

“Living & Dying For Love”

John 21:18-19

November 30, 2014

John 21:15-19 (NASB)

*¹⁵ So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus *said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He *said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He *said to him, "Tend My lambs." ¹⁶ He *said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" He *said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He *said to him, "Shepherd My sheep." ¹⁷ He *said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus *said to him, "Tend My sheep.*

¹⁸ "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go."

*¹⁹ Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He *said to him, "**Follow Me!**"*

DEATH AND GLORIFICATION are united so thoroughly in the Fourth Gospel that John regularly refers to Jesus' death simply as "his glorification" (e.g., [12:23](#)). The same correlation now applies to Peter ([21:19](#)). Discipleship for Peter will include not simply a ministry tending the flock of Christ ([21:15-17](#)) but also martyrdom that glorifies God. "I tell you the truth" (NIV) reflects the double formula "truly, truly" (see comment on [1:51](#)), an expression reserved for Jesus' most important sayings. Peter's youth was characterized by freedom. He dressed himself and was free to go where he desired. This may be a well-known proverb in Jesus' day. Old age, by contrast, will be characterized by limitations. At this time Peter will have to be dressed and led about.

While some interpreters think that Jesus is simply referring to Peter's dependence, a strong case can be made for typical Johannine double meaning. In another day, someone will "stretch out your hands," Jesus says to Peter. This language points clearly to crucifixion; the Greek word used here was used by many early Christian writers to represent death on the cross.

If this is true—and I am convinced it is—then we may also have one more allusion to crucifixion in [21:18](#). In old age, Peter will not be "dressed" (NIV), but "bound" (Gk. *zōnnyo*), as many victims were "fastened" with ropes to the cross. Those who lead him will not be charitable, but will force him to go where he does not want to.

We should no doubt read these verses together with [13:36-38](#), where Peter makes his bold promise to "lay down his life" for Jesus. Indeed, Jesus promises, while Peter cannot go where Jesus is going now, Peter will "follow later." Jesus is anticipating his own hour of glorification, and both in [13:37](#) and in [21:18](#) he is prophesying Peter's fate. Peter *will* lay down his life for Jesus ([13:38](#)); he will be crucified too; he will likewise glorify God in the same

manner as his Lord— but this must await a time in the future. "Follow me" in [21:19](#) now takes on a poignant and provocative new meaning. Peter will follow Jesus to the cross.

BRIDGING CONTEXT: THE WORK OF THE CHURCH. In many respects this chapter-long epilogue serves the Gospel much like the final verses of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Matthew ends his Gospel with the Great Commission, where Jesus takes his followers to a Galilee mountain and charges them to go into the world and make disciples ([Matt. 28:16-20](#)). This charge focuses on the church and its work, empowering and commissioning the disciples to nurture and tend the followers of Jesus. Luke's ending is similar ([24:44-53](#)); he shifts the focus to Jerusalem, where Jesus calls them to be his witnesses in the world — men and women empowered by the Holy Spirit, who will testify concerning the events of Jesus' life and bring new followers into discipleship. Again, the topic is the church and its work.

This closing frame of the Gospel of John echoes these same interests but supplements them with concerns of its own. These are not stories that affirm the reality of the resurrection or the truth of Jesus' message. The fishing miracle of chapter 21 is *not* a sign for unbelievers, compelling them to believe in the resurrected Christ. Chapter 21 is an epilogue addressed to the church and its responsibilities and work in the world. The principal story in the chapter—the great catch of fish and Jesus' subsequent conversation around the morning fire—reinforces the apostolic commission to take responsibility for those who come into the kingdom of Christ. Peter is to be fisherman and shepherd; some followers even may be called to be martyrs, but each has a task to glorify God by obediently following Jesus.

Peter's reconciliation to Jesus is a story of Peter's healing. It is no accident that Peter, the man who denied Jesus three times following a bravado-filled promise of faithfulness, now affirms his love for Christ three times. Much can (and ought) to be said for ministers and laypersons who work for Christ but need to have their own confidence in their relationship with him healed.

In order to develop [John 21](#) for an audience today, we should also probe the personal issues in Peter's life and make them a paradigm for personal health in ministry today. The work of the church—the gathering of fish, the nurture of sheep—cannot go forward unless its ministers are healed of their histories and renewed by God's Spirit.

APPLICATION: CHAPTER 21 IS about discipleship and leadership. As its story unfolds, Peter remains in the spotlight (along with the Beloved Disciple, John), modeling for us what it means to shepherd the flock of Christ. The disciples have now not only witnessed the resurrection of Jesus, but they have experienced the Spirit. They know the truth and have experienced the Spirit of truth. One question remains: What will they do with it? Will they simply privatize these spiritual moments with Jesus or will these moments lead them somewhere significant?

The miraculous catch of fish no doubt is *symbol* as well as *surprise*. Jesus is still the disciples' champion, aiding them in the struggle of their labors. But more, he wants to direct their work, and with his help they will find catches beyond their wildest belief. This symbolism can be applied to the church and its work. As Jesus worked through the direction of the Father, so too the disciples must work at the word of Jesus. He is a coworker and with him success is assured.

