it in private or public. I was jealous. Jealous in more ways than one because I hated him, as he was younger than I was and even under Roman rule he had been an honest businessman and had made a fortune whereas the rest of us couldn't, even if we tried dishonestly. He stopped the crowd and a hush descended. He spoke...

"Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"<sup>62</sup>

I thought "what more do you want mate? Surely with your clothes and wealth and humility that has us all beaten, you should get a free entry card!" And there he was kneeling on the ground giving an impression that life had been unfair to him and that God was still keeping something back from him.

I would have enjoyed his unfair condition at the drop of a hat. What was unfair in his life? "Typical", I thought. "He has everything the rest of us wants and thinks he has nothing. I could do with his money for a day!"

Jesus rounded on him and said " Why do you call me good? There is none good but one, and that is God:"<sup>63</sup>

In effect, HE was asking this man if he thought that Jesus was God.  
HE went on.

" You want something to do to get eternal life, then I suggest that you simply keep the commandments of God."<sup>64</sup>

He replied "Which?"

Jesus answered by reciting a number of the Ten Commandments<sup>65</sup> and in front of us all he said

"Master, all these have I kept from my youth up."

The funny thing was, we all knew him and knew that he had. It was irritating. However, I had noticed that Jesus had omitted some of the commandments. Namely, the very first one 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and all thy strength' and also the one about 'Thou shalt not covet!' I had wondered if his face would have gone red if HE had mentioned those to him. I was just about to shout to the Lord about those that HE had not mentioned (as I was already hoping HE would bring him down a peg and if I got him exposed I would feel one up on him at last), when Jesus spoke again and said...

" If you will be perfect, go and sell all that you have and give the money away to the poor and you will have eternal life."<sup>66</sup>

That did it! HE had found his flaw and the young man turned and left in tears. The sad walk away said it all. He thought Jesus unfair. Yes, I thought; you thought you would get in because of what you had achieved but you were wrong. You get in because of what Jesus will achieve. Then a new thought crossed my mind. Hey, wait a

minute! You have been looking for a chance to try harder. Did you see what this man's weakness was? He was covetous. Go on, here is your chance. Watch yourself. Be humble about it. So I turned round and said to Jesus...

"Lord we have already given up everything to follow you. We didn't walk away in tears when you called us. I gave up my fishing boat and nets and business for you and the others have given up things too." <sup>67</sup>

What could HE say to that? We had indeed done what the rich young ruler had not done.

Jesus looked at me and there was love in HIS eyes and I thought, "At last you have done it. HE is about to say 'ten out of ten, go to the top of the class.'" I was not ready for what he did say.

"Truly you which have followed ME, in the regeneration when the son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. and every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive much more now as well as eternal life afterwards. But many that are first shall be last and the last shall be first."<sup>68</sup>

That was tough to take. Yes, I would get a heavenly reward, but even now before I die he would make up to me for anything I considered a sacrifice for HIM, as being the King of Kings HE really did not need anything from me. I too had thought that I would get in on the basis of my sacrifice for HIM. I was no better than the Pharisees or the rich young Ruler. I had failed too. I was soon to find out the immensity of the sacrificing that Jesus would make for all of us especially me who once again had tried harder and failed. I would have to learn that it would be on the basis of whom He was, what He had done and especially what He had sacrificed. I walked away equally sad, at that moment knowing I had opened my mouth again and the response I got only made me join the new chorus that I had written that day - "God you are unfair - I've failed again."

59:- Matthew 23:1. 60:- Luke 18:9-14. 61:- Matthew 19:16-24. 62:- Matthew 19:16. 63:- Matthew 19:17. 64:- Matthew 19:17. 65:- Matthew 19:18-19. 66:- Matthew 19:21. 67:- Matthew 19:27. 68:- Matthew 17:29.

### **Dear Reader**

Have you had thoughts for some time that the Lord has been unfair as far as your own personal life is concerned?

## Chapter Nine

### The last straw.

Things happened fast after that almost as if HE was in a hurry to go somewhere. It all came to a head one night when HE ordered us to meet HIM at a certain house with an upper room where HE would have a meal with us. There we were, all relaxed with HIM and having a good meal. John was lying with his head on Jesus' chest.<sup>69</sup> HE was never afraid to receive everyone's affection whether it was Mary Magdalene, children or any one of us men. There was laughter and a closeness that was a great feeling and I had hoped it would go on forever and ever. That is the thing with feeling things - you want to keep on keeping on having the feelings. I don't know if HE knew that but HE shattered the whole dream when HE suddenly said almost casually "One of you shall betray me".<sup>70</sup>

The silence was deafening. We were all suddenly lost within ourselves, buried with sorrow. Nothing was said. It was almost as if we had never heard what HE said and slowly at first, but then increasingly almost like a defense mechanism conversation began to pick up again. John's eyes were shut so I leaned over and almost in a whisper, because I was so sure by then it would be me, (after all I had messed everything up so far), I said to HIM

"Lord is it I?"

HE looked at me and said nothing. John heard me and he opened his eyes and looked up at him and said exactly the same.

"Is it I?"

HE replied "HE that dippeth his hand with me in the dish is the one who will betray ME."

I looked down at my hand and looked at my fingers on my eating hand and I could see they had food stains on them. I had had my hand in the dish with HIM, but then I saw James and John looking at their hands and they were as sticky as mine were. In fact we had all had our hands in the dish. Just then, Judas lent forward and without as much as a glance at his hand, stuck it into the dish, taking some food in it and as it went into his mouth (and he chewed enough to be able to speak) he said out of the side of his mouth

"Is it I?"

I wasn't too sure what Jesus had said, but Judas got up and went out. That wasn't unusual for him for he often left during a meal to go and buy more to eat, as we had appointed him our Treasurer. He was about the only one we could trust and he had the money. When he had gone, Jesus took a piece of bread and broke it up and gave us each a piece and said...

" Take, eat; this is my body."<sup>71</sup> HE then took up the cup of wine and passed that around and said...

"Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom."<sup>72</sup>

HE asked us to sing a hymn with HIM. We never felt less like singing at that moment for we were all still thinking inside ourselves that we could be the one to betray HIM. It was hard singing outwardly while living an entirely different thing on the inside. When we finished, we all left and headed for the Mount of Olives. As we walked along, I talked mostly to myself, determining again in my sincerity that I would see to it that it wasn't me that would betray HIM. HE did it again. Just as I was thinking the best for myself to impress HIM, HE always seemed to know what I was thinking, for he suddenly broke the silence by saying...

" Did I tell you, my friends, that to-night you are all going to be offended by ME. There is an old prophecy about me that you will find in the book of Zechariah that ' I will smite the shepherd and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered everywhere'.<sup>73</sup> But try not to be too upset by that for after I am risen again, I will meet you in Galilee." That was the last straw as far as I was concerned. I may have messed things up during the few years I had known HIM, but at least I had tried my best. I quickly reviewed all I had done for HIM. I had forsaken everything to follow HIM. I had tried to do the impossible to please HIM; I had declared that I was prepared to learn all I could from HIM; I had spoken my mind and testified from my heart that I believed HE was the Messiah; I had done my best to let HIM see I would be HIS hardest and best worker, and I had defended HIM. Now, here HE was making a broad statement and HE had lumped me with that motley crew who was walking along with us.

Yes, someone would betray HIM, but it wouldn't be me. I stopped and spun round on HIM for as usual I was striding out in front on the walk to be by myself and with my thoughts and said...

"Though everyone else here gets offended by you, yet will I never be offended"<sup>74</sup>

HE just stood there and looked at me with those ever searching eyes, yet full of love and said calmly...

" To night before a cockerel can crow you will deny me three times".<sup>75</sup>

I was shattered. HE was telling me in front of everyone that HE had more control over the throat of a cockerel than he had over me.

"Never" I cried, " Though I die with you I will never deny you." <sup>76</sup>

HE said "Peter, Peter Satan wants you and will put tremendous pressures upon you but I have prayed for you that in spite of all you will go through that your faith will not fail and that you will be a means of strengthening to every one else."<sup>77</sup>

I almost never heard any of that and felt it unnecessary, as I was more than determined that I would defend HIM and die with HIM. How wrong I was. Within hours I had shown a bit of bravado by cutting a man's ear off in an attempt to defend HIM. Huh! When I think of it I even bungled that for I had intended cutting his head off and missed and Jesus humiliated me by healing the man's ear, then told me to stop

defending HIM and allowed them to arrest him. I left in absolute anger. HE was taken to the High Priest's palace and put on trial. If that were HIS attitude, I would keep well clear of him. If HE did not want my help, HE could do without it. John managed to get me into the courtyard of the palace so that I could find out what was happening. I knew in my heart I was still following HIM but afar off. <sup>78</sup>

Someone suggested that I was one of HIS team and I said I wasn't. It happened a few moments later and I denied it again. Then this little girl said she saw me with HIM and that I was one of HIS men. So I cursed and swore as only a Galilean fisherman could do. At that precise moment Jesus came out with the guards who were taking HIM to the Governor's Palace and HE turned and looked at me,<sup>79</sup> for at the same time as the sun came up over the hills I suddenly heard a cockerel crow. My heart broke and I went out and wept bitterly (Luke 22:62.). I was finished. Finished with HIM (HE'd never want me now) and finished with myself. I had betrayed HIM three times; I had even beaten Judas's record. He only did it once. I died inside. I was a perfect failure; I was perfect for quitting.

69:- John 13:23. 70:- Matthew 26:21. 71:- Matthew 26:26.72:- Matthew 26:28-29.73:- Zechariah 13:7. 74:- Matthew 26: 33. 75:- Matthew 26:34. 76:- Matthew 26:35. 77:- Luke 22:31-32. 78:- Matthew 26:58. 79:- Luke 22:61-62.

**Dear Reader**

Are you dead inside yet?

Are you perfect for quitting?

# He Died.

# HE ROSE AGAIN.

## Chapter Ten

### I start again. (John 21:1-17.)

James and John were delighted. In fact they all were, even Thomas who in the face of all his doubts was at last convinced. HE was alive again. Yes, alive again and I had seen HIM twice with the others. I had to, HE had told the women that first saw HIM to make sure I knew. <sup>80</sup>

I was still broken hearted and I believe - spirited also. For as happy as I was that HE was alive again, it was strange that I found I could be convinced HE was alive again for ever and happy for it and yet in my own feelings, completely drowned. I still felt that James and John would move ahead and into some sort of special place in His Kingdom. Me - I had relegated myself to failure and uselessness. I had gone home again to my village. One evening I wandered down to see the lads all getting ready to fish. To fish - it brought back that great statement HE once made to me at the edge of this very same spot at the sea of Galilee that HE would make me a fisher of men. You would think HE would have foreseen my triple betrayal and not made such a hopeful statement to me. I decided in watching them that I might as well pick up what was left of my broken dreams and at least go and earn a living again. I turned to my brother and said...

"I am going fishing." <sup>81</sup>

To my amazement the lads that were usually in my team as well as some of the disciples that were around suddenly said that they would go with me. I wanted to yell at them to get as far away from me as possible. How could they follow me still as though I were a leader, or even trust me? Here again I was failing. I was still leading, but leading them away from Him. Would I ever get this capacity to lead off my back? I said nothing and we set sail and worked hard all night and caught not a single thing. Ridiculous, I thought. HE sent me to fish and I caught one with silver in its mouth, and doing it at the best time too, as a fisherman for getting a catch we caught nothing. We returned to the shore despondent. As the boat neared the shore and we were all lost in our tiredness and thoughts and disappointment, we noticed a solitary figure standing on the beach. As we drew nearer HE asked us if we had anything for eating. We all chorused "no".

HE then yelled back to throw our nets over just where we were and we would get a catch. Where had I heard that before <sup>82</sup>, something in my memory was trying to tug me back into life from my depression?

