

KEY STATEMENTS FOR THE 2024 THANKSGIVING BLENDING CONFERENCE

**Although the subject of 1 and 2 Peter is God's government,
we need to see that everything concerning God's government
should bring us back to the central focus and basic structure of these Epistles—
the Triune God as our full enjoyment to carry out the economy of God.**

**The preciousness of Peter's writing is that
he combines the Christian life and God's government,
revealing that the Christian life and the government of God go together as a pair.**

**"The God of all grace"—who has called the believers into His eternal glory—
perfects, establishes, strengthens, and grounds them through their sufferings;
this "all grace" is the "true grace of God,"
into which the believers should enter and in which they stand.**

**As believers in Christ, we may become a reproduction of Christ as our model,
and we can experience and enjoy Christ as the Shepherd of our souls.**

**Outline of the Messages
for the Thanksgiving Blending Conference
November 28—December 1, 2024**

**GENERAL SUBJECT:
LIVING A CHRISTIAN LIFE AND CHURCH LIFE
UNDER THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD FOR THE ECONOMY OF GOD**

Message One

The Government of God for the Economy of God

Scripture Reading: 1 Pet. 1:2-3, 5, 10-12, 20; 2:1-5, 9; 3:4; 4:14; 5:10;
2 Pet. 1:4; 3:13, 18

I. The subject of Peter's Epistles is the government of God with His judgment:

- A. God's judgment began from the angels (2 Pet. 2:3-4) and passed through the generations of man in the Old Testament (vv. 5-9).
- B. In the New Testament age it begins from the house of God (1 Pet. 1:17; 2:23; 4:6, 17) and continues until the coming of the day of the Lord (2 Pet. 3:10), which will be a day of judgment on the Jews, the believers, and the Gentiles before the millennium (v. 12).
- C. After the millennium all the dead, including men and demons, will be judged and will perish (1 Pet. 4:5; 2 Pet. 3:7), and the heavens and the earth will be consumed by fire (vv. 10b, 12).
- D. The results of the various judgments are not the same; some judgments result in a disciplinary dealing, some in a dispensational punishment, and some in eternal perdition—2:1, footnote 5, point 2.
- E. However, by all these judgments the Lord God will clear up and purify the entire universe that He may have a new heaven and a new earth for a new universe filled with His righteousness (3:13) for His delight.
- F. God's governmental judgment can also be seen in the book of Daniel:
 1. Because Nebuchadnezzar's "heart was lifted up and his spirit became so arrogant that he conducted himself in pride, he was deposed from his royal throne, and his glory was taken away from him" (5:20); God said that his kingdom would be assured to him after he had "come to know that the heavens do rule" (4:26; 5:21).
 2. Although his descendant Belshazzar knew all this, his debauchery before God was an insult to God's holiness, and Daniel told him that "the God in whose hand is your breath and to whom all your ways belong, you have not honored" (vv. 22-23); thus, his kingdom was "divided and given to the Medes and Persians" (v. 28).
- G. Thus, Peter tells us that we should "pass the time of your sojourning in fear" (1 Pet. 1:17); he also says that we need to "be humbled under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time" (5:6); to be willing to be made low by God's humbling hand in His discipline is a prerequisite to our being made high by God's exalting hand and to our enjoying the Triune God Himself as our life supply, which is multiplied in the humble believer (v. 5; 1:2; 4:10).

H. To fear the Lord is to revere Him and to consider and regard Him in everything (Psa. 86:11; Isa. 11:2; Prov. 1:7; 3:5-10), never forgetting that He is the wonderful God who has created us (Isa. 43:7); fearing the Lord stops us from doing evil; it also causes us to be touched by the sufferings of others and to show mercy and compassion to them.

II. Although the subject of 1 and 2 Peter is God's government, this is not the central focus and basic structure of these Epistles; everything concerning God's government should bring us back to the central focus and basic structure of these Epistles—the Triune God as our full enjoyment to carry out the economy of God:

- A. The central focus and basic structure of 1 and 2 Peter are the energizing Triune God operating in His economy to bring His chosen ones into the full enjoyment of the Triune God; our human spirit, as the hidden man of the heart, and God's Spirit, as the Spirit of glory and as the Spirit of Christ, are the means for us to partake of God, in His divine nature, as our portion—1 Pet. 1:2-3, 5, 11; 2:1-3, 5, 9; 3:4; 4:14; 5:10; 2 Pet. 1:4.
- B. The central focus and basic structure of 1 and 2 Peter are the Triune God operating to accomplish His complete salvation so that we may be regenerated, so that we may feed on His word, and so that we may grow, be transformed, and be built up in order that He may have a dwelling place and we may be glorified to express Him—1 Pet. 1:23; 2:1-5, 9.
- C. Peter was bold in admitting that the early apostles, such as John, Paul, and himself (although their style, terminology, utterance, certain aspects of their views, and the way they presented their teachings differed), participated in the same, unique ministry, the ministry of the New Testament—2 Pet. 1:12-21; 3:2, 15-16; 2 Cor. 3:6, 8-9; 4:1.
- D. Such a ministry ministers to people, as its focus, the all-inclusive Christ as the embodiment of the Triune God, who, after passing through the processes of incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, dispenses Himself through the redemption of Christ and by the operation of the Holy Spirit into His redeemed people as their unique portion of life and as their life supply and everything, for the building up of the church as the Body of Christ, which will consummate in the full expression, the fullness, of the Triune God, according to the eternal purpose of the Father—Acts 2:36; 3:13, 15; 10:36; 1 Pet. 1:2-3, 18-19, 23; 2:2-5, 7, 9, 25; 3:7; 4:10, 17; 5:2, 4, 10; 2 Pet. 1:2-4; 3:18.