But with a mix of metaphors, this "catch of fish" now must become a flock that these men learn to nurture and tend. They must look to the model of shepherding given by Jesus, both in his life and in his words (ch. 10). The charge given to Peter must become the charge heard by contemporary church leaders today. Christ's church needs decisive leaders. This has been the case throughout the church's two thousand-year history. But many who would claim to play that role bear the weaknesses and shortcomings shown to us in the life of Peter. In fact, we may well see Peter's literary role in the chapter as a reflection of our own leadership, complete with its personal struggles and wounds. Through Peter's healing we may gain insight into our own.

- NIV Application Commentary

v.18:

Christ, having thus appointed Peter his doing work, next appoints him his suffering work. Having confirmed to him the honour of an apostle, he now tells him of further preferment designed him-the honour of a martyr. Observe,

1. How his martyrdom is foretold ([v. 18](#)): Thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, being compelled to it, and another shall gird thee (as a prisoner that is pinioned) and carry thee whither naturally thou wouldest not.

(1.) He prefaces the notice he gives to Peter of his sufferings with a solemn asseveration, Verily, verily, I say unto thee. It was not spoken of as a thing probable, which perhaps might happen, but as a thing certain, I say it to thee. "Others, perhaps, will say to thee, as thou didst to me, This shall not be unto thee; but I say it shall." As Christ foresaw all his own sufferings, so he foresaw the sufferings of all his followers, and foretold them, though not in particular, as to Peter, yet in

general, that they must take up their cross. Having charged him to feed his sheep, he bids him not to expect ease and honour in it, but trouble and persecution, and to suffer ill for doing well.

(2.) He foretels particularly that he should die a violent death, by the hands of an executioner. The stretching out of his hands, some think, points at the manner of his death by crucifying; and the tradition of the ancients, if we may rely upon that, informs us that Peter was crucified at Rome under Nero, A.D. 68, or, as others say, 79. Others think it points at the bonds and imprisonments which those are hampered with that are sentenced to death. The pomp and solemnity of an execution add much to the terror of death, and to any eye of sense make it look doubly formidable. Death, in these horrid shapes, has often been the lot of Christ's faithful ones, who yet have overcome it by the blood of the Lamb. This prediction, though pointing chiefly at his death, was to have its accomplishment in his previous sufferings. It began to be fulfilled presently, when he was imprisoned, [Acts 6:3](#); [Acts 5:18](#); [Acts 12:4](#). No more is implied here in his being carried whither he would not than that it was a violent death that he should be carried to, such a death as even innocent nature could not think of without dread, nor approach without some reluctance. He that puts on the Christian does not put off the man. Christ himself prayed against the bitter cup. A natural aversion to pain and death is well reconcileable with a holy submission to the will of God in both. Blessed Paul, though longing to be unloaded, owns he cannot desire to be unclothed, [2 Corinthians 5:4](#).

(3.) He compares this with his former liberty. "Time was when thou knewest not any of these hardships, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest." Where trouble comes we are apt to aggravate it with this, that it has been otherwise; and to fret the more at the grievances of restraint, sickness, and poverty, because we have known the sweets of

liberty, health, and plenty, [Job 29:2](#); [Psa. 42:4](#). But we may turn it the other way, and reason thus with ourselves: "How many years of prosperity have I enjoyed more than I deserved and improved? And, having received good, shall I not receive evil also?" See here,

[1.] What a change may possibly be made with us, as to our condition in this world! Those that have girded themselves with strength and honour, and indulged themselves in the greatest liberties, perhaps levities, may be reduced to such circumstances as are the reverse of all this. See [1 Samuel 2:5](#).

[2.] What a change is presently made with those that leave all to follow Christ! They must no longer gird themselves, but he must gird them! and must no longer walk whither they will, but whither he will.

[3.] What a change will certainly be made with us if we should live to be old! Those who, when they were young, had strength of body and vigour of mind, and could easily go through business and hardship, and take the pleasures they had a mind to, when they shall be old, will find their strength gone, like Samson, when his hair was cut and he could not shake himself as at other times.

(4.) Christ tells Peter he should suffer thus in his old age.

[1.] Though he should be old, and in the course of nature not likely to live long, yet his enemies would hasten him out of the world violently when he was about to retire out of it peaceably, and would put out his candle when it was almost burned down to the socket. See [2 Chronicles 36:17](#).

[2.] God would shelter him from the rage of his enemies till he should come to be old, that he might be made the fitter for sufferings, and the church might the longer enjoy his services.

Committed Christians Are Willing to Sacrifice Everything for Christ

"Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go." Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God.
([21:18-19a](#))

Jesus' prophecy of Peter's martyrdom underscores the truth that commitment to Him may require paying the ultimate price. "He who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me," Jesus had told the disciples when He commissioned them. Then He warned, "He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it" ([Matt. 10:38-39](#); cf. [16:24-26](#); [Rom. 14:8](#); [Phil. 1:21](#)).

As it does throughout John's gospel, the solemn phrase **truly, truly** introduces a significant truth ([1:51](#); [3:3,5,11](#); [5:19,24,25](#); [6:26,32,47, 53](#); [8:34,51,58](#); [10:1,7](#); [12:24](#); [13:16,20,21,38](#); [14:12](#); [16:20,23](#)). **When he was younger, Peter used to gird himself and walk wherever he wished;** in other words, he was in control of his actions. **"But,"** Jesus told him, **"when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go."** There would come a time, Jesus warned, when others would seize Peter, bind him, and lead him away to be executed. Peter's death, as the phrase **stretch out your hands** implies, would be by crucifixion.