Whatever it was I seemed to know that I should obey without question and I ordered the lads to throw the nets out again and we could hardly believe it. Everything was wrong; wrong time, wrong depth of water, it should never have happened. We were the fishing experts and that knowledge all went to the wind as our nets about burst with fish. We all stared at the fish and then instinctively we turned to look at the man on the shore and all at once in all of us the light went on and John shouted, "it's the Lord." I grabbed my fisherman's tunic and wrapped it around me because I always preferred to work nearest the edge of the boat while hauling in and always did it

naked rather than perpetually standing in wet clothes.<sup>83</sup> Some of us waded up the beach while others rowed in nearer and we dragged the net and fish onto the beach.

When we finally got our breath we discovered HE had already lit a fire and had already caught fish HIMSELF and was cooking them and had bread. We were not surprised, as HE had already in HIS humanity multiplied fish and bread with plenty left over. HE asked us to join HIM and we ate heartily although I tended to sit on the fringe of things. When we finished HE slowly turned round and looked at me. I thought, "here it comes", and the moment I dreaded. It is amazing what we do with our imaginations and our internal thinking according to our own guilty feelings that HE never creates. I decided already that HE would say something like- "and as for you- you can leave; you let ME down and I have nothing for you." I never expected at all what HE said.

"Simon, son of Jonah" <sup>84</sup>

What a slam; HE wasn't calling me Peter any more. HE was using my own name - Simon - which was a Hebrew word that meant 'hearer'. I deserved that; I had been all ears but in a time of testing had withered away. I had withered away. A light went on in my mind. HE had spoken of hearers on one occasion when telling a parable about a Sower sowing seed. One type of useless soil HE described was rocky soil. It was all hearing and receiving 'gladly' which was all emotion, but whenever it came to reality it withered away<sup>85</sup>.

Seed sown on a rock and the Greek word for rock was 'Petra' - Peter. How proud I had been and had not really heard what HE was saying when he named me Peter - the rock. I thought He meant 'strong, tough, durable and dependable' whereas now I knew HE meant that I was like that 'rocky soil' - all hearing, receiving gladly, emotionally, but when it came to reality - a flop. Now I knew I was finished. I swallowed hard and hoped HE would get the condemnation over with quickly and let me get out of there and back to fishing. I thought all that in a flash and heard HIM continue...

" Do you love me? "

What could I do? I didn't want to look into those eyes again with their searching, but when I looked over HIS shoulder, the sea was staring at me, almost laughing at me. That Sea was an evidence of three years of impetuously serving HIM and loving HIM with all I had and that ended in failure. I turned away choked to look in another direction, and there were the bread and fish also laughing at me, for even they whispered 'remember us? - Your answer to the starving was to get rid of them, and HIS answer was to multiply us and feed them'. All at once wherever I looked to avoid HIS eyes and muster up what I needed in voice to answer the risen Lord, I was faced with evidences of three years of failure: sea, boats, fish, bread, nets, disciples - HIM. I shut my eyes but even then I was trapped. As I breathed in to take the necessary air to reply the smoke from the fire went up my nose and reminded me that a short while before I had warmed just such a fire and cursed and swore and denied HIM. I could not get away from facing my failure. So I said what I said, full of fear, full of failure and yet knowing with all my heart I had loved HIM all these years every step of the way.

"Yes, Lord; you know that I love you".

He knew. HE knew everything. So as HE knew I was a hearer and not a doer, HE also knew that I did love HIM. Then came the surprise when HE said....

"Feed my lambs" .

I stood and stared, speechless, and the others stared at me too and were equally speechless. HE spoke again....

"Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?"

What could I say that would be different from what I had already said? There was nothing. I had to be honest so I said it again....

"Yes, Lord; you know that I love you."

"Feed my sheep."

Before I could even think about what he was trying to say HE spoke again....

"Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?"

I was in the deepest possible grief that I had ever experienced in my heart. Yes, I was grieved, not HIM. I was grieved because HE was asking me in front of all the others. Me, the complete failure in the whole group. What did HE want me to say? What kind of answer was HE looking for? It seemed so important that I give HIM the answer HE was wanting so that HE would either accept me or reject me but let me get out of there. I would have said anything to have peace at any price. I was frustrated with HIM; frustrated with myself; frustrated because they were watching and listening. With a bursting heart I knew I could say no more than I had already said because for once it was about the only true thing left in me. So I said it again...

"Lord, you know everything, you know that I love you."

"Feed my Sheep"

Suddenly I understood though I dared not believe it, HE was commanding me to become a pastor.

HE had kept his promise that when Satan sifted me like wheat HE would pray for me that my faith fail not and that I would turn again and become a means of strengthening the brethren. What could I do but submit and take up the reigns of leadership? I knew for the first time in my life what it meant for me to be an 'Elect Failure'.

Silence filled the room. Hours had passed as Peter had quietly and graciously revealed his heart to me, Silvanus, who had considered him be anything other than what he was, in a way that he had not shared it with another. We sat staring at each other. My pen was still in my hand, long since dry and not a word written in the letter we were to write.

"Forgive me Peter for ever questioning any thing you say, especially about 'Election', for now I know you are entitled to talk about being elected. What did you want to say in this letter?"

80:- Mark 16:7. 81:- John 21:3. 82:- Luke 5:4. 83:-John 21:7. 84:- John 21:15. 85:- Mark4:16-17.

### **Dear Reader**

How do you regard your Leadership?

Have you ever sought to get to know them in heart?

How do you present yourself to others?

Are you a hiding Failure?

Could you start again?

## Chapter Eleven

### Learning to Love.

"So let's continue..."

*Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied. (1 Peter 1:2.)-*

Oh! I'm not very good at this stuff Sylvanus"

"Well what is it you are trying to tell them?"

"About how to learn to love one another."

"Don't you think they already know that, as Christians?"

"They may think they know that my friend, but I am talking about a special love. A love even I had to learn, for when I started again it was the first issue I had to face, those three years of hating James and John and evaluating myself along side them and others."

"Is there a special love for that Peter"

"I didn't used to think so, but now I know better. I never understood it the very first time HE mentioned it. HE was telling us one day that HE had a new commandment for us. I groaned within myself, for I had always had enough trouble trying to live up to the original ten that I felt the last thing I wanted was an eleventh one. However, it was no glib slip of the tongue, for HE mentioned it to us more than once."

"What was it", said Sylvanus.

"That you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another."<sup>86</sup>

I almost laughed when HE said it because I had always thought that the proof that I was one of HIS would be by being very 'spiritual', or being able to be 'very holy', or 'preaching', or 'serving', or maybe belonging to a particular 'believing group of people'. HE made it sound so simple, 'by loving others, as HE loved us'. It was only after I had failed and started again that I knew how HE had loved me. HE had loved me as a failure, a denier, and it meant that I would have to love every failure and denier that I came across starting with those that I had been jealous and bitter against, in my pride, such as...."

He paused, as his throat closed through his feelings at that very moment and Sylvanus finished the comment for him.

"Such as James and John," he said.

"Yes." he said swallowing down a sob and holding back tears as only a man can do, making things worse for himself within his heart.

"Was it difficult to do that Peter?"

He took a moment to regain his composure and said

"No Sylvanus it was not difficult, it was down right impossible. That is the trouble with great commandments from Him, they are never easy, but impossible."

"How did you achieve it then?".

"Typical of me, I did nothing, hoping that that issue would go away, but it never did. Why, even one day I overheard James, the Lord's brother saying that this kind of attitude of loving others as you love yourself was a Royal Law (James 2:8.), one that if achieved put a sense of being an 'aristocrat' or a 'prince' to your lifestyle. I didn't like that either. Oh how I fought this. Why even my beloved brother Paul (2 Peter 15.)."

At the very mention of Paul, Sylvanus (stopped with a start) and looked up and said with a gasp of incredulity -

"Your 'beloved brother Paul'? Why I thought you two had a set-to at Antioch,<sup>87</sup> and that you were seen and heard nose to nose and eyeball to eyeball in Christian company. You were arguing and even being put down as the leader, appointed by Christ, of His Church by that man, and now your calling him 'beloved'. I doubt if I would have been able to call him that."

"If you would let me finish, you might learn how to achieve that marvelous miracle of loving, without pretending to do so, the unloveliest of your enemies. He said in his preaching (Romans 13:10.) that we Christians should owe no man anything, but that there was just one item we were allowed to be in debt about, and that was to love our neighbours as ourselves. That kind of love is an evidence that you are keeping the first ten, that I had long given up trying to keep."

"If this idea is right, Peter, then I have a long way to go and better get started trying to love those I don't like."

"Why?"

"Because I would think that if I achieved loving others like that I would feel I had reached the height of spiritual maturity and that would make me feel more holy. That feeling would surely go a long way to convincing and reassuring myself that I am a truly 'born again' and 'saved' Believer."

"Sylvanus, you are going about it the wrong way round. You do not have to achieve loving others to feel holy enough to be sure you are a real Christian. It is because your salvation is so guaranteed and secure, that we can take time to allow the Lord to love us and change our own imperfections. We will, in seeing how long it takes HIM to adjust our warped sinful behaviour, know how much patience we will have to exercise in letting Him have as much time with others that we consider in our opinion to be very sinful in comparison to ourselves. So, let's write this down in that order.

We will tell them how secure they are in being saved, then how to proceed in changing themselves, and lastly how to wait for others to go through the same process and so love them meanwhile while HE is changing them. That is why, my son, I started by calling them the Elect of God. HE knows who they are and what HE is getting, that is why His Spirit sanctified them, which simply means, 'paid attention to them, prior to their conversion'.

HE was communicating the light of the Gospel to them to bring them gently along a path to where they would be faced with the claims of Christ upon their lives through the shedding and sprinkling of His blood, by HIS sacrifice for them on the Cross. All they had to do was obey that light and news, and the moment they obeyed they became children of God"

"What shall I put down then?"

"Why, nothing less than the great assurance of the quality of the gift of 'salvation' He has given them. Put down...

***"Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance'...(1 Peter 1:3-4.)"***

"An inheritance! that's something a person gets when someone has died Peter"

"Quite right my son, and He not only died, but rose again from the dead, and in the treasure room of heaven there is a package, with your name on it, specifically for you. God is so sure that he is going to get you there<sup>88</sup>, that He has called it your inheritance. It's safe; in fact, you can put down in my letter three things about that inheritance. It is...

***Incorruptible, and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, (1 Peter 1:4.)"***

"For me? But how can I be sure, Peter, that I will finally get there and collect it?"

"Because of HIS promises, and HE cannot be faithless to HIMSELF.<sup>89</sup> HE will keep you by HIS power, as HE has already kept me through all my failings and weaknesses. Put that down too...

***Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time? (1 Peter 1:5.)"***

And I understand, Sylvanus your preoccupation in the present tense of your life with your failings and weaknesses, and even your sins. Sins that you still commit because of the intrinsic weakness of our humanity. However, if you will grab the truth of your great inheritance in Christ in heaven, you will be full of joy and that will help you to bear all that you must go through now while you serve Him. Sylvanus you are saved. Add this fact to my letter, so that those reading it, that think like you do, will be encouraged to keep on keeping on, in spite of failings in their everyday life...

***Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more***

*precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls....(1 Peter 1:6-9.)*

And remember not the salvation of your spirit. Your spirit life is saved by the presence of Christ within you by the Holy Spirit who is sealed within you until you get to heaven<sup>90</sup> and your spirit and soul are not the same.<sup>91</sup> The soul comprises of your mind that thinks your emotions that feel and your will that obeys.<sup>92</sup>

"You mentioned rejoicing and being happy in our feelings even though we have not seen Him"

"So, why do you question that?"

"Because I have heard of some who say they have seen the Lord in vision form while they pray or are, even sitting somewhere, and that that experience gave them something special. Every time I come across them they are always talking so happily about that experience."