III. In his two Epistles, comprising only eight chapters, Peter covers the entire economy of God, from eternity past before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:2, 20) to the new heavens and new earth in eternity future (2 Pet. 3:13); he unveils the crucial things related to God's economy, concerning which things the prophets prophesied and the apostles preached (1 Pet. 1:10-12) from four sides:

- A. From the side of the Triune God:
 - 1. God the Father chose a people in eternity according to His foreknowledge (vv. 1-2; 2:9) and called them into His glory (2 Pet. 1:3).
 - 2. Christ, foreknown by God before the foundation of the world but manifested in the last times (1 Pet. 1:20), has redeemed and saved God's chosen people (vv. 18-19, 2) by His vicarious death (2:24; 3:18) through His resurrection in life and ascension in power (1:3; 3:21-22).

3. The Spirit, sent from heaven, has sanctified and purified those whom Christ has redeemed and saved (1:2, 12, 22; 4:14)—the angels long to look into these things (1:12).
 4. The Triune God's divine power has provided the redeemed ones with all things that relate to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3-4) to guard them unto full salvation (1 Pet. 1:5).
 5. God also disciplines them (5:6) by some of His varied governmental judgments (1:17; 2:23; 4:5-6, 17; 2 Pet. 2:3-4, 9; 3:7), and He will perfect, establish, strengthen, and ground them by His all grace (1 Pet. 5:10).
 6. The Lord is long-suffering toward them that they all may have opportunity to repent unto salvation—2 Pet. 3:9, 15.
 7. Then, Christ will appear in glory with His full salvation for His lovers—1 Pet. 1:5, 7-9, 13; 4:13; 5:4.
- B. From the side of the believers:
1. The believers, as God's possession, were chosen by God (1:2; 2:9), called by His glory and virtue (v. 9; 3:9; 2 Pet. 1:3, 10), redeemed by Christ (1 Pet. 1:18-19), regenerated by God through His living word (vv. 3, 23), and saved through the resurrection of Christ (3:21).
 2. They now are being guarded by the power of God (1:5), are being purified to love one another (v. 22), are growing by feeding on the milk of the word (2:2), are developing in life the spiritual virtues (2 Pet. 1:5-8), and are being transformed and built up into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood to serve God (1 Pet. 2:4-5, 9).
 3. They are God's chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation, and peculiar people for His private possession to express His virtues—v. 9.
 4. They are being disciplined by His governmental judgment (1:17; 2:19-21; 3:9, 14, 17; 4:6, 12-19; 5:6, 9), are living a holy life in an excellent manner and in godliness to glorify Him (1:15; 2:12; 3:1-2), are ministering as good stewards of His varied grace for His glorification through Christ (4:10-11)—under the elders' exemplary shepherding (5:1-4)—and are expecting and hastening the coming of the Lord (1:13; 2 Pet. 3:12) in order to be richly supplied with an entrance into the eternal kingdom of the Lord (1:11).
 5. Further, they are expecting the new heavens and new earth, in which righteousness dwells, in eternity (3:13), and they are growing continually in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (v. 18).
- C. From the side of Satan—Satan is the believers' adversary, the devil, who as a roaring lion is walking about, seeking someone to devour—1 Pet. 5:8.
- D. From the side of the universe:
1. The fallen angels were condemned and are awaiting eternal judgment (2 Pet. 2:4); the ancient ungodly world was destroyed by a flood (v. 5; 3:6); the ungodly cities were reduced to ashes (2:6); the false teachers and heretical mockers in the apostasy and mankind in his evil living will all be judged unto destruction (vv. 1, 3, 9-10, 12; 3:3-4, 7; 1 Pet. 4:5); the heavens and the earth will be burned up (2 Pet. 3:7, 10-11); and all the dead men and the demons will be judged (1 Pet. 4:5).
 2. Then the new heavens and new earth will come as a new universe, in which God's righteousness will dwell for eternity—2 Pet. 3:13; cf. Isa. 1:26.