John's footnote, **Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God,** makes that clear.

Peter spent the last three decades of his life serving the Lord and anticipating his martyrdom. Yet he faced that prospect with confidence, comforted by the knowledge that he would not deny the Lord again, but instead would glorify Him in his death (cf. [1 Peter 4:14-16](#)). According to tradition, Peter was crucified, but requested to be crucified upside down, because he felt unworthy to be crucified like his Lord (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* III.1).

- MacArthur New Testament Commentary

v.19:

Committed Christians Focus on Following Christ's Leading

Following Jesus Christ is the sine qua non of the Christian life. In [John 12:26](#) Jesus put it simply: "If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me." It is the mark of His sheep that they follow Him ([John 10:27](#); cf. [8:12](#)), no matter what the cost ([Matt. 16:24](#); [19:27](#); [Luke 5:11,27-28](#); [9:23-25](#); [18:28](#)). To follow Jesus means not only to be willing to sacrifice everything in submission to His will, but also to obey His commands ([Matt. 7:21](#); [Luke 6:46](#)) and to imitate Him ([1 Thess. 1:6](#); [1 John 2:6](#); cf. [1 Cor. 11:1](#)).

After Jesus **had spoken** His prophecy of Peter's death, **He said to him, "Follow Me!"**

- MacArthur New Testament Commentary

The explication of this prediction ([v. 19](#)), This spoke he to Peter, signifying by what death he should glorify God, when he had finished his course. Observe,

(1.) That it is not only appointed to all once to die, but it is appointed to each what death he shall die, whether natural or violent, slow or sudden, easy or painful. When Paul speaks of so great a death, he intimates that there are degrees of death; ***there is one way into the world, but many ways out, and God has determined which way we should go.***

(2.) That it is the great concern of every good man, whatever death he dies, to glorify God in it; for what is our chief end but this, to die to the Lord, at the word of the Lord? When we die patiently, submitting to the will of God,-die cheerfully, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God,-and die usefully, witnessing to the truth and goodness of religion and encouraging others, we glorify God in dying: and this is the earnest expectation and hope of all good Christians, as it was Paul's, that Christ may be magnified in them living and dying, [Philippians 1:20](#).

(3.) That the death of the martyrs was in a special manner for the glorifying of God. The truths of God, which they died in the defence of, are hereby confirmed. The grace of God, which carried them with so much constancy through their sufferings, is hereby magnified. And the consolations of God, which have abounded towards them in their sufferings, and his promises, the springs of their consolations, have hereby been recommended to the faith and joy of all the saints. The blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the church, and the conversion and establishment of thousands. Precious therefore in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints, as that which honours him; and those who thereby at such an expense honour him he will honour.

3. The word of command he gives him hereupon: When he had spoken thus, observing Peter perhaps to look blank upon it, he saith unto him, Follow me. Probably he rose from the place where he had sat at dinner, walked off a little, and bade Peter attend him. This word, Follow me, was

(1.) A further confirmation of his restoration to his Master's favour, and to his apostleship; for Follow me was the first call.

(2.) It was an explication of the prediction of his sufferings, which perhaps Peter at first did not fully understand, till Christ gave him that key to it, Follow me: "Expect to be treated as I have been, and to tread the same bloody path that I have trodden before thee; for the disciple is not greater than his Lord."

(3.) It was to excite him to, and encourage him in, faithfulness and diligence in his work as an apostle. He had told him to feed his sheep, and let him set his Master before him as an example of pastoral care: "Do as I have done." Let the under-shepherds study to imitate the Chief Shepherd. They had followed Christ while he was here upon earth, and now that he was leaving them he till preached the same duty to them though to be performed in another way, Follow me; still they must follow the rules he had given them and the example he had set them. And what greater encouragement could they have than this, both in services and in sufferings?

[1.] That herein they did follow him, and it was their present honour; who would be ashamed to follow such a leader?

[2.] That hereafter they should follow him, and that would be their future happiness; and so it is a repetition of the promise Christ had given Peter (ch. [13:36](#)), Thou shalt follow me afterwards. ***Those that faithfully follow Christ in grace shall certainly follow him to glory.***

- Matthew Henry's Commentary

Jesus had just spoken about Peter's life and ministry, and now He talks about Peter's death. This must have been a shock to Peter, to have the Lord discuss his death in such an open manner. No doubt Peter was rejoicing that he had been restored to fellowship and apostleship. Why bring up martyrdom?

The first time Jesus spoke about His own death, Peter had opposed it ([Matt. 16:21ff](#)). Peter had even used his sword in the Garden in a futile attempt to protect his Lord. Yet Peter had boasted he would die for the Lord Jesus! But when the pressure was on, Peter failed miserably. (You and I probably would have done worse!) Anyone who yields himself to serve the Lord must honestly confront this matter of death.

When a person has settled the matter of death, then he is ready to live and to serve! Our Lord's own death is a repeated theme in John's Gospel: He knew that His "hour" would come, and He was prepared to obey the Father's will. We as His followers must yield ourselves—just as He yielded Himself for us—and be "living sacrifices" ([Rom. 12:1-2](#)) who are "ready to be offered" ([2 Tim. 4:6-8](#)) if it is the will of God.