"Sylvanus, Sylvanus, the inner joy I am talking about is one you cannot even talk about, it is unspeakable, yet full of joy. Remember also to beware of the things visible and tangible in this life, for they are related to our senses, time and material. Such things are not eternal or everlasting, but for the moment. Never evaluate a person's faith on the basis of what they have seen with their eyes, or heard with their ears, voices and the such like, or even what they are able to utter with their throats. If people do have such experiences, they are not Christ, plus something super, in fact they are Christ, plus something less."

"Explain that to me."

"Well, we live by faith not by sight <sup>93</sup> to have something of an experience visible or tangible or audible, is for God to cross over the realm of faith and trust, to give someone something earthly, sensual and tangible. Now that is directly connected with their senses and the here and now. It has nothing to do with faith and trust. That system has one major drawback, whenever you are down, ill, toothache, pain, suffering, depression, persecution, pressure, you will not at such a time feel joyful. However, those of us who face the everyday trials of life that do come to us all, because we do trust HIM, even though we do not see or feel anything at such a time, except our pain, have a hope, encouraged by our faith, in the invisible eternal powers to see us safely through life. After that, into that room to pick up our inheritance parcel.<sup>94</sup>"

"That almost makes my salvation something very special."

"Yes, it is, and throughout the Old Testament time, the Prophets who received the Word to write down, to give us the scriptures, couldn't figure out what it was they were even writing about. They heard, wrote, and were mystified, for this was the biggest secret that God was keeping quiet about until the Lord Jesus finished HIS

work on the Cross and rose again to live in us by HIS invisible and intangible presence. Let's tell them that also...

***Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.... (1 Peter 1:10-11.) "***

"Wait a minute, hold it, what do you mean by saying that the Old Testament Prophets spoke and wrote through the Spirit of Christ which was in them? I always thought that the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost and that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the fullness of the Holy Spirit started then."

"You have not been reading your Bible very carefully, Sylvanus. Why, the very first mention of the Holy Spirit is in Genesis chapter one and verse two when the Spirit of God moved upon the waters. Throughout the Old Testament everything connected with God doing his work through men was by the Spirit of God in them and through them. Look at Exodus chapter thirty-one and verses one to three and you will even read that Bezaleel, who constructed the building of the Tabernacle, their mobile Temple in a tent, did all that because he was 'filled with the Spirit of God'. Read the entire Old Testament, Sylvanus, and every time you come across a man God is using in any way you will find the Spirit there. It might say he was clothed by the Spirit, or that the Spirit came upon him, or he did things by the Spirit which was in him enabled him to do. The presence and filling is not the exclusive right of New Testament Christians. Sylvanus, the difference between then and now is that then He was a temporary visitor to their lives, but now we have Him sealed within us and the New Testament word is *permanence*, so continue writing...

***Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven; which things the angels desire to look into... (1 Peter 1:12.)"***

"Angels? I thought they knew everything!"

"No they don't. If you think that, you are making them equal to God, and the next thing you will be thinking is that even Satan, who is a fallen prince amongst angels, knows everything, is everywhere and all powerful. Whereas, the truth is that even he is very limited. Yes, granted, he knows more than we do but not everything. He can travel fast, but is not everywhere at once, and above all is not all-powerful. It is our Lord that is all-powerful, all knowing and everywhere by His Holy Spirit. It is a mistake Christians so often make of reversing the roles, and they attribute to Satan the attributes of Christ, and then accuse Christ of being as limited as an angel.

Get it right, Sylvanus. Even the angels could not understand what this great Mystery was that God hid from all previous ages that we should be saved and indwelt by the Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit within our hearts.<sup>95</sup>

***Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 1:13.)***

Did you get that down."

"Yes. Now I have a question?" said Sylvanus.

"What is it?"

"If we are so sure we are saved, how does that assurance help us to love others as we love ourselves?"

"Well if instead of trying to be sure you are saved, you will rest in that hope and knowledge, that will free much of your mind's time to concentrate on your own development and personal holiness, and in doing that you will give others time also.

You see, Sylvanus, whenever someone becomes a truly born again Christian, they get a new name in heaven. You are called from then on in an 'Obedient Child'. You obeyed to be saved, so now you obey to become holy. Now, this holiness is not a general holiness, it is individual and personal. Sin manifests itself in each person's life a different way. Some are alcoholics, whereas alcohol never bothers many others, yet they have their weakness in that they are immoral or over eat. It is interesting that these weaknesses are, in God's eyes, sin. None worse than the other, yet so often an overeating person can never see that for being too busy condemning the immoral person. No, once you are born again and see what your list of weaknesses are, you relax in your salvation and then co-operate with the Holy Spirit. Never forget that HE is not just a Spirit, HE is the Spirit that is very Holy, and HE will aid you, by HIS presence, to get into HIS school of adjusting you, in a process of time, from image, to image into the likeness of Christ.<sup>96</sup> I want that in the letter also, say...

***As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of behaviour, because it is written, be ye holy for I am holy....(1 Peter 1:14-16.)***

For loved one, if we claim to be full of the Holy Spirit and under the Holy Spirit's control, it is logical that a Holy Spirit in control will manifest a Holy behaviour equal to that control. All it takes is to yield obedience to HIM. Never forget also the great price he has paid to bring us this new internal possibility, to become different, and I do not want the readers to forget this either....

***And if you call on the Father, who without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain behaviour received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish or spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. Seeing you have purified your minds, souls (wills and emotions) in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently. ( 1 Peter 1:17-22.)"***

"What do you mean by unfeigned and fervently?"

"Quite simple, 'unfeigned' means no play acting, role playing or pretence; saying one thing with your mouth while thinking another in your heart, and 'fervently' could be better expressed, for your sake, Sylvanus, by the phrase "love everyone else as though it was a disease, or fever, you were inflicted with and could not get rid of". Loving other people. Being as patient with the Lord to change them as you are asking the Lord to be patient with you for you to change. Remember that is possible for...

***Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. (1 Peter 1:23.)***

For life is too short not to love others. We often forget that. We are nothing compared with eternity as long as we are in this human body of ours, but time is our best friend, for we will not be living in it forever....

***For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. (1 Peter 1:24-25.)*** "

All that could be heard was the scritch, scritch of the stylus that Sylvanus was using upon his parchment, the thought expressed and written hanging in their hearts. This was disturbed by a slight breeze of wind that came through the window on what had been, until then, a windless, dry and tyrannously hot day. As it caught a vase of flowers that had been placed there earlier in the day, the petals began to cascade on to the floor around Peter's feet. They both looked down viewed them in silence, knowing that they had gotten the message. They both laughed, and they knew that it was their love for one another, though very different men, that was laughing, almost as if realising that time was rushing past and that they had better enjoy each other like they never did before - before, for both of them, time and material would be no more, they would drop as petals one day.

"Let's take a break Sylvanus after all we are only human!"

86:- John 13:34-35 & John 15:12. 87:- Galatians 2:11-18. 88:- Philippians 1:6, Jude24 & 1 Thessalonians 5:24. 89:- 2 Timothy 2:13. 90:- Ephesians 1:13-14. 91:-1 Thessalonians 5:23. 92:-Exodus 35:5,10,21., Mark 2:8, John 14:1 & Romans 6:17. 93:- 2 Corinthians 5:7. 94:- 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. 95:- Colossians 1:26-27. 96:- 2 Corinthians 3:17-18.

## **DEAR READER.**

Have you begun to love and enjoy others as you do yourself?

## Chapter Twelve

### Learning to grow.

When Peter re-entered the room, he stopped and stared at Sylvanus. Sylvanus never even turned his head. He was obviously miles away in his thoughts and even Peter almost jumped to the conclusion that the man had never moved since they stopped their previous discourse an hour or so ago.

"A denarius for your thoughts", Peter said.

Sylvanus gave a sudden turn and rather sheepishly admitted that he had not heard Peter enter the room, as he had been so very far away in his thoughts, and his present thought, humorous too, was that Peter had certainly changed down the years for in the beginning everyone would have heard him crash any door he went through open and clump into the room. The man's gentleness was in itself a proof of his own changing experience.

"Oh I was lost in what you had been saying. The every idea that it takes time to develop personal holiness and that it is not a thing of a moment, or a very spiritually high and charged emotion that settles growth."

"Growth is indeed the word," said Peter. It is the next thing I want to tell the family of God about in that letter we are writing. Shall we begin again?

***"Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all two facedness and play acting, and jealousies and all evil speakings, as new born babies, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby"*** (1 Peter 2:1-2.)

Yes, 'wherefore', it is the natural follow-up to the discovery, Sylvanus, that holiness is equal to specific personal growth and we should use the inner power of our Lord, who is in our hearts, to be practical and learn the art of laying aside all the inside mess"

"Yes, I noticed you stated that, Peter. I would have thought that growth was getting the outside right, but you have started on the matters of the inside, where the heart is."

"And so we should", replied Peter. "Men, and particularly religiously inclined men, who do believe in God have too often concentrated in their assemblies on creating an outward behaviourism for behaviours sake, instead of concentrating on that inward relationship to the Lord Jesus that might result in a change in outward behaviour. When you find a man constantly drunk, Sylvanus, never attack his drinking, that is what is noticed on the outside. If you attack that you will dry him out and get him to speak without a slur and even walk straight but learn that he will go straight back to the bottle when you are not around, for you never dealt with the inner mess that is evidenced by the outward symptom of being drunk. Jesus said it is not what goes in at the mouth that defiles a man<sup>97</sup>, but that which comes out, and if it has never been done by a man, it simply means he has not done it - yet but the capability is there."

"So I have been wrong when I have been telling the new in faith that they *must* stop doing this and *must* stop doing the other to be good Christians?"

"Of course you have been wrong. If a man has to stop being evil to be good enough to get to know God, he will never get to know God because he cannot stop doing evil things. The truth is you get to know God through Christ in order to stop. That is an inside job; and one other thing my son, there is no such thing as a good Christian. There is only one that is good and that is God. It is when His presence takes over inside us that his goodness is demonstrated through us. That only comes by the practice of yielding and growth."

"Why have I missed this word 'grows' Peter?"

"Because, my son, we are beginning to move into the spirit of the age when we want everything done in an instant. Read your Bible. Moses grew; in fact the word says in Exodus 1:10 'the child grew' and in the next verse, that when 'Moses was grown' he began to concern himself with God's work for him. By that time he was forty, not eighteen! In Judges 13:24 we read that Samson grew and the Lord blessed him and the Spirit began to move him. By that time he was thinking of marriage. Note also that the Spirit never began to move him until he was grown and blessed.

We always get it wrong, Sylvanus, we think in terms of being moved by the Spirit of God to be blessed enough to grow. We are truly upside down in our thinking. Even in 1 Samuel 2:21 we read that Samuel grew before the Lord. There is a big difference between growing before men and growing before the Lord. Men's standards are adjustable depending on who is the present theological leader, but the Lord does not have for us an adjustable standard, but an absolute holiness that changes not. In the same chapter in 1 Samuel 2:26 we are told that Samuel 'grew on' - a process - and was in favour both with men as well as God. Again, in chapter 3:19 it states 'and Samuel grew and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground'. "

Sylvanus gave out a heartborn groan and uttered, almost in tears - "And what do we have today Peter? Christians roaring to each other about possessing the Holy Spirit and gifts and their words never fall to the ground either because they never utter any word to see if they will fall to the ground. Witnessing is scarce, and witnesses are few, and where there is no vision the people perish. Sorry for that out burst Peter, but the indifference of so many abounds while men die in their sin".

"All the more reason my son, that we get them to grow up. Why, even in my lifetime we know that John the Baptist was full of the Holy Spirit from birth, even before he had natural birth. God makes our imprisoned theologies ludicrous doesn't he, yet John was hidden in the deserts while he was growing up and till it was time for his service and witness.<sup>99</sup> And even his own Son, although he knew his mission at twelve years of age, and all the theology,<sup>100</sup> we hear no more of him until he was thirty, because God gave him 18 years to grow up physically, mentally, and again a favourite with God and man, not just God's spiritual favourite; he had to be a favourite in the community."