Message Two

Living a Christian Life under the Government of God

Scripture Reading: 1 Pet. 1:17; 2:21-24; 4:17-19; 5:6

I. The Epistles of 1 and 2 Peter are on the universal government of God:

- A. The subject of 1 Peter is the Christian life under the government of God, showing us the government of God especially in His dealings with His chosen people—1:2.
- B. The subject of 2 Peter is the divine provision and the divine government, showing us that as God is governing us, He supplies us with whatever we need—1:1-4; 3:13.
- C. God governs by judging; the judgment of God is for the carrying out of His government—1 Pet. 1:17; 4:17:
 - 1. Because 1 and 2 Peter are concerned with the government of God, in these Epistles the judgment of God and of the Lord is referred to repeatedly as one of the essential items—1 Pet. 2:23; 4:5-6, 17; 2 Pet. 2:3-4, 9; 3:7.
 - 2. Through various kinds of judgments, the Lord God will clear up the entire universe and purify it so that He may have a new heaven and a new earth for a new universe filled with His righteousness for His delight—v. 13.
- D. The judgment in 1 Peter 1:17, which is carried out by the Father, is not the future judgment but is the present, daily judgment of God's governmental dealings with His children:
 - 1. The Father has regenerated us to produce a holy family—a holy Father with holy children—vv. 3, 15, 17.
 - 2. As holy children, we should walk in a holy manner of life (vv. 15-16); otherwise, in His government God the Father will become the Judge and will deal with our unholiness (4:15-17; Heb. 12:9-10).
- E. The disciplinary judgment in the government of God begins from the house of God—1 Pet. 4:17:
 - 1. God judges everything that does not match His government; therefore, in this age we, the children of God, are under the daily judgment of God—1:17.
 - 2. God uses fiery ordeals to deal with the believers in the judgment of His governmental administration, which begins from His own house—4:12, 17.
 - 3. The purpose of this judgment is that we would live according to God in the spirit—v. 6.

II. The preciousness of Peter's writings is that he combines the Christian life and God's government, revealing that the Christian life and the government of God go together as a pair—1 Pet. 1:17; 2:21, 24; 3:15; 4:17; 5:5-8:

- A. The Triune God has passed through a long process in Christ and has become the life-giving Spirit to indwell us; this is for our Christian life—John 1:14; 14:17; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 6:17.
- B. At the same time, the Triune God is still the Creator of the universe and its Ruler—1 Pet. 4:19.
- C. Although we have been born of God to have a spiritual life and to be a new creation, we are still in the old creation—John 1:12-13; 3:3, 5-6; 2 Cor. 5:17:
 - 1. For this reason, we need God's governmental dealings—1 Pet. 1:17.

2. In order for the Christian life to grow, we need the discipline of God's government—2:2; 4:17; 2 Pet. 1:5-7.

III. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He lived a human life that was absolutely under the government of God, and He committed everything related to Him to God's government—John 6:38; 1 Pet. 2:21-23:

- A. The Lord kept committing all His insults and injuries to Him who judges righteously in His government, the righteous God, to whom He submitted Himself; He put His trust in this righteous One, recognizing His government—v. 23.
- B. When God counseled Christ as a man, Christ's inward parts were one with God and instructed Him through His contact with God—Psa. 16:7; Isa. 50:4.

IV. As believers in Christ and children of God, we should live a Christian life under the government of God—John 3:15; 1:12-13; 1 Pet. 4:13-19; 5:6-8:

- A. The Epistles of Peter reveal the Christ who enables us to take God's governmental dealings administered through sufferings—1 Pet. 1:6-8; 2:3-4, 19, 21-25; 3:18, 22; 4:1, 15-16; 5:8-9.
- B. We should pass the time of our sojourning in holy fear, that is, in a healthy, serious caution that leads us to be holy in all our manner of life—1:15, 17.
- C. We should be humbled under the mighty hand of God, which carries out the government of God—5:6:
 1. In verse 6 *the mighty hand of God* refers to God's administrating hand seen especially in His judgment—1:17; 4:17.
 2. To be humbled under God's mighty hand is to be made humble by God; however, we must cooperate with God's operation and be willing to be made humble, lowly, under His mighty hand—5:6.
- D. We should commit our souls to the faithful Creator—4:19:
 1. God can preserve our soul, and His loving and faithful care accompanies His justice in His governmental administration.
 2. While God judges us in His government, He cares for us faithfully in His love; as we are suffering His disciplinary judgment, we should commit our souls to the faithful care of our Creator—Matt. 10:28; 11:28-29.
- E. In the death of Christ we have died to sins so that in the resurrection of Christ we might live to righteousness under God's government—1 Pet. 2:24:
 1. God's government is established upon righteousness (Psa. 89:14a); as God's people living under His government, we must live a righteous life.
 2. The expression *live to righteousness* is related to the fulfilling of God's governmental requirements—1 Pet. 2:24:
 - a. We were saved so that we might live rightly under the government of God, that is, in a way that matches the righteous requirements of His government.
 - b. In Christ's death we have been separated from sins, and in His resurrection we have been enlivened so that in our Christian life we might live spontaneously to righteousness under the government of God—Rom. 6:8, 10-11, 18; Eph. 2:6; John 14:19; 2 Tim. 2:11.