The day would come when another would take charge of Peter—and kill him (see [2 Peter 1:13-14](#)). Tradition tells us that Peter was indeed crucified, but that he asked to be crucified upside down, because he was not worthy to die exactly as his Master had died.

Our Lord's words, "Follow Me!" must have brought new joy and love to Peter's heart. Literally, Jesus said, "Keep on following Me." Immediately, Peter began to follow Jesus, just as he had done

before his great denial. However, for a moment *Peter took his eyes off the Lord Jesus*, a mistake he had made at least two other times. After that first great catch of fish, Peter took his eyes off his Lord and looked at *himself*. "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" ([Luke 5:8](#)) When he was walking on the stormy sea with Jesus, Peter looked away from the Lord and began to look at the wind and waves; and immediately he began to sink ([Matt. 14:30](#)). It is dangerous to look at the circumstances instead of looking to the Lord.

- Bible Exposition Commentary

Piper shares Bunyan:

This brings us to the dilemma that has faced many faithful witnesses: When do you flee from danger? And when do you embrace it and witness through it? In 1684, John Bunyan published a book called **Seasonable Counsels, or Advice to Sufferers**. In it, he addressed this question: When does a sufferer fly (from danger) and when does he stand (and suffer the danger)? Bunyan knew how to answer for himself. He had four children, one of them blind, and he chose to remain in prison for twelve years rather than promise not to preach the gospel. How does he answer the question for others? May we try to escape?

Thou mayest do in this as it is in thy heart. If it is in thy heart to fly, fly; if it be in thy heart to stand, stand. Anything but a denial of the truth. He that flies, has warrant to do so; he that stands, has warrant to do so. Yea, the same man may both fly and stand, as the call and working of God with his heart may be. Moses fled, **Ex. 2:15**; Moses stood, **Heb. 11:27**. David fled, **1 Sam. 19:12**; David stood, **1 Sam. 24:8**. Jeremiah fled, **Jer. 37:11-12**; Jeremiah stood, **Jer. 38:17**. Christ withdrew himself, **Luke 19:10**; Christ stood, **John 18:1-8**. Paul fled, **2 Cor. 11:33**; Paul stood, **Act 20:22-23**. . . .

There are few rules in this case. The man himself is best able to judge concerning his present strength, and what weight this or that argument has upon his heart to stand or fly. . . . Do not fly out of a slavish fear, but rather because flying is an ordinance of God, opening a door for the escape of some, which door is opened by God's providence, and the escape countenanced by God's Word, **Matt. 10:23**. . . .

If, therefore, when thou hast fled, thou art taken, be not offended at God or man: not at God, for thou art his servant, thy life and thy all are his; not at man, for he is but God's rod, and is ordained, in this, to do thee good. Hast thou escaped? Laugh. Art thou taken? Laugh. I mean, be pleased which [how]soever things shall go, for that the scales are still in God's hand. (p. 726)

cf. Luke 14 where Jesus expands on "fishing" & "truth"

Luke 14

14:1-4 These verses continue the theme (see [6:1-11](#)) of the Pharisees seeking to trap Jesus. **Swollen with fluid** describes a condition known as "dropsy," the major symptom of which was swollen limbs. Jesus performed five miracles on the Sabbath in Luke ([vv. 1-4](#); [4:31,38](#); [6:6](#); [13:10,14](#)). The probable reason why the scribes (**law experts**) and Pharisees refused to answer Jesus' question about whether it was **lawful to heal on the Sabbath** was that others had been humiliated previously when they tried to debate Jesus on this topic (see note at [13:17](#)).

14:5 The commandment not to work on **the Sabbath day** ([Dt 5:12-14](#)) should not have been taken to mean that rescue efforts (for people or animals) were forbidden on the Sabbath.

14:7-10 The **best places** at a dinner were next to the host. Jesus' parable made the point that the danger of arrogantly taking the best place at a banquet was that the person who invited you—here representing God—could ask you to move to the **lowest place** at the banquet table, causing humiliation rather than honor. It was wiser to sit in the seat of the humble and then be asked to **move up** to a seat of higher honor.

14:11 The principle that arrogance leads to humiliation appears repeatedly in the OT Wisdom Literature, especially Proverbs. That humility can lead to exaltation is a common theme in the NT ([Lk 18:14](#); [Jms 4:10](#); [1Pe 5:6](#)).

14:12-14 True hospitality (hosting a dinner or a banquet) will be **blessed** by the Lord if you invite those who cannot return the favor. The **resurrection of the righteous** is the positive side of the resurrection mentioned in [Dan 12:2](#) and [Jn 5:28-29](#). It is probably the same thing as "the first resurrection" mentioned in [Rev 20:4-6](#).

14:15 The statement about being **blessed** to **eat bread** in the coming **kingdom of God** is true. However, the person who said this probably assumed (wrongly) that many at the table in the Pharisee's home ([v. 1](#)) would experience this blessing. The story Jesus told next ([vv. 16-24](#)) reflected a different reality.

14:16-20 This story symbolizes being **invited** to the messianic **banquet** in the future kingdom of God ([v. 15](#)). Those who were initially invited (the religious leaders of the Jewish people) all made excuses about why they could not attend.

14:21-24 After being rejected by those who symbolized the religious leaders, the unfortunate ones to whom Jesus came to minister ([Isa 61:1](#)) were invited. However, there was **still room** for others. So a wider group (those from **the highways**) was also invited. These stand for Gentiles. Non-Jewish participation in the gospel is a common theme in Luke's Gospel.