"That's tough, Peter, even I am prone to want to be so sure that I am pleasing the Lord that I have to admit I have failed to mix with the men of the world as HE did, and become their favourite too, yet without compromise. God forgive me. Still, you have already said enough about failures, Peter, that in your presence I am at least in equally failing company and can repent and do something about it. Perhaps I have some

growing to do too. - Say, Peter, did your beloved brother Paul ever talk about growing in his teaching?"

"Yes he has been known to have talked about that.<sup>101</sup> But remember, friend, it is not a focus on the growing but on the one who will be doing the maturing by our yielding to HIM. If you know HIM already as Saviour, tasted that work, then let HIM do the rest. Put this down in the letter...-

**If so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in Scripture, behold, I lay in Sion, a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. (1 Peter 2:3-6.)**

And remember, Sylvanus, I am not talking about man made bricks from clay baked in an oven with their trade mark stamped all over them, all the same size and shape. That too often is what leadership is trying to create in their young believers, - bricks, all one size, depth, shape, colour, and they call it unity. No, my son, HE is a unique Stone and we are also unique lively stones. Not one of us the same, or expected to be. HIS temple is made up of Christians so differing from one another that it is like a house made of natural stone. Some small bits, yet significant, and some big stones, as well as some awkward bits jutting out here and there, but all serving to hold the whole together, as long as they are resting on the Chief Corner Stone, The Lord himself. Never sacrifice your uniqueness. Yes, HE, is the issue.. continue...

**Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto they were also appointed. But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a special people; that you should show forth the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. (1 Peter 2:7-10)...**

Just think of that, we were a bunch of nobodies until we came to know the Lord Jesus Christ and his mercy, but now we are a bunch of somebodies. Though extremely differing from one another, we are Kings, Holy Priests, Special people. Oh! If they would grab that they would walk tall in their communities as the Aristocracy of the world. Somebody's for Christ, yet laughing inwardly knowing their secret is not they supporting Christ, but him holding us all together by his life. Grow into that experience and you will surprise your little world that you live in."

97: - Mark 7:14-23 98: - Luke 1:80. 99: -Luke 2:42-52. 100: - Ephesians 4:14-16.

**Dear Reader**

Get growing and be somebody for HIM.

## Chapter Thirteen

### So behave yourself.

Somebody's for God, the Aristocracy of the community and nation. The thought hung there in the room and the more they thought about it in the silence of inner meditation, the taller and more dignified and spiritual and majestic their hearts seemed to become.

"Wow!"

"Yes, indeed wow! " said Peter. Who by this time was standing by a window surveying the human traffic hustling and bustling and jostling in the streets of Jerusalem? A mass of pressurized panic filled and fear filled people with only one common aim in life, in the face of the political and economical and religious situation forced upon them by the might of Rome, selfish survival. Every day brought sudden news that could change the face of their history in a flash. What would happen next? The unknown ahead brought no hope, but a fearful emptiness. Rumour even had it that the 'Power to be' was sending his No 1 man to subject the land and take care of this Middle East constant problem once and for all, with their built in idea that if you get rid of the Jews and scatter them throughout the world, the outcome would be universal peace. Was there no hope? Peter smiled inwardly, for he was full of hope, as he knew of the promises in the Word of God that at some far flung future date the Lord would bring his people back to the homeland he promised Abraham to give them. Yes, even Peter felt he would easily give up if it were not for the promised future that generated hope within him. He shared these thoughts with Sylvanus who was already sitting at the table and ready to write more of Peter's first letter to the Christians.

"It's all very well cheering our hearts up with a future hope, but in the light of what you have been saying in your letter, and knowing what is just outside your window, what does the mature Christian do meanwhile, as he awaits that fulfillment of the then future hope?" said Sylvanus.

" Quite simple", retorted Peter, "They can demonstrate that they are 'somebody's' in this present rotten world by taking the power of the presence of Christ within, through the Holy Spirit, and behave themselves out there amongst those people."

"Fine, but where do they start? In fact, I would be better to say where would I start? Funny how we always tend to face an important issue with the idea that *we* should get the *us* and the *them* and the *they* into some sort of action, when in fact it would be better starting with *me* and seeing what I can do to begin the reversal of the rot."

"Good thought, Sylvanus, and I think I would like to put in my letter next, exactly where to start as an individual to become a 'somebody' for him. Put down...

**Dearly beloved I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul: having your behaviour honest among the unbelievers.....(1 Peter 2:11-12.)**

My but wouldn't that be a great starting point for new behaviour if believers were honest, for a change....

**that whereas they speak evil against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation."**(1 Peter 2:11-12.)

"Are you certain, Peter, that in that mass of sameness of sinfulness and permissiveness out there, that one Christian behaving and doing good works will be noticed?"

"Why of course, Sylvanus, It is the uniformity of their sinful ways that will make the one believer, yielded to the Life of Christ, stand out like a banana amongst cucumbers. The very minute just one pagan sees the banana behaving as a Christian, God is visiting him, and in the inward side of such a pagan's mind his basic definition, that sinfulness is the norm, is suddenly shattered, and he will never be able to say from that moment forward that 'all men are the same'. He will have to say of the weakness in society that 'nearly all men are the same'. He will have observed an alternative, and that is God visiting his heart that day, and he will only come to that conclusion as the Spirit of God wings the testimony of the behaving believer to him that 'only God could make a man that different' and that's it. He will never again say, there is no God. He has received the communication of first light that will haunt him for the rest of his life, even if he, on seeing that behaving Christian, mocks him, spits on him and slaps his face."

"That's a tall order Peter. You might be able to do that within the confines of a neighbour, but what of the impact on the nation as a whole. Where would you start? "

Peter stopped, turned and held his pensive, pursed lips between his fingers while Sylvanus crossed his arms, almost with an air of triumph that he had cornered Peter, and in fact in doing so, had cornered God as not having taken that greater issue into consideration. Peter sensed this sort of 'check mate' attitude of Sylvanus, which would be so easy to adopt, throw in the sponge and conclude that the situation is lost.

"You want to know where to begin in the nation with good behaviour?" said Peter. " I suggest that one starts by obeying the Government passed Laws of the land. That would be a good start that would make the neighbours look up and conclude that you must have a power outside of yourself to do that, for it is the assumed idea of the majority that they have a right to try and loop-hole their way around Government, controls to get what they want. Rob the Government and then vote them out for not controlling everyone else but one's self. Let's put this in the letter. How shall we phrase it?"

**Submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake:** (not their own sake) **whether it be to the King, as supreme; or unto Governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:"** (1 Peter 2:13-15.)

With a startled, illuminating look Sylvanus stopped writing. Peter turned at that and looked at him quizzically, and with hands outstretched in an appeal said

"Is there something wrong in that?"

"I was just staggered by your saying 'for so is the will of God', for I am certain that most believers are always thinking in terms of knowing the will of God for their lives, and I personally had never thought on this aspect of the 'will of God' for my life. I had always thought in terms of a future destiny, plan, career - but never behaving by obeying the Officialdom of the nation. Well, I learn something new every day."

"Good" retorted Peter, "and keep it that way. The day you think you are beyond learning new things you will cease to grow. Beware of the 'know it all's' who have it all buttoned up. Since I got converted and began to read HIS word, it amazes me that every time I go through reading it all over again I see things in that word that I would swear were not there last time I read it, and even wonder if perhaps you slipped it in during the night." he laughed, and Sylvanus laughed too.

"**As free**" (1 Peter 2:16.) Peter cried. "Put that down," "as free." Oh! the liberty there is in taking the power of Christ within us, through the fullness of the Holy Spirit to behave ourselves in every area of life; with the neighbours and the Government."

"As free" the other replied. "As free! Huh I always thought it was freedom from others, be it neighbours or Government. After all, don't we Christians belong to another Kingdom."

"Then if that is your thinking my son, why don't you go to that other Kingdom right now? With that attitude you will be no earthly use here, and God did tell Adam before he fell into sin that he was on the earth for a purpose. It says in Genesis 2:15, "and the Lord God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it." Note that in itself was almost a warning to Adam that there was a force afoot that could harm the garden. If that were not so, God would not have commanded him to keep or protect it. Why, Sylvanus, look at our planet already, because we have not dressed and kept it. I fear for future generations if we continue to behave this way towards the very planet. That is why God appoints Governments to curb our stupidity with protective laws. Can you imagine what this planet will be, say in the year 1992 for instance?

No, our Christian liberty and freedom is not for excusing ourselves to be able to opt out of such responsibilities, in the guise of being pilgrims at present, looking for the new atmosphere and earth that God has promised.<sup>102</sup> Play being 'spiritual', and by default, add to its corruption. Take this down and do not just write it for others, Sylvanus, remember this and behave yourself in this area too...

**As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as servants of God.** (! Peter 2:16.)

"Servants", get it, servants. We are meant to use our liberty to serve, not to escape."

**"Honour all men**, and I mean *all men*, not just the local Christians within your denominational attachment and doctrinal liking, but even those that are not Christians at all. **Love the brotherhood. Fear God.** That would be new for some, for they are so enjoying their new found relationship to the Lord that they take HIM for granted too often and treat HIM as a pal and forget that HE is still God, and known as the King of Kings and soon coming, Lord of Lords." **Honour the King. Servants be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also the froward.** (! Peter 2:17-18.)"

"Can you run that by me again, Peter, as I am not certain I got it right? Is there another way of saying that last sentence?"

"I will try again, for we do not want them left imagining what I am saying. Say, Employees, be obedient to your Boss and respect them; not only the terrifically kind Bosses, but also the awkward beggars that get right up your nose."

"Why that, Peter. That is a tough one."

"I will tell you why, and tell them why,

**For this is thankworthy if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully, for what glory is it, if, when you be buffeted for your faults, ye take it patiently? but if, when you do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. (1 Peter 2:19-20.)**

That is why. Get it?"

"I got it, Peter, but there is a new word you have introduced for the first time in your thoughts in this letter."

"What word?"

"Suffer"

"And tell me what is wrong with that word?"

"Well, some have a feeling that if we possess God through the Holy Spirit, and are under his filling or control, and even gifted by him and equipped by Him with His fruit, then surely we should be exempt from suffering."

"Where did you dig that idea up from?"

"Oh! I just hear it around the fellowship. In fact some even say if you suffer, then you have some secret sin as yet unconfessed".

"Forget the democratic chosen verdict of the majority who assume that if nine out of ten agree on an idea, that makes it divine truth. Not so, the Word of God is Truth, and do not fall foul of the new merchants who will try and throw you a line that they have a 'new word' straight from the throne room of heaven from our Father himself, and that if such a 'new word' appears to be contradicting the already established truth of the Holy Bible, then the 'New Word' replaces the Bible. That is disastrous. God will never send a 'new word' to contradict what the divine heart has already uttered. God never says 'Oops! pardon me, I made a mistake in my thoughts and teaching a few centuries ago and I will have to amend it now. I was having a bad day that day, excuse me'.

Never, Sylvanus. Remember also, we have a perfect precedent and super example of being perfect and sinless and full of the Holy Spirit's control in the Saviour Himself and he suffered for the whole world. Even Paul agrees on this issue, for he has said 'for as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our hope also aboundeth by Christ,'<sup>103</sup>

and again he said 'and our hope of you Christians is steadfast, knowing that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you be also of the hope.' <sup>104</sup>So let's tell them that....