Message Three

Life and Building in Peter's Epistles

Scripture Reading: 1 Pet. 1:8; 2:1-5, 9; 2 Pet. 1:3-4

I. The central thought of Peter's Epistles and of the entire Scripture is life and building—1 Pet. 1:23; 2:2-5; 2 Pet. 1:3-4:

- A. Life is the Triune God embodied in Christ and realized as the Spirit dispensing Himself into us for our enjoyment, and building is the church, the Body of Christ, God's spiritual house, as the enlargement and expansion of God for the corporate expression of God—Gen. 2:8-9, 22; Matt. 16:18; Col. 2:19; Eph. 4:16.
- B. Christ as the seed of life is the power of life within us that has granted to us all things which relate to life and godliness for the building up of the church as the rich surplus of life and the expression of life through the growth and development of life—2 Pet. 1:3-4; cf. Acts 3:15; *Hymns*, #203, stanza 4.

II. God's goal is to have a spiritual house built up with living stones—1 Pet. 2:5:

- A. As life to us, Christ is the incorruptible seed; for God's building, He is the living stone—1:23; 2:4.
- B. At Peter's conversion the Lord gave him a new name, Peter—a stone (John 1:42); when Peter received the revelation concerning Christ, the Lord revealed further that He was the rock—a stone (Matt. 16:18); by these two incidents Peter received the impression that both Christ and His believers are living stones for God's building (1 Pet. 2:4-8; Acts 4:20; Isa. 28:16; Zech. 4:7).
- C. We, the believers in Christ, are living stones as the duplication of Christ through regeneration and transformation; we were created of clay (Rom. 9:21), but at regeneration we received the seed of the divine life, which by its growing in us transforms us into living stones (1 Pet. 2:5).

III. Since God's building is living, it is growing; the actual building up of the church as the house of God is by the believers' growth in life—Eph. 2:21:

- A. In order to grow in life for God's building, we must love the Lord, take heed to our spirit, and guard our heart with all vigilance to stay on the pathway of life—1 Pet. 1:8; 2:2, 5; 3:4, 15; Prov. 4:18-23; Deut. 10:12; Mark 12:30.
- B. If we want Christ's life to be unhindered in us, we must experience the breaking of the cross, the killing death of Christ in the all-inclusive Spirit of Christ as the Spirit of glory, so that the following obstacles within us can be dealt with and removed—1 Pet. 1:11; 4:14; Psa. 139:23-24:
 - 1. Being a Christian means not taking anything other than Christ as our aim; the obstacle to this is not knowing the pathway of life and not taking Christ as our life—Matt. 7:13-14; Phil. 3:8-14; Col. 3:4; Rom. 8:28-29.
 - 2. The second obstacle is hypocrisy; a person's spirituality is not determined by outward appearance but by how he takes care of Christ—Matt. 6:1-6; 15:7-8; John 5:44; 12:42-43; cf. Josh. 7:21.
 - 3. The third obstacle is rebellion; we may be very active and zealous in doing things but still imprison and disobey the living Christ within us by ignoring Him—Lev. 14:9, 14-18; 11:1-2, 46-47; Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 15:33.
 - 4. The fourth obstacle is our natural capabilities; if these natural capabilities remain unbroken in us, they will become a problem to Christ's life—2:14-15; 3:12, 16-17; Jude 19; cf. Lev. 10:1-2.

- C. In order to grow in life for God's building, we must put away "all malice and all guile and hypocrisies and envyings and all evil speakings"—1 Pet. 2:1.
- D. In order to grow in life for God's building, we must be nourished with the guileless milk of God's word—v. 2:
 - 1. The guileless milk is conveyed in the word of God to nourish our inner man through the understanding of our rational mind and is assimilated by our mental faculties—Rom. 8:6; cf. Deut. 11:18.
 - 2. Although the nourishing milk of the word is for the soul through the mind, it eventually nourishes the spirit, making us not soulish but spiritual, suitable for being built up as a spiritual house of God—cf. 1 Cor. 2:15.
 - 3. In order to enjoy the milk of the word, to taste God with His goodness in the word, we must receive His word by means of all prayer and muse on His word—1 Pet. 2:3; Eph. 6:17-18; Psa. 119:15, 23, 48, 78, 99, 148:
 - a. To muse on the word is to taste and enjoy it through careful considering—1 Pet. 2:2-3; Psa. 119:103.
 - b. Prayer, speaking to oneself, and praising the Lord may also be included in musing on the word; to muse on the word is to "chew the cud," to receive the word of God through much reconsideration—Lev. 11:3.
 - 4. By feeding on Christ as the nourishing milk in the word, we grow unto full salvation, unto maturity through transformation for glorification; salvation in 1 Peter 2:2 is a matter of transformation for God's building.
 - 5. We enjoy the "milk-Christ" to nourish us so that we may be transformed with Him as the "stone-Christ" and be built up as the "Body-Christ," as God's spiritual house into a holy priesthood—vv. 2-4; 1 Cor. 12:12-13.