14:26 Hate his own here hyperbolically expresses the same principle found in [Matthew 10:37](#), where Jesus says, "The person who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." Both Luke and Matthew convey the same point. Disciples must love Jesus more than they love their own family members.

miseo

Greek Pronunciation [mih SEH oh]

HCSB Translation hate

Uses in Luke's Gospel 7

Uses in the NT 40

Focus passage [Luke 14:26](#)

The Greek verb *miseo* is the basic word meaning *to hate*, the exact antonym of love (*agapao*). The essence of love is caring more about others than about self, even to the point of great sacrifice—including death ([Jn 15:13](#)). *Hate*, on the other hand, is the opposite; it cares little or nothing about others and actually wishes them harm or even death ([Mt 24:9](#)). With only one exception ([Lk 1:71](#)), *miseo* in the Gospels is always used by Jesus. By far the most difficult occurrence of *miseo* is [Luke 14:26](#)—difficult both to understand and to practice. In this passage Jesus seems to demand *hatred*, even toward one's parents, wife, children, and siblings—those whom we are specifically told elsewhere in Scripture to honor, protect, and love. Jesus' statement is best understood as the willingness to choose Him above all else. The context is Jesus' challenge to measure the cost of being His disciple (see [14:26-35](#)).

[14:27](#) On bearing a **cross**, see note at [9:23](#).

[14:28-32](#) It is necessary to **calculate the cost** to be a disciple of Christ. Like a person who does not foresee the full cost of building a **tower** and suffers ridicule for starting something he cannot finish, a disciple must understand what it will take to complete the Christian life before he makes the commitment. Similarly, a **king** must soberly consider the odds before deciding between war and peace.

[14:33](#) The essence of being a disciple of Christ is unreserved commitment to Him. This involves holding loosely the material things of this world.

[14:34-35](#) Most **salt** of the ancient world was impure and lost its **taste** easily, making it unfit to use even as fertilizer or as a catalyst for burning **manure**. The danger for a person who lets his witness become "unsalty" is that he or she may be discarded from the Lord's service. On **ears to hear**, see note at [8:5-8](#).

- **HCSB Study Bible.**

[Christ Heals a Man On the Sabbath \(14:1-6\)](#)

This Pharisee, as well as others, seems to have had an ill design in entertaining Jesus at his house. But our Lord would not be hindered from healing a man, though he knew a clamour would be raised at his doing it on the sabbath. It requires care to understand the proper connexion between piety and charity in observing the sabbath, and the distinction between works of real necessity and habits of self-indulgence. Wisdom from above, teaches patient perseverance in well-doing.

He Teaches Humility (14:7-14)

Even in the common actions of life, Christ marks what we do, not only in our religious assemblies, but at our tables. We see in many cases, that a man's pride will bring him low, and before honour is humility. Our Saviour here teaches, that works of charity are better than works of show. But our Lord did not mean that a proud and unbelieving liberality should be rewarded, but that his precept of doing good to the poor and afflicted should be observed from love to him.

Parable of the Great Supper (14:15-24)

In this parable observe the free grace and mercy of God shining in the gospel of Christ, which will be food and a feast for the soul of a man that knows its own wants and miseries. All found some pretence to put off their attendance. This reproveth the Jewish nation for their neglect of the offers of Christ's grace. It shows also the backwardness there is to close with the gospel call. The want of gratitude in those who slight gospel offers, and the contempt put upon the God of heaven thereby, justly provoke him. The apostles were to turn to the Gentiles, when the Jews refused the offer; and with them the church was filled. The provision made for precious souls in the gospel of Christ, has not been made in vain; for if some reject, others will thankfully accept the offer. The very poor and low in the world, shall be as welcome to Christ as the rich and great; and many times the gospel has the greatest success among those that labour under worldly disadvantages and bodily infirmities. Christ's house shall at last be filled; it will be so when the number of the elect is completed.

The Necessity of Consideration and Self-Denial (14:25-35)

Though the disciples of Christ are not all crucified, yet they all bear their cross, and must bear it in the way of duty. Jesus bids them count upon it, and then consider of it. Our Saviour explains this by two similitudes; the former showing that we must consider the expenses of our religion; the latter, that we must consider the

perils of it. Sit down and count the cost; consider it will cost the mortifying of sin, even the most beloved lusts. The proudest and most daring sinner cannot stand against God, for who knows the power of his anger? It is our interest to seek peace with him, and we need not send to ask conditions of peace, they are offered to us, and are highly to our advantage. In some way a disciple of Christ will be put to the trial. May we seek to be disciples indeed, and be careful not to grow slack in our profession, or afraid of the cross; that we may be the good salt of the earth, to season those around us with the savour of Christ.

- Matthew Henry Commentary.

14:1-6 Earlier Jesus had been invited to a Pharisee's home for discussion ([7:36](#)). This time a prominent Pharisee invited Jesus to his home specifically to trap him into saying or doing something for which he could be arrested. It may be surprising to see Jesus on the Pharisees' turf after he had denounced them so many times. But he was not afraid to face them, even though he knew that their purpose was to trick him into breaking their laws.

14:7-11 Jesus advised people not to rush for the best places at a feast. People today are just as eager to raise their social status, whether by being with the right people, dressing for success, or driving the right car. Whom do you try to impress? Rather than aiming for prestige, look for a place where you can serve. If God wants you to serve on a wider scale, he will invite you to take a higher place.