**For even hereunto were you called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving an example, that you should follow in His steps: who did no sin, neither was lying found in his mouth: who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness by whose stripes you were healed. For you were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls. (1 Peter 2:21-25.).**

People have too often assumed that to follow Jesus example, and walk in his footsteps, meant doing miracles, healing people, casting out demons, preaching good sermons and being filled with the Spirit. Yes, I agree that he did do all of that, but never forget HE suffered for it. Abandoned by the crowd that wanted at one time to make him a king, abandoned by almost all of his disciples, rejected by his own nation, and then for no other reason that, to protect his political position before a mad Caligula Caesar, Pilate had him nailed to a tree by his hands and feet, after already having had his back whipped until it was like a ploughed field, and a crown of thorns rammed on his head; the very hair of his face pulled off, slapped and thumped around, and even when they offered him a sedative of gall mixed with wine, which is a pain killer, Sylvanus, he didn't take it, but yelled out 'father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing'. Yes he reviled not again.

What about us, my son, the minute we suffer we yell out to God that this should not be happening to us, and we remind him of our faithfulness, and when HE does not run on with the pain killer and say abracadabra, we begin to suspect HE does not love us and is letting us down - Sylvanus!"

"Yes, Peter"

"Behave yourself. Toughen up as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, and learn to take a bit of suffering and keep the Lord company in his pain."

102:- Revelation 21:1. 103:- 11 Corinthians 1:5 104:-11 Corinthians 1:7.

### **Dear Reader**

Your Taxation.  
Your Custom Duty.  
Your welfare benefits.  
Your work.  
Your Boss.  
Your environment.  
Your Neighbours.  
Your community.  
Your litter.  
Your garden rubbish.  
Your appearance.

How's your behaviour?  
Are you a banana or a cucumber!

## Chapter Fourteen

### You Couples Also!

Sylvanus put down the stylus and shoved his seat back and stretched his arms, then rubbed his hands, with an almost 'that's a good job done' attitude. He began to roll up the parchment when Peter, turning round at hearing the scuffling noise of rolling parchment, looked at what was happening and said

"What's the matter, are you finished for today?"

"Why? Aren't you finished with this letter? I thought what you said about wrapped it all up."

"Far from it" said Peter, "So, if you don't mind, we shall continue."

"Why? What more is there to say that you have not already said? You have touched the essentials of being saved, learning to love and grow and behave, so that as Christians face the rigours of a pagan society they will give a good testimony to Christ."

"True, Sylvanus, that is all they require to face a world out there, but what about in the home. Remember that the greatest earthly illustration of the spiritual relationship between the Lord Jesus and a forgiven sinner, a Christian, is observed in the union of a man and wife and the resultant fruitful family. Even Paul has mentioned in his preaching that we are dead to the law by the body of Christ that we should be married to another, even to him that is raised from the dead, (the Lord Jesus Christ), that we should bring forth fruit to God. (Romans 7:4.) That is why the enemy, the devil, has attacked the family unit all down the ages. If he can constantly mess up marriage and family life, and we begin to tell people that to be united to Christ is like being married, they will stare at us blankly and probably say 'as bad as that'. That is why we need to have a behaving family also, and couples who stick to each other through thick or thin, just as Christ sticks to us, mercifully, through thick and thin, and never leaves us nor forsakes us, no matter how weak we are, or at times good. So let's have a few words addressed to the family unit. Say...

**Likewise, you wives, be in subjection to your own husbands;"**(1 Peter 3:1)

"Why the word *own* Peter?"

"Because it appears it is easier for wives to communicate with other wives husbands than communicate with their own."

"Is that an idea you thought up yourself?"

"No, far from it, other preachers have seen the same failing I have observed, that it appears easier for women to talk to other men than talk to their own husbands."<sup>105</sup>

"Is it as simple as that, Peter. After all some women have come to know the Saviour since they got married and do not have believing husbands. Surely that puts the wife spiritually ahead of her spiritually blind husband, therefore, with the Holy Spirit

within her, her wisdom and opinions, tempered with the light of truth, should mean she is always right and he is always wrong? "

"Logically, what you are saying, sounds and is great, Sylvanus, but in practical terms the woman has all the more spiritual resources now available to her to submit in order to express the fruit of the Spirit to win him over. Remember that fruit of the Spirit has qualities of love, joy, peace and longsuffering, which I prefer to the word 'patience', for at least that old word contains the words long and suffering, indicating putting up with 'painfully' for a long time. It also contains gentleness, goodness, faith and meekness, which is not weakness, and temperance or balance.<sup>106</sup> From what I have observed they seem to think that although it took the Lord years to get through to their darkened hearts, now that the wife is saved, God should achieve the same in their partner in record time. Because it does not quite work out as fast as they think it should, putting the Lord into a limit, which is always dangerous; because God is God and knows best the exact technique required to reach a lost husband, they then begin to use their own techniques to attempt to manipulate and seduce a partner into becoming a Christian. That technique does not get Divine Holy Spirit power but is solely dependent on self-energy and talents.

It's the kind of art practiced by the women of the world to trap a man just like a prostitute would do. Our Christian women do not require to act or dress or seduce their men into believing by using the cosmetic worldly outward techniques. Now then if you will write, we will deal with that very point. Where was I...?

**That if any (*husbands*) obey not the word, they also may be won by the behaviour of the wives; while they (*the husbands*) behold your pure behaviour coupled with respect (*for the husband*). Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair and of the wearing of gold, or of the putting on of apparel (*like a street prostitute*); but let it be the hidden man of the heart (*Jesus Christ within them with his Risen life and power through the Holy Spirit*), in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek, and quiet (*not nagging, or preaching*) spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."**(1 Peter 3:1-4.).

"But what if the husband is still not responding to that and could turn out to be an abusing husband, dishing out bad leadership in the family?"

"A valid question. God is good, Sylvanus, but never forget that in the beginning, before Christ entered the relationship, they already did marry because they were in love with one another. To a certain extent, the saved partner can present the Lord, sincerely but unwisely, as a rival between them demanding their love and allegiance. The husband sees Christ as a wife stealer because he is in the dark. The human, blind reaction is to be expected. However, even in the Bible we do have women who had husbands who were far from perfect. They stayed with them, obeyed them and left God with the outcome and the amazing thing is that in time, if they gave God some years, God changed the whole affair round and used the couples for his service and glory, and gave them a destiny that brought Christ into the world. God can do it if we will not rush HIM but trust HIM. Put that down for them to read in case they are thinking what you are thinking...

**For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands: even as Sarah**

**obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters you are as long as you do well, and are not afraid with any amazement (at their bad behaviour).** (1 Peter 3:5-6.) And I cite Abraham, Sylvanus, for even though we think of him by the title God gave him of being His friend and the father of a faith by works, never forget in his weakness he did send Sarah to bed with another man to try and save his own neck. She obeyed and the Lord stepped in and stopped the man from touching her and delivered her and corrected Abraham, for his offence towards his wife. God sees the inside story that we do not see and is able to take care of it all."

"It almost appears, Peter, that the husbands, in your thinking, go free."

"Not so Sylvanus. Here is a word for them too..."

**Likewise you husbands, dwell with them (the wives) according to knowledge (not according to feelings) giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel-" 1 Peter 3:7.)**

"Hold it! Just hold it a minute, Peter. Are you trying to tell me that women are weaker and not equal to men?"

"Not at all. When God made Adam, HE filled his life with a gift of the Garden of Eden and everything in it and even brought him all the animals to keep him company. HE let him give them pet names, which is a means of expressing love, but even after that God realised that by making the man in his own image, HE had given the man HIS quality of divine love, which is a love that has to be given away without a thought of a return of love, the man was still lonely. He had a weakness prior to the fall into sin, in that he had a love he could not get rid of on animals. God was the one who declared that it is not good for a man to be alone.<sup>107</sup> Why, Sylvanus, the impression we get today is one of 'poor single women, all alone and without a man'. Rubbish, Sylvanus, they can survive without men. It is we men who need them. So God made woman, and here is why I emphasized knowledge and not what we feel about it, and HE made her from out of the man.

The bone was not from his heel, so that he could say she was inferior to him and from beneath his feet, nor did he take the bone from his head, so that she could say she was superior and above him. No, he took it from the rib nearest his heart so that they would acknowledge their being on the same level and equality right from the start. However, when they fell into sin, they emerged from that episode being held responsible by God for their part in that matter and became a couple equal in sinfulness. Equal in strengths and equal in weaknesses. Yet they were to compliment each other. Bring into each other's lives what each lacked. That is why it is best never to marry two persons of exactly the same. One should never look into another's eyes expecting to find oneself in there but to see the other person and their Lord in there which would enhance ones own needs and emptiness. It was after this, for the protection of the woman and so that she would not be deceived again, that God made her subject to her husband. Not for him to abuse her, but to protect her. This is the knowledgeable weakness man has to remember in the relationship. He is divinely appointed to protect her in order to get what she has, as an equal, to contribute to his well being. I am sorry, Sylvanus, but I cannot cut out from HIS word parts that may offend how the ladies feel, not what the ladies know. Of course, as a sinful couple,

there will always be a sense of trying to dominate one another, but you will find that a woman is at her happiest when protected by her man.

If you read scripture, you will notice that throughout its narrative, whenever a woman usurped her position over her man, and he allowed it, chaos ensued. Sarah, who we already mentioned, thought the Lord had been negligent to note her age when HE promised Abraham that he would have a son. Sarah had a good think about that and figured that she had better help God out of a mess, and rescue her husbands spiritual reputation amongst the relatives, by doing something about it. She came up with a great idea. Abraham relinquished his leadership and did what she said and had a child, Ishmael, through a slave girl. They offered their best effort to help God out of trouble, and to their surprise God rejected Ishmael and reiterated his promise to give them a son from their own partnership. No doubt they thought God was wrong, but if they would wait they would see that their best effort to help HIM was to produce every Arab alive today who constantly threatens our Jewish people and threaten to conquer our land. Wow, Sylvanus, when they did their best they really did it!

Queen Jezebel had her husband Ahab relinquish his authority on the throne to her and she went about murdering people, stealing their land and killing the prophets. So continue writing son...

**And as being heirs together** (*there is your equality in Christ Jesus*) **of the grace of life: that your prayers be not hindered.** (1 Peter 3:7.)

Remember that point, Sylvanus, 'that their prayers be not hindered'. Very often people, and particularly the marrieds, wonder why their prayers are not being answered. Here is one area they should examine. Are they working together to safeguard that precious relationship so that prayers can be answered? After all, even in leadership, Paul has stated that the family life is an important issue to observe in choosing leaders."

"How did you come by all this knowledge, Peter, about a man and a woman? Was it a 'Word from heaven' or is it just an opinion?"

"No, my friend, from my own experience as a married man. Remember before I ever knew Christ and became an evangelist, I was married and even Christ stayed on occasion in my mother-in-laws house.<sup>108</sup>"

"I had forgotten that, Peter, for you never seem to mention much about your married life or your wife".

"I thought I had already told you, I was a failure, Sylvanus", and with that he sat down and put his head in his hands and started to sob. Sylvanus, realising he had touched a tender spot locked away in this great man's heart, stopped writing and quietly got up and left the room knowing, that to try and say something 'Christian', 'loving' or 'spiritual' would only be misunderstood. Instead a quiet withdrawal to the other side of the door, where he too could cry because he hurt him, and where in private the great Healer could come and attend to both their hearts. He sat down behind the door and sobbed and prayed.

105:- See Ephesians 5:22., Colossians 3:18 & Titus 2:5. 106:-Galatians 5:22-23. 107:-  
Genesis 2:18. 108:- Mark 1:30.

**Dear Reader.**

Did you find that tough?  
Then Pray.

## Chapter Fifteen

### Unity and Love.

When Sylvanus finally slipped into the room again, Peter was sitting pensively on the window ledge looking out. Sylvanus came and stood near him, not knowing quite how to begin again. They were both aware of each other's presence, and there was simply a turning of the heads to look into each other's eyes, both very aware that they could see the redness of much weeping in each other's faces.

"Peter" said Sylvanus with a choking throat.