IV. The holy priesthood, the coordinated body of priests, is the built-up spiritual house; God wants a spiritual house for His dwelling and a priestly body, a corporate priesthood, for His service—1 Pet. 2:5; Exo. 19:5-6:

- A. We are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people acquired for a possession" (1 Pet. 2:9)—*chosen race* denotes our descent from God; *royal priesthood*, our service to God; *holy nation*, our being a community for God; and *people acquired for a possession*, our preciousness to God.
- B. Our corporate priestly service is to tell out as the gospel the virtues of the One who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (v. 9) so that we may "offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (v. 5b); these spiritual sacrifices are:
 - 1. Christ as the reality of all the sacrifices of the Old Testament types, such as the burnt offering, meal offering, peace offering, sin offering, and trespass offering—Lev. 1—5.
 - 2. The sinners saved by our gospel preaching, offered as members of Christ—Rom. 15:16.
 - 3. Our body, our praises, and the things we do for God—12:1; Heb. 13:15-16; Phil. 4:18.
- C. All our priestly service to the Lord must originate from Him as "the God of measure" and not from ourselves; all our priestly service must be according to His leading and His limitation, as we allow His death to operate in us, so that His resurrection life can be imparted through us into others—2 Cor. 10:13; John 12:24; 21:15-22; 2 Sam. 7:18, 25, 27; Luke 1:37-38; *Hymns*, #907.

Message Four

Becoming a Reproduction of Christ and Experiencing Christ as the Shepherd of Our Souls

Scripture Reading: 1 Pet. 2:21-23, 25; Matt. 11:28-30; Phil. 1:27; 2:2

I. As believers in Christ, we may become a reproduction of Christ as our model—1 Pet. 2:21:

- A. The living of the Lord Jesus under the government of God is a model so that we may follow in His steps by becoming His reproduction—vv. 21-23; Eph. 4:20-21.
- B. The Greek word for *model* in 1 Peter 2:21 denotes a master copy used in the teaching of writing—a writing copy, an underwriting, for students to use in tracing letters as they learn to draw them:
 1. The Lord Jesus has set His life before us as an underwriting for us to copy by tracing and following His steps—Matt. 11:28-30.
 2. It is not God’s intention that we try to imitate Christ by our own effort; what we need is not imitation but reproduction—Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18.
- C. We need to become Christ’s reproduction, copies of Christ, by a process that involves the riches of the divine life; when this process is completed, we will become a reproduction of Christ—John 3:15; Eph. 3:8.
- D. The making of xerox copies may be used to illustrate what Peter means by Christ being a model for us.
- E. In order to become a reproduction of Christ as our model, we need to experience Christ as the One living in us, being formed in us, and making His home in our hearts—Gal. 2:20; 4:19; Eph. 3:16-17a:
 1. The New Testament reveals that Christ is deeply related to our inner being—Gal. 1:16; Col. 3:10-11.
 2. The pneumatic Christ—Christ as the life-giving Spirit—is living in us—1 Cor. 15:45b; Gal. 2:20:
 - a. God’s economy is that the “I” be crucified in Christ’s death and that Christ live in us in His resurrection—John 14:19.
 - b. We are one spirit with the Lord, we have one life with Him, and we should now be one person with Him—1 Cor. 6:17; Col. 3:4; Phil. 1:21a.
 - c. Since Christ dwells in us as the Spirit, we need to let Him live in us—John 14:16-19; Gal. 2:20.
 3. To have Christ formed in us is to have Christ fully grown in us—4:19:
 - a. Christ was born into us at the time we repented and believed in Him, then He lives in us in our Christian life, and finally, He will be formed in us at our maturity—John 1:12-13; 3:15; Gal. 2:20; 4:19.
 - b. To have Christ formed in us is to allow the all-inclusive Spirit to occupy every part of our inner being, to have Christ fully grown in us—Col. 2:19; Eph. 4:15-16.
 - c. To have Christ formed in us implies that we are being constituted with Christ organically—Col. 3:10-11.
 - d. *Formed* in Galatians 4:19 corresponds to *image* in 2 Corinthians 3:18; Christ will be formed in us so that we may express Him in His image.
 4. The Christ who lives in us and who is being formed in us is making His home in our hearts—Eph. 3:16-17a.

5. As Christ lives in us, is formed in us, and makes His home in our hearts, we become a reproduction of Christ for the corporate expression of God—Rom. 8:29; 12:4-5; Rev. 21:2.