14:7-14 Jesus taught two lessons here. First, he spoke to the guests, telling them not to seek places of honor. Service is more important in God's Kingdom than status. Second, he told the host not to be exclusive about whom he invited. God opens his Kingdom to everyone.

14:11 How can we humble ourselves? Some people try to give the appearance of humility in order to manipulate others. Others think that humility means putting themselves down. Truly humble people compare themselves only with Christ, realize their sinfulness, and understand their limitations. On the other hand, they also recognize their gifts and strengths and are willing to use them as Christ directs. Humility is not self-degradation; it is realistic self-assessment and commitment to serve.

14:15-24 The man sitting at the table with Jesus envisioned the glory of God's Kingdom, but he did not yet understand how to have a share in it. In Jesus' story, many people turned down the invitation to the banquet because the timing was inconvenient. We, too, may resist or delay responding to God's invitation, and our excuses may sound reasonable—work duties, family responsibilities, financial needs, or other reasons. Nevertheless, God's invitation is the most important event in your life, no matter how inconveniently it may be timed. Are you making excuses to avoid responding to God's call? Jesus reminds us that the time will come when God will pull his invitation and offer it to others—then it will be too late to get into the banquet.

14:16ff The custom was to send two invitations to a party: the first to announce the event and the second to tell the guests that everything was ready. The guests in Jesus' story insulted the host by making excuses when he issued the second invitation. In Israel's history, God's first invitation came from Moses and the prophets; the second came from his Son. The religious leaders accepted the first invitation. They believed that God had called them to be his people, but they insulted God by refusing to accept his Son. Thus, as the master in the story sent his servant into the streets to invite the needy to his banquet, so God sent his Son to a whole world of needy people to tell them that God's Kingdom had arrived and was ready for them.

14:16ff In this chapter we read Jesus' words against seeking status and in favor of hard work and even suffering. Let us not lose sight of the end result of all our humility and self-sacrifice—a joyous banquet with our Lord! God never asks us to suffer for the sake of suffering. He never asks us to give up something good unless he plans to replace it with something even better. Jesus is not calling us to join him in a labor camp but in a feast—the wedding feast of the Lamb ([Revelation 19:6-9](#)), when God and his beloved church will be joined forever.

14:27 Jesus' audience was well aware of what it meant to carry one's own cross. When the Romans led a criminal to his execution site, he was forced to carry the cross on which he would die. This showed his submission to Rome and warned observers that they had better submit, too. Jesus made this statement to get the crowds to think through their enthusiasm for him. He encouraged those who were superficial either to go deeper or to turn back. Following Christ means total submission to him—perhaps even to the point of death. (See also the note on [9:23](#).)

14:28-30 When a builder doesn't count the cost or estimates it inaccurately, the building may be left uncompleted. Will you abandon the Christian life after a little while because you did not count the cost of commitment to Jesus? What are those costs? Christians may face loss of social status or wealth. They may have to give up control of their money, their time, or their career. They may be hated, separated from their family, and even put to death. Following Christ does not mean a trouble-free life. We must carefully count the cost of becoming Christ's disciples so that we will firmly hold to our faith and won't be tempted later to turn back.

14:34 Salt can lose its flavor. When it gets wet and then dries, nothing is left but a tasteless residue. Many Christians blend into the world and avoid the cost of standing up for Christ. But Jesus

says if Christians lose their distinctive saltiness, they become worthless. Just as salt flavors and preserves food, we are to preserve the good in the world and bring new flavor to life. This requires careful planning, willing sacrifice, and unswerving commitment to Christ's Kingdom. But if a Christian fails to be "salty," he or she fails to represent Christ in the world. How salty are you?

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cf. Peter's letters (his own commentary on this passage)

1PETER:

CRUSHED, overwhelmed, devastated, torn—these waves of feelings wash over those who suffer, obliterating hope and threatening to destroy them. Suffering has many forms—physical abuse, debilitating disease, social ostracism, persecution. The pain and anguish tempt a person to turn back, to surrender, to give in.

Many first-century followers of Christ were suffering and being abused and persecuted for believing in and obeying Jesus. Beginning in Jerusalem at the hands of their Jewish brothers, the persecution spread to the rest of the world—wherever Christians gathered. It climaxed when Rome determined to rid the empire of the "Christ-ones"—those who would not bow to Caesar.

Peter knew persecution firsthand. Beaten and jailed, he had been threatened often. He had seen fellow Christians die and the church scattered. But he knew Christ, and nothing could shake his confidence in his risen Lord. So Peter wrote to the church scattered

and suffering for the faith, giving comfort and hope, and urging continued loyalty to Christ.

Peter begins by thanking God for salvation ([1:2-6](#)). He explains to his readers that trials will refine their faith ([1:7-9](#)). They should believe in spite of their circumstances; for many in past ages believed in God's plan of salvation, even the prophets of old who wrote about it but didn't understand it. But now salvation has been revealed in Christ ([1:10-13](#)).

In response to such a great salvation, Peter commands them to live holy lives ([1:14-16](#)), to reverently fear and trust God ([1:17-21](#)), to be honest and loving ([1:22-2:1](#)), and to become like Christ ([2:1-3](#)).