"Say nothing my dear brother".

"But I hurt you"

"Hurts will come, even to Christians, and although we must not become hard hearted, for that would kill all feeling, we must learn to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ - in other words 'toughen up'. In fact I have heard that beloved Paul has even suggested that to his family in the faith.<sup>109</sup> What is important, Sylvanus, is that we learn from this experience, which neither of us planned, to be more interested in keeping a unity and love between the members of the body, rather than letting a little bit of pain and hurt create a rift between us."

"That is something you should be mentioning in your letter, Peter. How about it?"

"If you think it would help others, why not, so if you wouldn't mind getting to the table again we shall do exactly that. Say...."

**Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous** (1 Peter 3:8)...

Because if they do not do that, they are liable to want to reek revenge on one another, because hurts make one react that way first."

"I agree, Peter, but that 'be pitiful' bit, I thought Christians should not wallow in pity and expect others to join them in their 'pity me party'?"

"Rightly so, Sylvanus, but read what I said, I said 'be pitiful', I did not say 'wallow in self pity'. You are entitled to give unsolicited pity to another, but not to create your own self-pity and expect others to build on it. If you had just thought earlier today, you might have come to a conclusion yourself that there must have been some very real underlying reason, why I never mentioned my marriage. With that thought, you could have demonstrated a Christ like compassion and loved me by forgetting my past, as Christ has forgiven and forgotten. Of course, that is one of our major weaknesses as Christians, we tend to keep remembering each other's sins for years. I am so glad that HE has forgotten. The best thing is Unity and love, so continue writing..."

**Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing"**(1 Peter 3:9.)

"Inherit a blessing', Peter, isn't that a little bit like encouraging people to work for blessing and run into the danger of self effort to gain from God? Don't you think you ought to reconsider that idea of yours?"

"It is not my idea at all, Sylvanus. Jesus said so and I heard HIM say it."

"What did HE say, and when?"

"It was when HE was preaching and teaching on the mountain, HE said " Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye" Do not even the tax gatherers the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others do? Do not even the tax collectors so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your father which is in heaven is perfect." <sup>110</sup>

So you see my son it is not my idea at all it is HIS. I know it is a tough order but do not fail to remember HE never took revenge. HE cried on that Cross "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do".<sup>111</sup> Now if we cannot be like that with each other, where do we begin out in that world as Christians?

"Again I stand corrected. Oh! There is so much I have yet to learn. Why can't we sit down some day, Peter, and you give me some Bible study on these things and rush me along in all I have to learn so that I can get the learning behind me and get on with life"

"In my impetuosity, Sylvanus, I used to think like that, but even to those of us who were closest to HIM HE once stated that HE had many things to say to us but we could not take them at that time.<sup>112</sup>So I regret that there is no Bible Study course or Bible School we can send you to, Sylvanus, that will do a quick job for you in teaching you all. Like those of us who argued with each other about who should be sitting on HIS right and left hand in HIS Kingdom, you will have to settle down to learning it all throughout your entire life. There is no quick lesson on knowing all Truth."

"Thank you, Peter, but it is still tough to take. What do you want to say next?"

**"For he that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, for that is what caused our hurt and tears today, just words across our lips, and his lips that they speak no guile: sneaky subtle attack on a person, Let him hate evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and follow after it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are opened unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil"**(1 Peter 3:10-12.)

"Can I interrupt you a minute Peter at that point?"

"Yes, why? What's on your mind?"

"Prayer! You said that His eyes and ears are ever opened to the prayers of the righteous. Then why is it I often feel His eyes are closed and that His ears are stopped, and I get a deep feeling that He is not paying any attention to me and that my prayers are never answered."

" I will go for two areas in your words, Sylvanus. Firstly 'feel", and secondly ' I, me and my'. Try to remember that when we asked HIM to teach us to pray, the first thing HE taught us was to stop claiming HIS Father in heaven as our personal property and thinking we are the only one HE should be listening to. HE taught us to say "Our Father which art in heaven." <sup>113</sup>HE has a large family to take care of. HE hears you and will always answer your prayers, HE will say yes! No! Or Wait! Sometimes HE is just silent because HE is attending to what you need as speedily as possible. It just might not be quick enough for you."

"Taking care of what I need. That's a laugh, I seldom get from HIM what I desire and I keep on asking for it. After all, are we not encouraged, even by Christ, to keep on praying for a thing."

"Ah! There is your mistake. HE is not there to give you what you desire, but what you need. You might desire a million gold coins, but you do not need a million gold coins. Fresh air is a need, food and drink are needs, but much of what you think are needs are not needs but desires. A man may even desire sex, but it is not a need, he can survive without it. A lack of that will never kill him. And as for your constantly asking, the Lord taught us to 'persist' in prayer; keep communicating and talking to HIM, HE did not teach us to 'insist' in prayer. <sup>114</sup> You will always get what you need, not what you want. Eventually you will find that some things you did not get were worth not getting. Now write this down....

**And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, Remember that, Sylvanus, 'if'. It means that not everyone will necessarily suffer, but there will be those that will, and it will not mean that they have a secret sin that is unconfessed and are being punished by the Lord, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;" (1 peter 3:13-14.)**

"That sounds strange coming from you, Peter, when you know your own time is drawing near when events will take place that will cause you to be arrested and taken where you do not want to go, and be put to death for HIS names sake. How can you be so calm in the face of that and give such advice?"

"Because on the occasion that HE broke the news to me that I would be an abject failure<sup>115</sup>, HE also followed that statement up immediately by saying that I should not let my heart be troubled, that my belief in God, in spite of my failure, would see me through<sup>116</sup> HE even said "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid."<sup>117</sup> So, ever since then I have simply paid attention to HIS presence in my heart to fight fear and trouble at all costs, with the knowledge of HIS being there to kill fear and keep me at peace. I am always ready to go Sylvanus. "

"Tell them that then."

"All right say...

**But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and reverence: having a good conscience; that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good behaviour in Christ. (1 Peter 3:15-16.)**

"You will be a good example of that to the readers, Peter."

"No there is a better one than I, and it is The Lord Himself. If they need anything they need to be made aware of HIM and not me. Continue...

**For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: "(1 Peter 3:17-18.)**

"That's good, Peter, just think, HE suffered, yet HE had no sin, and quickened, brought back to eternal life again by the Holy Spirit. Just think, the Holy Spirit being that powerful."

"Yes, and HE always was and always will be. The Holy Spirit of God, as God, never diminishes in power and will be able to do the same for me when my turn comes and for every child of God when their turn comes. HE has always demonstrated that tremendous power throughout this world's history. It was that same Holy Spirit who raised the Lord Jesus to life again, who was preaching away back in the days of Noah. Every board made, every nail hammered home on that huge vessel which would deliver Noah and all in it from the judgement of the flood, was HIM preaching back then through Noah, and that event, to a sinful world. The sad thing is that just like today the people did not listen then to the Holy Spirit speaking to their hearts about the judgement to come, and the judgement came. Now those people who perished in that judgement are at this present time in an eternal prison, awaiting their appearance at the Great White Throne, to be sent to an eternal second death.<sup>118</sup> Only those who believed the Gospel spoken to their hearts were saved then, and it is the same now. Get that down, Sylvanus....

**By which also He (The Holy Spirit) went (in Noah's day) and preached unto the spirits (at that time and are now at this present time) in prison; which were sometime disobedient, (when the Holy Spirit preached to them then) when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the Ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him." (1 Peter 3:19-22.)**

"I didn't quite get that last part Peter about baptism. What exactly did you mean by that?"

"Well just as the physical and visible building of an Ark was a demonstration of the inward faith, hope and trust and obedience to God by Noah and his obedient family,

to their sinful neighbours and world, we too are used by the same Holy Spirit to demonstrate physically and visibly by baptism that we have another side to ourselves; that is inward and full of faith and hope and obedience to God. We are already concluding by baptism that we have already inwardly reckoned ourselves to be dead because of sin, and believe that the other side of baptism is indicating our newness in life in Christ, and that we are sure of our resurrection to eternal life, no matter what happens to us in this temporary life. He has gone to heaven before us. We are saying, we are coming too. "

"I see. So all this being here is but a means of telling the world about HIM until we are called into our eternal destination by HIM. That being the case, time being as short as it is, we ought not to be hurting one another, but demonstrating our unity and love for and with each other, as a people headed for a better place, to those who do not as yet know HIM."

"You got it, and that is a prelude to a better behaviour in every walk of life."

109:- 2 Timothy 2:3. 110:- Matthew 5:43-48. 111:- Luke 23:34. 112:-John 16:12. 113:- Luke 11: 1-2. 114:- Luke 18: 1-8. 115:- John 13:38. 116:- John 14:1. 117:- John 14:27. 118:- Revelation 20:11-15.

#### **Dear Reader.**

Have you blurted out a person's past and hurt them recently?

Have you cried about that enough to go and apologise?

Do you work on your Church Unity with one another?

Does HIS example inspire you enough to do the same?

## Chapter Sixteen

### Better Behaviour

"A better behaviour in every walk of life as a testimony to HIM before the world. That would be real evangelism, Peter"

"Yes, it would, Sylvanus. So let us encourage them to do that in this next paragraph.

**"Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh (his human body), arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he should no longer live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men but to the will of God."** (1 Peter 4:1-2) for..."

"Just a minute, just a m-i-n-u-t-e", spoke out Sylvanus, slowly and emphatically

"Why, what's bothering you now?"

"That phrase "for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin". Are you telling me that a Christian who simply suffers in his humanity hath ceased from sin - sinless? "

"No, not quite like that Sylvanus, because of what sin has done to us, we are like a chariot wheel whose metal rim was put on a little to one side of true centre, it never runs true, but the wheelwright adds a metal weight to one side of the rim to balance it up and let it run true. By nature, we have a built in bias for sin and can never run true, However, when we have the Lord Jesus in our lives, HE is like that counteracting weight on the chariot wheel, for as long as HE is in position we will run true, or cease from bending towards sin. Remember though, we are not wheels, but a people made in the image of God, who have a right of choice, so we tend to naturally veer off into sin and sin is our norm, and it does not hurt, but when ever the counterbalance of the Lord is in us and by our permission from step to step is in allowed to be Lord, we will suffer in our weak humanity, as by that process we will not be able to veer off at will as we want to but be counteracted and made to stay true and that is not natural, that is spiritual and it will hurt, for we will not be doing what others do and we used to. That hurts."

"Yes, it does, Peter, and it is true, sin when being committed does not hurt, it is the aftermath that hurts. I well remember"

"Yes, we all remember," said Peter, abruptly stopping Sylvanus from beginning to relate his past.

"Why did you stop me, Peter?"

"Because what HE has forgotten, I will keep driving home to you, you should be forgetting also. Let any remembrance of the past be a means of having a positive effect on you to a better behaviour in your today. Only others will think you strange. I want that in the letter also, so put down further..."

**"For the time of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the heathen, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revelings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: (1 Peter 4:3-4.)**

Yes, that will even hurt more my son when they see that you have had sin counteracted as you suffer HIM balancing up your behaviour, which will make you appear to be going against the natural flow of things in life. They will think you are weird. However, do not let that distress you, as they will even begin to say awful things about you in an attempt to get you to come back into the natural line of things and sin again. Yield not to their mental manipulation. Their day will come."

" I hope that the readers of your letter will know that. Cover it, Peter, in case they do not know that."

"Fine, say

**"Who shall give an account to Him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead, for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are (already dead is implied.) That they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." (1 Peter 4:5-6.)**

What a shock they are in for, those heathen, disbelieving tormenters of the true children of God, when they leave their bodies at death and find that in spirit they are still very much alive, and their attitude as men in the flesh, is still in existence after they have left their bodies. That in itself will be the evidence required for their judgement. Yes, they will be living still but this time before God and awaiting judgement which could be sooner than they think. Warn the Christians of that also in my letter, Sylvanus."