II. As we become a reproduction of Christ, we can experience and enjoy Christ as the Shepherd of our souls—1 Pet. 2:25; Matt. 11:28-30; Phil. 1:27; 2:2:

- A. As the Shepherd of our souls, the pneumatic Christ oversees our inward condition, caring for the situation of our inner being:
 1. Christ's organic shepherding primarily takes care of our soul—Psa. 23:3.
 2. Christ shepherds us by caring for the welfare of our soul and by exercising His oversight over the condition of our inner being—cf. Heb. 13:17.
 3. This kind of shepherding is an inward, intrinsic, organic comforting.
- B. Because our soul is very complicated, we need Christ, who is the life-giving Spirit in our spirit, to shepherd us in our soul, to take care of our mind, emotion, and will and our problems, needs, and wounds—John 14:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 6:17:
 1. As our pneumatic Shepherd, Christ takes care of us from within our spirit.
 2. His shepherding begins from our spirit and spreads to every part of our soul.
 3. From our spirit Christ reaches all the parts of our soul and takes care of us in a tender, organic, all-inclusive way.
- C. As the Shepherd of our souls, Christ restores our soul—Psa. 23:3a:
 1. For our soul to be restored means that we are revived.
 2. Restoring our soul also includes renewing and transforming—Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18.
- D. As the Shepherd of our souls, the Lord gives rest to our soul—Matt. 11:28-30:
 1. The Lord calls those who are striving to keep the law or struggling to be successful in any work to come to Him for rest—v. 28.
 2. This rest refers not only to being set free from the toil and burden under the law or religion or under any work or responsibility but also to perfect peace and full satisfaction.
 3. To take the Lord's yoke is to take the will of the Father—12:50.
 4. The Lord lived such a life, constrained by and caring for the will of His Father (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38); He was fully satisfied with the Father's will and had rest in His heart.
 5. The rest that we find by taking the Lord's yoke and learning from Him is an inward rest, a rest for our souls—Matt. 11:29-30.
- E. As the Lord shepherds our soul and restores our soul, we not only experience Christ but also enjoy Him—Phil. 2:2; 3:1a:
 1. The experience of Christ is a matter primarily in our spirit, but the enjoyment of Christ is in our soul—1:27; 2:2.
 2. If there is a problem with our soul, we may have the experience of Christ without the enjoyment of Christ.
 3. Regarding Christ, our taste is mainly with our soul; this is the reason that in order to have the enjoyment of Christ, we need the Lord to shepherd every part of our soul, especially our mind.

Message Five

Grace in Peter's Epistles

Scripture Reading: 1 Pet. 1:2b, 10, 13; 2:19-20; 3:7; 4:10; 5:5, 10, 12;
2 Pet. 1:2; 3:18

- I. Grace is Christ Himself as our enjoyment—grace is the resurrected Christ as the life-giving Spirit giving Himself freely to us, being everything to us, and doing everything in us, through us, and for us—John 1:14, 16-17; Isa. 55:1; 2 Cor. 1:8-9, 12; Gal. 2:20; cf. 1 Cor. 15:10.**
- II. The multiplication of grace is the grace that multiplies in our daily life in the full knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; the grace of God in His economy is rich, multiplying, and abounding—1 Pet. 1:2b; 2 Pet. 1:2; John 1:16; Eph. 1:6-8; 2:7; Rom. 5:17, 21; 1 Tim. 1:14; Rev. 22:21:**
 - A. Grace is multiplied to us through our sufferings, limitations, and weaknesses; grace is Christ as our burden bearer; the more burdens we have, the more opportunities we have to experience Christ as grace—2 Cor. 12:7-9; cf. 1:12, 15.
 - B. The enjoyment of the Lord as grace is with those who love Him—Eph. 6:24; John 21:15-17; 1 Pet. 1:8.
 - C. The enjoyment of the Lord as grace with His divine nature is by our receiving and abiding in the word of His grace, which includes all His precious and exceedingly great promises—Acts 20:32; 2 Pet. 1:4; Eph. 6:17-18.
- III. The prophets in the Old Testament prophesied concerning the grace that was to come unto us—1 Pet. 1:10:**
 - A. The Spirit of Christ in the Old Testament prophets made them clear concerning Christ coming as grace to us through His incarnation, His sufferings in His human living and crucifixion, and His glories in His resurrection, ascension, second coming, and reigning for the application of God's full salvation to us—vv. 5, 9-10; cf. Psa. 22; Isa. 53; Dan. 9:26.
 - B. Although the Spirit of Christ was constituted dispensationally through and with Christ's death and resurrection in the New Testament time (John 7:39; Rom. 8:9-11), the function of the Spirit is eternal, because He is the eternal Spirit (Heb. 9:14).
 - C. The Spirit of Christ, in His eternal function, was in the Old Testament prophets, making them clear concerning Christ coming to the New Testament believers to be the all-sufficient and unlimited grace of God's full salvation to them for their entry into the joy of the Lord in the kingdom age, which is the salvation of their souls—John 1:17; Heb. 10:29b; 1 Pet. 1:9; Matt. 25:21, 23.
 - D. The Spirit of Christ applies God's full salvation as grace to us by two instrumentalities: the prophesying of the Old Testament prophets and the preaching of the New Testament apostles—1 Pet. 1:10-12; cf. Rev. 2:7a.
- IV. The grace on which the believers set their hope perfectly will be brought to the believers at the revelation of Jesus Christ—1 Pet. 1:13:**
 - A. The grace being brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ refers to the salvation of the soul as the consummation of God's full salvation—vv. 5, 9-10:
 1. The grace given to us in Christ was bestowed on us before the world began—2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 2:11.