Jesus Christ, as "the living cornerstone" upon whom the church is to be built ([2:4, 6](#)), is also the stone that was rejected, causing those who are disobedient to stumble and fall ([2:7, 8](#)). But the church, built upon this stone, is to be God's royal priesthood ([2:9, 10](#)).

Next, Peter explains how believers should live during difficult times ([2:11-4:11](#)). Christians should be above reproach ([2:12-17](#)), imitating Christ in all their social roles—masters and servants, husbands and wives, church members and neighbors ([2:18-3:17](#)). Christ should be our model for obedience to God in the midst of great suffering ([3:18-4:11](#)).

Peter then outlines the right attitude to have about persecution: Expect it ([4:12](#)), be thankful for the privilege of suffering for Christ ([4:13-18](#)), and trust God for deliverance ([4:19](#)).

Next, Peter gives some special instructions: Elders should care for God's flock ([5:1-4](#)), younger men should be submissive to those who are older ([5:5, 6](#)), and everyone should trust God and resist Satan ([5:7-11](#)).

Peter concludes by introducing Silas and by sending personal greetings, possibly from the church in Rome, and from Mark ([5:12-14](#)).

When you suffer for doing what is right, remember that following Christ is a costly commitment. When persecuted for your faith, rejoice that you have been counted worthy to suffer for your Lord. He suffered for us; as his followers, we should expect nothing less. As you read 1 Peter, remember that trials will come to refine your faith. When they come, remain faithful to God.

Vital Statistics

Purpose:

To offer encouragement to suffering Christians

Author:

Peter

Original Audience:

Jewish Christians driven out of Jerusalem and scattered throughout Asia Minor

Date Written:

Approximately A.D. 62-64, possibly from Rome

Setting:

Peter was probably in Rome when the great persecution under Emperor Nero began. (Eventually Peter was executed during this persecution.) Throughout the Roman Empire, Christians were being tortured and killed for their faith, and the church in Jerusalem was being scattered.

Key Verse:

"These trials will show that your faith is genuine.... So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world" ([1:7](#)).

Key People:

Peter, Silas, Mark

Key Places:

Jerusalem, Rome, and the regions of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia Minor, and Bithynia

Special Features:

Peter used several images that were very special to him because Jesus had used them when he had revealed certain truths to Peter. Peter's name (which means "rock") had been given to him by Jesus. Peter's conception of the church—a spiritual house composed of living stones built upon Christ as the foundation—had come from Christ. Jesus had encouraged Peter to care for the church as a shepherd tending the flock. Thus, it is not surprising to see Peter using living stones ([2:5-9](#)) and shepherds and sheep ([2:25](#); [5:2, 4](#)) to describe the church.

The Blueprint

1. God's great blessings to his people ([1:1-2:10](#))
2. The conduct of God's people in the midst of suffering ([2:11-4:19](#))
3. The shepherding of God's people in the midst of suffering ([5:1-14](#))

Peter wrote to Jewish Christians who were experiencing persecution for their faith. He wrote to comfort them with the hope of eternal life and to challenge them to continue living holy lives. Those who suffer for being Christians become partners with Christ in his suffering. As we suffer, we must remember that Christ is both our hope in the midst of suffering and our example of how to endure suffering faithfully.

MEGATHEMES

THEME	EXPLANATION	IMPORTANCE
<i>Salvation</i>	Our salvation is a gracious gift from God. God chose us out of his love for us, Jesus died to pay the penalty for our sin, and the Holy Spirit cleansed us from sin when we believed. Eternal life is a wonderful gift for those who trust in Christ.	Our safety and security are in God. If we experience joy in relationship with Christ now, how much greater will our joy be when he returns and we see him face to face. Such a hope should motivate us to serve Christ with greater commitment.
<i>Persecution</i>	Peter offers faithful believers comfort and hope. We should expect ridicule, rejection, and suffering because we are Christians. Persecution makes us stronger because it refines our faith. We can face	Christians still suffer for what they believe. We should expect persecution, but we don't have to be terrified by it. The fact that we will live eternally with Christ should give us the

persecution victoriously, as Christ did, if we rely on him.

confidence, patience, and hope to stand firm even when we are persecuted.

God's Family

We are privileged to belong to God's family, a community with Christ as the founder and foundation. Everyone in this community is related—we are all brothers and sisters, loved equally by God.

Because Christ is the foundation of our family, we must be devoted, loyal, and faithful to him. By obeying him, we show that we are his children. We must accept the challenge to live differently from the society around us.

Family Life

Peter encouraged the wives of unbelievers to submit to their husbands' authority as a means of winning them to Christ. He urged all family members to treat others with sympathy, love, compassion, and humility.

We must treat our families lovingly. Though it's never easy, willing service is the best way to influence loved ones. To gain the strength we need for self-discipline and submission, we need to pray for God's help.

Judgment

God will judge everyone with perfect justice. We all will face God. He will punish evildoers and those who persecute

Because all are accountable to God, we can leave judgment of others to him. We must not hate or resent those

God's people. Those who love him will be rewarded with life forever in his presence.	who persecute us. We should realize that we will be held responsible for how we live each day.
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2 PETER:

WARNINGS have many forms: lights, signs, sights, sounds, smells, feelings, and written words. With varied focus, their purpose is the same—to advise alertness and give notice of imminent danger. Responses to these warnings will also vary—from disregard and neglect to evasive or corrective action. How a person reacts to a warning is usually determined by the situation and the source. One reacts differently to an impending storm than to an onrushing automobile, and the counsel of a trusted friend is heeded more than advice from a stranger or the fearful imaginings of a child.

Second Peter is a letter of warning—from an authority none other than the courageous, experienced, and faithful apostle. And it is the last communication from this great warrior of Christ. Soon thereafter he would die, martyred for his faith.

Previously Peter had written to comfort and encourage believers in the midst of suffering and persecution—an external onslaught. But three years later, in this letter containing his last words, he wrote to warn them of an internal attack—complacency and heresy. He spoke of holding fast to the nonnegotiable facts of the faith, of growing and maturing in the faith, and of rejecting all who would

distort the truth. To follow this advice would ensure Christ-honoring individuals and Christ-centered churches.

After a brief greeting ([1:1](#)), Peter gives the antidote for stagnancy and shortsightedness in the Christian life ([1:2-11](#)). Then he explains that his days are numbered ([1:12-15](#)) and that the believers should listen to his messages and the words of Scripture ([1:16-21](#)).

Next, Peter gives a blunt warning about false teachers ([2:1-22](#)). They will become prevalent in the last days ([2:1, 2](#)); they will do or say anything for money ([2:3](#)); they will despise the things of God ([2:2, 10, 11](#)); they will do whatever they feel like doing ([2:12-17](#)); they will be proud and boastful ([2:18, 19](#)); they will be judged and punished by God ([2:3-10, 20-22](#)).

Peter concludes his brief letter by explaining why he has written it ([3:1-18](#)): to remind them of the words of the prophets and apostles that predicted the coming of false teachers, to give the reasons for the delay in Christ's return ([3:1-13](#)), and to encourage them to beware of heresies and to grow in the faith ([3:14-18](#)).

Addressed to those who "share the same precious faith," 2 Peter could have been written to us. Our world is filled with false prophets and teachers, who claim to have the truth and who clamor for attention and allegiance. Listen carefully to Peter's message and heed his warning. Determine to grow in your knowledge of Christ and to reject all those who preach anything inconsistent with God's Word.

Vital Statistics

Purpose:

To warn Christians about false teachers and to exhort them to grow in their faith in and knowledge of Christ

Author:

Peter

Original Audience:

The church at large

Date Written:

Approximately A.D. 67, three years after 1 Peter was written, possibly from Rome

Setting:

Peter knew that his time on earth was limited ([1:13, 14](#)), so he wrote about what was on his heart, warning believers of what would happen when he was gone—especially about the presence of false teachers. He reminded his readers of the unchanging truth of the gospel.

Key Verse:

"By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence" ([1:3](#)).

Key People:

Peter, Paul

Special Features:

The date and destination are uncertain, and the authorship has been disputed. Because of this, 2 Peter was the last book admitted to the

canon of the New Testament Scripture. Also, there are similarities between 2 Peter and Jude.

The Blueprint

1. Guidance for growing Christians ([1:1-21](#))
2. Danger to growing Christians ([2:1-22](#))
3. Hope for growing Christians ([3:1-18](#))

While Peter wrote his first letter to teach about handling persecution (trials from without), he wrote this letter to teach about handling heresy (trials from within). False teachers are often subtly deceitful. Believers today must still be vigilant against falling into false doctrine, heresy, and cult activity. This letter gives us clues to help detect false teaching.

MEGATHEMES		
THEME	EXPLANATION	IMPORTANCE
<i>Diligence</i>	If our faith is real, it will be evident in our godly behavior. If people are diligent in Christian growth, they won't backslide or be deceived by false teachers.	Growth is essential. It begins with faith and culminates in love for others. To keep growing we need to know God, keep on following him, and remember what he taught us. We must remain diligent in faithful obedience and Christian growth.
<i>False</i>	Peter warns the church to Christians need	

Teachers beware of false teachers. discernment to be able
These teachers were to resist false teachers.
proud of their position, God can rescue us from
promoted sexual sin, and their lies if we stay true
advised against keeping to his Word, the Bible,
the Ten Commandments. and reject those who
Peter countered them by distort the truth.
pointing to the Spirit-
inspired Scriptures as our
authority.

*Christ's
Return* One day Christ will create
a new heaven and earth,
where we will live
forever. As Christians, our
hope is in this promise.
But with Christ's return
comes his judgment on all
who refuse to believe.

The cure for
complacency,
lawlessness, and heresy
is found in the confident
assurance that Christ
will return. God is still
giving unbelievers time
to repent. To be ready,
Christians must keep on
trusting and resist the
pressure to give up
waiting for Christ's
return.

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VIDEO resources:

IMB Missions: “One Sacred Effort”
<http://youtu.be/VZFBU9K6360>

IMB Missions: “Living Sent”
http://youtu.be/RU-6dn_kjjk

David Platt: “Believing the Gospel is not as accepted...”
<http://youtu.be/Eyf96Xnmz8o>

David Platt: “The Tragic Cost of Non-Discipleship”
<http://youtu.be/sOEEsS5-y9g>

David Platt: “Risking It All to Follow Jesus”
<http://youtu.be/IqPkteVT85U>

THE BRIDGE: “Acts 1:8 Living Thanksgiving 2014”
<http://youtu.be/YBPjS6aE37E>