"What do you want me to say about that?"

"Nothing elaborate, just a simple sentence of genuine warning..."

**"But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, (serious minded) and watch unto prayer. And above all things have a fervent love amongst yourselves: for love shall cover the multitude of sins." (1 Peter 4:7-8)**

" Was that what you were doing, Peter, when you interrupted what was going to be for me a baring of my soul about my past sins?"

"Yes, Sylvanus, I do not need to know anything about your past sins, for I am fully aware of my own, and if you can give this old man compassionate friendship and fellowship, who am I to even want to know what you have done. Life is too short to have to carry a memory of your sins as well as my own. No wonder HE encourages us to know HE forgets, so we should forget our own and yours. Living with each other as though we never sinned will baffle the world out there. They love to have one-upmanship on each other and have information about each other up their sleeves to be able to blackmail one another for selfish ends.

We are the opposite in our behaviour leastwise, we should be. Unfortunately too many Christians copy the world in this matter and love also to expose each other supposing to add to their own spiritual perfection, but that is where their spiritual perfection falls flat on its face. I hope also they note I said a multitude of sins and not just selective ones or a few, but all of them. No, loving behaviour is a far better way."

"What is loving behaviour Peter?"

"Well for a start tell them to.

**"Use hospitality one to another without grudging."** (1 Peter 4:9.)

"Meaning?"

"I have noticed even in the matter of hospitality, Sylvanus, that many invite for subtle reasons, such as being able to name drop that I had been in their home; but for that they might not have even bothered. Others invite in the hope of a return invitation, and if they do not get one are very put out, but that is their problem not mine. If they really wanted me to invite them to my home they should just have said so, instead of trying to manipulate me into giving them an invitation by having me first. No, an open home of hospitality, and not only to friends of the fellowship but to anyone, Christians and non-Christians alike, is a great winner in a new behaviour to impress people. In fact, in some cases that is their gift. They will never be preachers, but they can always have an open heart and home, and if that type of behaviour is displayed your home will never be empty."

"I never thought of that as a gift, I always imagined that gifts had to do with preaching."

"Not at all, there is nothing we have in our lives that God did not give us. Sin keeps all our every day ordinary abilities from being controlled by HIM, but the moment the Lord is in control, they are of a great positive use in a new way and are to be used. That is my next thought for them. Say...

**"As everyman hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God: if any man serve, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth (not of the ability or gift that God has not given and they think they have, or someone else told them they have) that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever Amen."** (1 Peter 4:10-11.)

"Wow! Imagine that, Jesus Christ being glorified through opening your front door and giving someone a warm drink on a cold day or a piece of bread"

"Just think, Sylvanus, how much more glorifying if you opened the door and gave them your own last warm drink on a cold day and the only piece of bread left in the house!"

That brought silence.

"That's a different type of behaving, Peter. Have you any more ideas like that? They are tough ideas, Peter; so contrary to the norm of behaviour we see daily. That could bring on them such an anti Christian feeling that they might end up suffering desperately for it."

"You're right; so let's warn them not to be hurt by that..."

**"Beloved think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified."** (1 Peter 12-14.)

"You know, Peter, the longer this letter gets, the more you are using the word 'suffering' in it. Truly, there is no beautiful rose without thorns, nor beautiful Christians without suffering. Is there any suffering we will be exempt from Peter?"

"Oh, there are a few things we should tell them not to suffer for."

"Such as?"

"Write this down carefully, Sylvanus, as it will be a clear list of the things they should not suffer for in their lives"

"I'm ready - fire ahead Peter"

**"But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody (nosey-parker) in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf (for this reason) (1 Peter 4:15-16.)"**

"I know, Peter, you are going to say that the reason Christians should glorify God through suffering is to show the world what a great Christian they are."

"Quite wrong, my dear boy, quite wrong. I was going to say something completely different. It was to be.

**"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God:"** (1 Peter 4:17)

"What"

"Yes, don't be shocked. If you read in your Bible, Sylvanus, the writings of Malachi, you will note in the last chapter the believers of that day were saying that God was unfair because everyone that had evil behaviour was getting away with it and no matter how hard the Believers tried to have better behaviour, the evil ones were having a better time, and they were accusing God of not being concerned, and telling Him that he ought to come.

Read it. HIS response was "Behold ...the Lord whom you seek shall suddenly come to his temple."<sup>119</sup> And then HE went on to remind those shouting that HE was doing nothing, that when HE did come HE would judge the believers first. So, a major reason we need better behaviour is in order to be ready for Him when HE suddenly comes to the house of God, which today comprises, not of buildings, but people in whom Christ lives by His Holy Spirit. Yes, we face Him first. Just think of that. So, if you would like a bit of extra time to straighten your own life out as a Christian, how much more should we be prepared to give God time with the unsaved who appear to be getting away with it. No, they are not, and their end will be the more severe. Put this down...

**"And if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God. And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly sinner appear? Wherefore let him that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator. (1 Peter 4:17-19.)**

"Commit their souls to Him in well doing" repeated Sylvanus as he finished writing that down. Well doing?"

"Better behaviour."

119:- Malachi 3:1

### **Dear Reader.**

How's your behaviour these days?

When did you last have someone home for hospitality?

What's our gift and do you use it with all your heart?

If HE came today to deal with you first are you ready?

## Chapter Seventeen

### Faithful Shepherding.

"I think that's about it, Sylvanus. We should simply sign it and send it."

"But you cannot stop there, Peter!"

"Why not?"

"Because I don't think that some of us could simply commit the keeping of our souls to HIM in well doing, as you said, for that is all a sort of spiritual commitment to an indwelling, yet invisible and intangible Christ. That may work for some but I'm sure there are simple souls who need more than a mysterious Saviour they cannot see, or feel, or touch."

"A very valid point, Sylvanus, and I'm so glad you brought that up. Yes, the majority of believers will require Christ to help them in a more tangible, sensing way on an earthly material plane. This is why we have 'leadership' presented throughout scripture. From Genesis until now the family of God has always fallen into 'leaders' and 'followers'. For Jesus to talk to me about feeding the sheep and lambs; is for HIM to state that there is the necessity for an earthly shepherd who, will under HIS control, feed the flock, who are the followers. A Church does not comprise of all followers, or all leaders, or shepherds. There are some leaders, and the rest are to follow."

"But could some abuse that, Peter, and create a 'heavy shepherding' situation where they could run peoples lives to suit there own fleshy, lustful, self interests as a leader?"

"Yes, that is all too possible. So, let us say a few things about that matter.

**"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: feed the flock of God which is among you."(1 Peter 5:1-2)**

"The flock of God, Peter?"

"Yes, Sylvanus, that is the one statement that all elders and leaders should constantly remind themselves of, that the flock is God's flock and not theirs. If they remembered that fact, there would be less of the situations arising that you mentioned, where leaders claim the congregation as theirs. They are never theirs, they belong to God. They are merely under shepherds, for He is the Chief Shepherd. If He is the Chief Shepherd of the under shepherd, or elder, then that elder will find that the Lord will be doing His Chief Shepherding through him and he will be a balanced Christ-like shepherd."

"Wasn't it David who called the Lord his shepherd?<sup>120</sup>"

"Yes, and if you get your Bible out right now, Sylvanus, and read that Shepherd Psalm<sup>120</sup>, you will not only see the entire ministry of Christ, the Chief Shepherd, but also see what HE will be doing through the under shepherds."

"You mean that everything Christ was to David as his Shepherd, is what the elders and pastors should be to those under them?"

"Exactly, Sylvanus. Now, what does psalm 23:1 state for a start? Go on look it up", said Peter, as he passed him the Old Testament Scroll of the psalms.

"I do not need to look that one up, Peter, for I can say it by heart and it says 'The Lord is my Shepherd' "

"Stop right there. Now note it opens with 'The Lord', not a Saviour, but 'The Lord', the first relationship required by the flock, as well as the elders is having HIM as Lord. Now note the tense David used, the Lord 'is'; that is present tense, and then he goes on to say '**my Shepherd**'. That is David saying he is a sheep and is prepared to recognise one above him as his personal Shepherd all the days of his life. Now, if in the present Christian Church the believer would see himself as a sheep, and move into a present tense relationship with the under shepherds, then they would reap all the benefits every day from their shepherds."

" What are the benefits, Peter?"

"Quote the rest of the Psalm, Sylvanus."

"I shall not want, all the days of my life." That means, Peter, if I have a good under shepherd, who is yielded to the Chief Shepherd, I will never need to go elsewhere for feeding. No roaming around various fellowships looking for something for my soul. "

"That is important, Sylvanus. If you have bad leadership, then the flock starts bleating and breaking out of the fence to go to another field and flock for food. Too many Pastors say that others steal their sheep. Not so, if they were doing what they ought to do, in supplying the need of their own flock, the flock would not go away. That is why David follows that up with the next resultant benefit, 'He makes me to lie down in green pastures'. No sheep will ever lie down in a lush pasture unless it is satisfied and well fed. So it is necessary for the leadership to so feed the flock that they will be satisfied."

"So, what does the 'lead me beside the still waters', denote, Peter, as a benefit from a Shepherd?"

"Still waters, Sylvanus, not rushing noisy torrents. When a river is shallow, there are lots of gurgle and noise, but no depth. However, if you come out of a forest, upon the reach of a river where it is wide and deep, you might be deluded into thinking that it is a lake. It can be like a mirror, but throw in a twig and you will suddenly discover it moving away fast, and then realize that it is a river, not a lake and there is power there. Yes, a good shepherd will lead the flock to depth: not thirst, not noise but a place of deep power. Then the rest will follow on as daily benefits from such a shepherd, restoring the mind, will and emotions of the flock, leading them in paths of

righteousness, for his name's sake, not their reputation as a Pastor Shepherd. Read on."

"Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me. What is a valley of a shadow of death Peter?"

"That I can answer, Sylvanus. It is just like when I got the news that James had been beheaded by Herod<sup>121</sup>. Inside oneself you get the every day normal feelings of the threat of death. A sort of 'this is the end' feeling. I got that when what I expected to happen, happened, and I was arrested next. They took me to the fortress and put me in chains in the dungeon,<sup>122</sup> and had sixteen soldiers guard<sup>123</sup> me under penalty of death, which was a rule amongst Roman Soldiers, if I should escape. Two of them were even made to go into the damp, rat infested, and stinking cell with me and were chained to me.<sup>124</sup> That was a shadow of death. But remember that a shadow has no substance. It threatens, but never can kill. Besides, I knew I wouldn't die."

"How did you know that. What changed your shadow to a fearless thing."

"A promise, Sylvanus. Simply a promise. He told me I would be taken as an old man and put to death when I was old. Remember I told you about that earlier today<sup>125</sup>. A promise is a promise. Whatever the Shepherd says should be trustable and that goes for the under shepherds also, who are leading in the Church right now. It can turn darkness to light, fear takes flight, freedom takes over."

"I wonder how many pastors are aware of the fact that their word is 'their word'? And can be a means of such tremendous support and comfort to the entire flock."

"Yes, there is more to being a shepherd than simply preaching. Even the next phrase of the psalm shows that for it says, 'thy rod and thy staff they comfort me'. The rod of chastisement, as well as support and comfort. Too many I am afraid, will only use their stick to comfort and support, for in that way they will be loved, but a real shepherd will also chastise a rebel sheep for its own benefit. It learns, but has a new healthy respect for the shepherd. Those that do not allow Christ to fulfil HIS shepherding through them in that respect, are always loved, but not respected, and produce rebellious, spoiled sheep.

Yes, a shepherd prepares a table for his sheep, whom the evil ones hate. They are a joy to the flock, and they can confidently go forward towards being with Him for ever"

"I don't think that in those terms, Peter, too many would want to become pastors."

"Then let us encourage them to do so, for it is a rewarding responsibility. Say in the letter to them..."