2. God, who was in the beginning, became flesh in time as grace for man to receive, possess, and enjoy—John 1:1, 14, 16-17.
 3. The processed Triune God, who has been consummated as the all-inclusive, life-giving, and indwelling Spirit, has become the Spirit of grace with our spirit—1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:17; Heb. 10:29; Gal. 6:18; Phil. 4:23.
- B. Day by day we should be open vessels to be continual receivers of grace and set our hope wholly and perfectly on this grace—Rom. 5:17; 1 Pet. 1:13.

V. *Grace with God in 1 Peter 2:19-20* refers to the motivation of the divine life within us and its expression in our living, which becomes in our behavior gracious and acceptable in the eyes of both man and God:

- A. Grace as the processed Triune God for our enjoyment becomes our inward motivation and outward expression in our intimate fellowship with God and our consciousness of God; we all have to learn how to have grace, which is to take grace, possess grace, use grace, and apply grace—Heb. 12:28.
- B. The processed Triune God as grace received and enjoyed by us becomes visibly expressed for others to see in our holy living and church meetings—Acts 11:23.
- C. We have been called to enjoy and express Christ as grace in the midst of sufferings so that we may become a reproduction, a xerox copy, of Christ as our model, according to His God-man living—1 Pet. 2:20-21.

VI. *The grace of life is the inheritance of all the believers, whether strong or weak—3:7:*

- A. The grace of life is God as life and life supply to us in His Divine Trinity—the Father as the source of life, the Son as the course of life, and the Spirit as the flow of life, who flows within us, with the Son and the Father, as grace to us—John 7:38-39; Rev. 22:1.
- B. We are heirs to inherit the grace of life and vessels to contain the grace of life—1 Pet. 3:7; Eph. 1:14; 2 Cor. 4:7.

VII. *The varied grace of God indicates the riches of the grace of God in its varieties ministered by the saints one to another—1 Pet. 4:10:*

- A. The varied grace of God is the rich supply of life, which is the Triune God ministered into us in many aspects—2 Cor. 13:14; 12:9.
- B. We need to be good stewards of the varied grace of God, speaking the words of grace as the oracles of God and ministering out of the strength and power of grace, which God supplies—1 Pet. 4:10-11; Luke 4:22; Eph. 3:2; 4:29.

VIII. *God gives grace to the humble while He resists the proud—1 Pet. 5:5:*

- A. In the church life, all of us need to gird ourselves with humility toward one another so that we may enjoy God as the Grace-giver—cf. John 13:3-5.
- B. Humility saves us from all kinds of destruction and invites God's grace, whereas pride makes us a top fool—James 4:6; Psa. 138:6; Prov. 29:23.
- C. We must be willing to be made humble, lowly, under the mighty hand of God in His discipline and to throw our life with its care upon God, because He cares for us lovingly and faithfully—1 Pet. 5:5-7; cf. Psa. 55:22.

IX. *“The God of all grace”—who has called the believers into His eternal glory—perfects, establishes, strengthens, and grounds them through their sufferings; this “all grace” is the “true grace of God,” into which the believers should enter and in which they stand—1 Pet. 5:10, 12.*

X. The true grace of God is the grace in which, together with the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the believers should grow unto His glory both now and unto the day of eternity—2 Pet. 3:18:

- A. This is the concluding word of the apostle Peter's writings, indicating that whatever he has written is of, in, by, and through the grace of God.
- B. The product of the grace in God's economy is the Body of Christ as God's poem to be the New Jerusalem as the consummation of God's righteousness in the new heavens and new earth—Eph. 2:7-10; 2 Pet. 3:13.
- C. The riches of God's grace, the riches of God Himself for our enjoyment, surpass every limit and will be publicly displayed for eternity—Eph. 2:7.

Message Six

**Partakers of the Divine Nature
and the Development of the Divine Life
and the Divine Nature
for a Rich Entrance into the Eternal Kingdom**

Scripture Reading: 2 Pet. 1:1, 3-11; 3:18

I. As those who have received equally precious faith, we, the believers in Christ, should be partakers of the divine nature—2 Pet. 1:4:

- A. The divine nature refers to what God is, that is, the riches, the elements, and the constituents of God's being—John 4:24; 1 John 1:5; 4:8, 16.
- B. The divine life and the divine nature are inseparable; the divine nature is the substance of the divine life and is within the divine life—1:1-2; 5:11-13.
- C. As the children of God, we are God-men, born of God, possessing the life and nature of God, and belonging to the species of God—3:1; John 1:12-13:
 - 1. At our regeneration, another nature was imparted into us; this is the nature of God, the divine nature—2 Pet. 1:4.
 - 2. Because the divine nature is in the divine life, the divine life with which we were born again has the divine nature within it—John 3:3, 5-6, 15.
 - 3. Whoever believes into the Son of God is born of God and has the right to become a child of God; thus, a believer has the right to partake of, to enjoy, the nature of God—1:12-13.
- D. A partaker of the divine nature is one who enjoys the divine nature and participates in the divine nature—2 Pet. 1:4:
 - 1. To partake of the divine nature is to enjoy what God is; to be a partaker of the divine nature is to be a partaker of the riches, the elements, and the constituents of God's being—1 Pet. 1:8.
 - 2. If we would be partakers of the divine nature, we need to live by the divine life within which is the divine nature—John 1:4; 10:10; 11:25; 6:57b.
- E. We enjoy the riches of the divine nature through God's precious and exceedingly great promises—2 Cor. 12:9; Matt. 28:20b; Eph. 3:20.
- F. Being a partaker of the divine nature has a condition—that we escape the corruption which is in the world by lust; we need to live in the cycle of escaping and partaking and of partaking and escaping—2 Pet. 1:4.
- G. If we enjoy God and partake of the riches of His being, we will be constituted with the divine nature, becoming the same as God in life and nature but not in the Godhead and expressing Him in all that we are and do—v. 3.
- H. As we partake of the divine nature, enjoying all that God is, the riches of the divine nature will be fully developed, as described in verses 5 through 7.

II. We need to experience the development of the divine life and the divine nature contained in the divine seed that has been sown into us so that we may have a rich entrance into the eternal kingdom—vv. 1, 4-11:

- A. We have been allotted the wonderful equally precious faith, and this faith is an all-inclusive seed—v. 1:
 - 1. All the divine riches are in this seed, but we must be diligent to develop them; to grow to maturity is to develop what we already have—vv. 1-8; 3:18.

2. By developing these virtues, we grow in life, and eventually we will reach maturity, be full of Christ, and be qualified and equipped to be kings in the coming kingdom—Eph. 4:13-15; Col. 2:19; 2 Pet. 1:11.
 3. We need to have the full development and maturity from the seed of faith, through the roots of virtue and knowledge, the trunk of self-control, and the branches of endurance and godliness, to the blossom and fruit of brotherly love and love—vv. 5-7.
- B. To supply virtue in faith is to develop virtue—the energy of the divine life issuing in vigorous action—in the exercise of the equally precious faith; this faith needs to be exercised so that the virtue of the divine life may be developed in the succeeding steps and reach maturity—v. 5a.
 - C. Virtue needs the bountiful supply of the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; the knowledge that we should develop in our virtue includes the knowledge of God and of our Savior, the knowledge of God’s economy, the knowledge of what faith is, and the knowledge of the divine power, glory, virtue, nature, and life—v. 5b.
 - D. Self-control is the exercise of control and restraint over one’s self in its passions, desires, and habits; such self-control needs to be exercised in knowledge for the proper growth in life—v. 6a.
 - E. To exercise endurance is to bear with others and with circumstances—v. 6b.
 - F. Godliness is a living that is like God and that expresses God—v. 6c.
 - G. Brotherly love (*philadelphia*) is brotherly affection, a love characterized by delight and pleasure; in godliness, which is the expression of God, this love needs to be supplied for the brotherhood, for our testimony to the world, and for the bearing of fruit—v. 7a; 1 Pet. 2:17; 3:8; Gal. 6:10; John 13:34-35; 15:16-17.
 - H. The ultimate development of the divine nature within us is love—*agape*, the Greek word used in the New Testament for the divine love, which God is in His nature—2 Pet. 1:7b; 1 John 4:8, 16:
 1. Our brotherly love needs to be developed further into a nobler and higher love—2 Pet. 1:7b.
 2. In our enjoyment of the divine nature, we need to let the divine seed of the allotted faith develop to its consummation in the divine and nobler love—vv. 5-7.
 3. When we partake of the divine nature to the uttermost, we are filled with God as love, and we become persons of love, even love itself—Eph. 3:19.
 - I. To develop the spiritual virtues in the divine life and thus to advance in the growth of the divine life makes God’s calling and selection of us firm—2 Pet. 1:10.
 - J. We should be diligent to pursue the growth and development of the divine life and divine nature for a rich entrance into the eternal kingdom—vv. 10-11:
 1. The bountiful supply that we enjoy in the development of the divine life and divine nature (vv. 3-7) will bountifully supply us a rich entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord.
 2. This supply will enable and qualify us to enter into the coming kingdom by all the riches of the divine life and divine nature as our excellent virtues (energy) unto the splendid glory of God—v. 3; 1 Pet. 5:10.
 3. Apparently, it is we who enter into the eternal kingdom; actually, the entrance into the eternal kingdom is supplied to us richly through our growth in life and through the development of the divine life within us.