**'Taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint but willingly'** (1 Peter 5:2.) and while we are at it we had better remind them it is not a trade or profession but a vocation. Say...

**"Not for filthy money, but of a ready mind; neither as being lord over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."** (1 Peter 5:2-4.)

"That should put *them* in their place, Peter." said Sylvanus, rubbing his hands with glee.

"Sylvanus, you talk like a child sometimes. The 'them' and 'us' syndrome. Try to grow out of that. For just as much as the shepherds need a word in their ear, who tend to lean too heavily on the youth of their flock, the youth also need a little word of reminder, for we have already said that shepherds need lambs as well as sheep and just as they require to recognise themselves, the lambs need to learn to recognise themselves also, and submit to the care of the shepherd. So before you get too carried away, my 'lamb', put this down...

**"Likewise ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder"**. (1 Peter 1:5.)

"Ouch, Peter, that was like a smack from the rod you just talked about."

"Yes it is good for bringing us all into line, and creating good balance in all things. However, it is for all of us..."

**Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.** (1 Peter 5:5.)"

120:- Psalm 23:1. 121:- Acts 12:1-2. 122:- Acts 12:3.123:- Acts 12:4. 124:- Acts 12:6. John 21:18-19.

#### **Dear Reader.**

Are you a leader?  
What kind of leader are you?

Are you a follower?  
What kind of follower are you?

Is their balance in your fellowship?

## Chapter Eighteen

### Humility & balance.

"What's the key to striking a balance within a fellowship, and especially between the generations that so often create a gap between them and through that divide and scatter?" said Sylvanus.

"One word my son, and that is 'humility'."

"Humility"

"Exactly. It is the key. Keep yourself at your right level before the Lord and others. Put it down as a closing thought..."

**"Humble yourselves therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. Casting all your care upon him for he careth for you"** (1 Peter 5:6-7.)

"Are you sure HE cares for you Peter?"

"Yes, even David knew that long before the Holy Spirit became the indwelling permanent Comforter of us post-Cross believers. He stated in Psalm 142:4 that no man cared for his soul, but he made it plain that by calling upon the Lord he had in HIM one who did care for his soul, and HE still does today. The problem is we do not trust HIM to care for us. We live in an age of caring for ourselves, looking after No. 1. We are too often our only hope and when we try to take care of ourselves even then we end up in despair, for we let ourselves down. So it is an essential Sylvanus that we pay attention to this, for if we don't, the enemy knows and will get to work on us. He knows when we trust in ourselves and our own strength and wisdom. Say this..."

**"Be serious, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking who he may devour:"** (1 Peter 5:8.)"

"Seeking who he may devour! Do you mean that he has to *seek* someone to devour and attack?"

"Yes, all too often believers give the impression that they are all open to his attacks at any time of the day, but it is just not true. Satan is limited when it comes to attacking believers. Note, I said, "walking about". He is not everywhere at once; he is limited in his sphere of activity. He has to walk about. Even in Job Chapter 1 when Satan was asked, "From whence cometh thou?" his response was " from going to and from in the earth and from walking up and down in It." <sup>125</sup>, and not only that but to seek for someone to attack. He knows that if a person has on the whole armour of God<sup>126</sup> and in humility is submitting themselves to the Lordship of Christ in their lives, he cannot get near them, and besides, he is not a very wise lion, he roars and lets you know that he is coming."

"Roars! I always thought that he sneaked up and attacked Christians."

"Yes! A real lion would sneak up on its prey and not roar and frighten the prey away. He always singles out the prey for attack and then with stealth creeps up and makes a grab for it. In fact it is known, on studying lions, that if a new young male chases away the aging old man of a Pride and becomes the new dominating male, if the new bunch of wives he has acquired have cubs they will show no interest at that time in mating with him. So in the first days of his control over the Pride, and to demonstrate his power, simply ambles up to a cub, and before the cub suspects what is coming, he kills it and all other cubs that he did not sire. Within days the lionesses realise that if they are to have new cubs in order to survive as a Pride they had better go on heat and get him to sire them, and that they do. However, our enemy is an unwise lion, and he tips us off every time he is approaching so that we do not have an attack 'unawares'."

"But I have heard believers say that the devil sneaked up on them and they slipped and fell into sin."

"No doubt you have, but that is simply pride and self justification and passing the blame to another. It is as old as the Garden of Eden. No! That is why I am warning them to be humble and balanced and above all watchful, for if they submit in all humility to Christ, he, the enemy, cannot touch them. It is the opposite; you get the ability to resist. So put that down next in the letter. . . .

**"Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."(1 Peter 5:9.)**

"Wow! That is humbling, Peter. You mean that no one can pray to the Lord as an exceptional case, as if they were the only one under a special attack of the enemy?"

"Correct. Too often we pout and suck our thumbs and give the impression that we are being especially picked on by the enemy and are being uniquely attacked by him and are the only one that has ever gone through such a problem. No! We are all on a similar level and the enemy has no new tricks. His attacks are as old as time itself. He attacked Eve through the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life. It was the same rusty old attack on Samson, the lust of the eyes. He saw a woman of Timnath and in his prideful arrogance, as a special servant of God, he thought that made him untouchable, and demanded her. What a mess he got himself into. David was exactly the same, he saw Bathsheba, and, as a King, demanded her and got her and got more than he bargained for. Even our Lord Jesus Christ found that the enemy had a go at him in all three of those areas. 'Lust of the flesh' - go ahead in your hunger and satisfy your flesh by turning these stones into bread. 'Lust of the eyes' - see the kingdoms of this world and fall down and worship me and I will give you all of these, for they are the cosmetic things of life that I can give you. 'The pride of life'- go ahead and throw yourself off a cliff and He will send his guardian angels down to catch you and protect you and keep you from falling. Sylvanus, if even HE could be attacked in such a way, who are we to think that we should be able to go through life as Christians without being attacked in similar ways. No, we are all being watched very carefully and the enemy has to look for those amongst us who are not yielded to HIM in any one day, or even moment, that he might get through the protective defenses of the Lord in our lives and attack. Be humble my son."

"I will try, Peter".

"No, do not try Sylvanus, for that is where the balance comes in, for the provision is in HIM not you. Put this down..."

**"But the God of all grace (not some grace), who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that you have suffered a while, make you perfect (or mature), stablish, strengthen, settle you. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever Amen."** (1 Peter 5:10-11.)"

"Amen"

"Now, Sylvanus, let us wrap it all up. Let them know that you did the writing for me."

"Oh! No, Peter, it is your letter, don't mention me at all"

He said this with his head to the side, a shrug of the shoulder and a wave of the hand, as if it was not worth mentioning and he did not want it mentioned.

"Sylvanus, I have just dictated in those last paragraphs about humility and balance, so be humble enough and balanced enough to take credit where credit is due. I spoke, you wrote, so we will tell them that, after all it might inspire others to become secretaries to others and useful in the Church, so write as I dictate....."

**"By Sylvanus a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein you stand. (1 Peter 5:12) and also a couple of greetings, "The Church that is in Babylon, elect together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son. Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen."** (1 Peter 5:13-14.), and that is that."

"Yes, I liked that kiss bit, Peter."

"Did you, Sylvanus, then be warned about kissing, for that too has to be done in humility and balance, for there are several different kinds of kissing in the world, and you can even see them in Scripture. It is not kissing that is the problem, but with what kind of kiss are you kissing?"

"What kind of kisses are there? Peter. I thought a kiss was a kiss."

"Not at all. There is a kiss of affection, a kiss of greeting. There is even a kiss that is a sort of 'kiss off'. In other words, 'there, I kissed you, now get out of my way and let me do my thing. I did the done thing so, go' Yes, there is even a kiss of treachery, where you expect love and affection and they are about to stick a dagger under your ribs and into your heart while doing it. A kiss of stealing someone else's love from a heart that belonged to another to yourself, and never forget the kiss of betrayal, Judas did that."

"Then it would be better not to kiss at all, Peter"?

"Wrong. Remember when Jesus was in the Pharisee's house and a prostitute came in and kissed his feet and washed them with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head; the Pharisee inwardly resented Jesus allowing her to do that, and Jesus

turned on him and reminded him that when he opened the door of his home and asked HIM to come in he gave HIM no water to wash his feet or the courtesy of a kiss of affectionate greeting.<sup>127</sup>

Yes, Jesus anticipated a kiss and never got one, and when Judas kissed Him in the Garden, it was not the first time, not a 'one off' signal to those who would arrest HIM, we always gave each other a kiss of greeting every time we met, you know that is our custom here. Judas was doing what he always did, but this time the action was determined by his hearts attitude and it became a kiss of betrayal. You have reacted, Sylvanus, true to type, either all kissing or no kissing, instead of real kissing. Watch your heart in these matters, and be humble and balanced enough to be genuine even in a kiss. I love you my son and now I thank you for what you have done for me today and all the hard work that you put in. Now I am tired and must go to bed, for who knows, tomorrow could be my day to be arrested and die."

And with that Peter leaned over the table where Sylvanus was folding up the letter and kissed him and left the room.

Sylvanus looked up to see the back of that great man leaving the room and with his fingers touched the remnants of feeling on the spot on his cheek where Peter had kissed him. Suddenly overcome with the awareness that it had been many years since someone, even in his family, had done such a thing to him, he had to swiftly move the manuscript of Peter's letter to one side, for he became aware of tear drops from somewhere hitting the parchment endangering the ink. He looked up to try and find who was crying, only to find they were his own tears. He let them flow, he let them pour out and a new feeling of being someone who had been given something for a change made him utter to God, his heavenly Father, amidst those tears, "Father thank you for a giant of an elect failure, but with a real heart."

He got on with the dignity of a good cry.

125:- Job1:7. 126:- Ephesians 6:13. 127:-Luke 7:45.

### **Dear Reader.**

Who cares for your soul these days?

How's your humility and balance?

Are there ulterior motives behind your love?

## The First Epistle of Peter

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied. "Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance Incorruptible, and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven; which things the angels desire to look into. Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of behaviour, because it is written, be ye holy for I am holy.

And if you call on the Father, who without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain behaviour received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish or spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that you faith and hope might be in God. Seeing you have purified your minds, souls (wills and emotions) in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently. Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all two facedness and play acting, and jealousies and all evil speakings, as new born babies, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Wherefore also it is contained in Scripture, behold, I lay in Sion, a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto they were also appointed. But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a special people; that you should show forth the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

Dearly beloved I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul: having your behaviour honest among the unbelievers that whereas they speak evil against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the King, as supreme; or unto Governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as servants of God. Honour all men, Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the King. Servants be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also the froward. For this is thankworthy if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully, for what glory is it, if, when you be buffeted for your faults, ye take it patiently? but if, when you do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were you called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving an example, that you should follow in His steps: who did no sin, neither was lying found in his mouth: who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness by whose stripes you were healed. For you were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

Likewise, you wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of the putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands: even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters you are as long as you do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

Likewise you husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life: that your prayers be not hindered. Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing For he that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him hate evil,

and do good; let him seek peace, and follow after it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are opened unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and reverence: having a good conscience; that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good behaviour in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which were sometime disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the Ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us(not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him.

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he should no longer live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men but to the will of God." For the time of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the heathen, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries:

wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: Who shall give an account to Him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead, for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit. But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things have a fervent love amongst yourselves: for love shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As everyman hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God: if any man serve, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever Amen. Beloved think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody(nosey parker) in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God. And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly sinner appear? Wherefore let him that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint but willingly; not for filthy money, but of a ready mind; neither as being lord over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder.

Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. Casting all your care upon him for he careth for you. Be serious, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking who he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace(not some grace), who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that you have suffered a while, make you perfect(or mature), stablish, strengthen, settle you. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever Amen. By Sylvanus a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein you stand. "The Church that is in Babylon, elect together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son. Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen.