

Romans 5:1-21

1 Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. **2** Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of highest privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory. **3** We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they are good for us - they help us learn to endure. **4** And endurance develops strength of character in us, and character strengthens our confident expectation of salvation. **5** And this expectation will not disappoint us. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

6 When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. **7** Now, no one is likely to die for a good person, though someone might be willing to die for a person who is especially good. **8** But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. **9** And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's judgment. **10** For since we were restored to friendship with God by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be delivered from eternal punishment by his life. **11** So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God - all because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us in making us friends of God. **12** When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire human race. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned. **13** Yes, people sinned even before the law was given. And though there was no law to break, since it had not yet been given, **14** they all died anyway - even though they did not disobey an explicit commandment of God, as Adam did. What a contrast between Adam and Christ, who was yet to come! **15** And what a difference between our sin and God's generous gift of forgiveness. For this one man, Adam, brought death to many through his sin. But this other man, Jesus Christ, brought forgiveness to many through God's bountiful gift. **16** And the result of God's gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man's sin. For Adam's sin led to condemnation, but we have the free gift of being accepted by God, even though we are guilty of many sins. **17** The sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over us, but all who receive God's wonderful, gracious gift of righteousness will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ. **18** Yes, Adam's one sin brought condemnation upon everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness makes all people right in God's sight and gives them life. **19** Because one person disobeyed God, many people became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many people will be made right in God's sight. **20** God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more and more, God's wonderful kindness became more abundant. **21** So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful kindness rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

6:1-23 -

1 Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more kindness and forgiveness? **2** Of

course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? **3** Or have you forgotten that when we became Christians and were baptized to become one with Christ Jesus, we died with him? **4** For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. **5** Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised as he was. **6** Our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. **7** For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. **8** And since we died with Christ, we know we will also share his new life. **9** We are sure of this because Christ rose from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. **10** He died once to defeat sin, and now he lives for the glory of God. **11** So you should consider yourselves dead to sin and able to live for the glory of God through Christ Jesus. **12** Do not let sin control the way you live; ^{F21} do not give in to its lustful desires. **13** Do not let any part of your body become a tool of wickedness, to be used for sinning. Instead, give yourselves completely to God since you have been given new life. And use your whole body as a tool to do what is right for the glory of God. **14** Sin is no longer your master, for you are no longer subject to the law, which enslaves you to sin. Instead, you are free by God's grace. **15** So since God's grace has set us free from the law, does this mean we can go on sinning? Of course not! **16** Don't you realize that whatever you choose to obey becomes your master? You can choose sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God and receive his approval. **17** Thank God! Once you were slaves of sin, but now you have obeyed with all your heart the new teaching God has given you. **18** Now you are free from sin, your old master, and you have become slaves to your new master, righteousness. **19** I speak this way, using the illustration of slaves and masters, because it is easy to understand. Before, you let yourselves be slaves of impurity and lawlessness. Now you must choose to be slaves of righteousness so that you will become holy. **20** In those days, when you were slaves of sin, you weren't concerned with doing what was right. **21** And what was the result? It was not good, since now you are ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom. **22** But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life. **23** For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

7:1-25 -

1 Now, dear brothers and sisters ^{F22} - you who are familiar with the law - don't you know that the law applies only to a person who is still living? **2** Let me illustrate. When a woman marries, the law binds her to her husband as long as he is alive. But if he dies, the laws of marriage no longer apply to her. **3** So while her husband is alive, she would be committing adultery if she married another man. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law and does not commit adultery when she remarries. **4** So this is the point: The law no longer holds you in its power, because you died to its power when you died with Christ on the cross. And now you are united with the one who was raised from the dead. As a result, you can produce good

fruit, that is, good deeds for God. [5](#) When we were controlled by our old nature, sinful desires were at work within us, and the law aroused these evil desires that produced sinful deeds, resulting in death. [6](#) But now we have been released from the law, for we died with Christ, and we are no longer captive to its power. Now we can really serve God, not in the old way by obeying the letter of the law, but in the new way, by the Spirit.

[7](#) Well then, am I suggesting that the law of God is evil? Of course not! The law is not sinful, but it was the law that showed me my sin. I would never have known that coveting is wrong if the law had not said, "Do not covet." ^{F23} [8](#) But sin took advantage of this law and aroused all kinds of forbidden desires within me! If there were no law, sin would not have that power. [9](#) I felt fine when I did not understand what the law demanded. But when I learned the truth, I realized I had broken the law and was a sinner, doomed to die. [10](#) So the good law, which was supposed to show me the way of life, instead gave me the death penalty. [11](#) Sin took advantage of the law and fooled me; it took the good law and used it to make me guilty of death. [12](#) But still, the law itself is holy and right and good. [13](#) But how can that be? Did the law, which is good, cause my doom? Of course not! Sin used what was good to bring about my condemnation. So we can see how terrible sin really is. It uses God's good commandment for its own evil purposes.

[14](#) The law is good, then. The trouble is not with the law but with me, because I am sold into slavery, with sin as my master. [15](#) I don't understand myself at all, for I really want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do the very thing I hate. [16](#) I know perfectly well that what I am doing is wrong, and my bad conscience shows that I agree that the law is good. [17](#) But I can't help myself, because it is sin inside me that makes me do these evil things. [18](#) I know I am rotten through and through so far as my old sinful nature is concerned. No matter which way I turn, I can't make myself do right. I want to, but I can't. [19](#) When I want to do good, I don't. And when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway. [20](#) But if I am doing what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing it; the sin within me is doing it. [21](#) It seems to be a fact of life that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. [22](#) I love God's law with all my heart. [23](#) But there is another law at work within me that is at war with my mind. This law wins the fight and makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. [24](#) Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin? ^{F24} [25](#)

Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God's law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin.

8:1-39 -

[1](#) So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. [2](#) For the power ^{F25} of the life-giving Spirit has freed you ^{F26} through Christ Jesus from the power of sin that leads to death. [3](#) The law of Moses could not save us, because of our sinful nature. But God put into effect a different plan to save us. He sent his own Son in a human body like ours, except that ours are sinful. God destroyed sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. [4](#) He did this so that the requirement of the law

would be fully accomplished for us ^{F27} who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit. [5](#) Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. [6](#) If your sinful nature controls your mind, there is death. But if the Holy Spirit controls your mind, there is life and peace. [7](#) For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. [8](#) That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God. [9](#) But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them are not Christians at all.)

[10](#) Since Christ lives within you, even though your body will die because of sin, your spirit is alive ^{F28} because you have been made right with God. [11](#) The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as he raised Christ from the dead, he will give life to your mortal body by this same Spirit living within you. [12](#) So, dear brothers and sisters, ^{F29} you have no obligation whatsoever to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. [13](#) For if you keep on following it, you will perish. But if through the power of the Holy Spirit you turn from it ^{F30} and its evil deeds, you will live. [14](#) For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children ^{F31} of God. [15](#) So you should not be like cowering, fearful slaves. You should behave instead like God's very own children, adopted into his family ^{F32} - calling him "Father, dear Father." ^{F33} [16](#) For his Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts and tells us that we are God's children.

[17](#) And since we are his children, we will share his treasures - for everything God gives to his Son, Christ, is ours, too. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering. [18](#) Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will give us later. [19](#) For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. [20](#) Against its will, everything on earth was subjected to God's curse. [21](#) All creation anticipates the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. [22](#) For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. [23](#) And even we Christians, although we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, also groan to be released from pain and suffering. We, too, wait anxiously for that day when God will give us our full rights as his children, ^{F34} including the new bodies he has promised us. [24](#) Now that we are saved, we eagerly look forward to this freedom. For if you already have something, you don't need to hope for it. [25](#) But if we look forward to something we don't have yet, we must wait patiently and confidently.

[26](#) And the Holy Spirit helps us in our distress. For we don't even know what we should pray for, nor how we should pray. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. [27](#) And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will. [28](#) And we know that God causes everything to work

together ^{F35} for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

29 For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn, with many brothers and sisters. **30** And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And he gave them right standing with himself, and he promised them his glory.

31 What can we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? **32** Since God did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't God, who gave us Christ, also give us everything else? **33** Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? Will God? No! He is the one who has given us right standing with himself. **34** Who then will condemn us? Will Christ Jesus? No, for he is the one who died for us and was raised to life for us and is sitting at the place of highest honor next to God, pleading for us. **35** Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or are hungry or cold or in danger or threatened with death? **36** (Even the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep." ^{F36}) **37** No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. **38** And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from his love. Death can't, and life can't. The angels can't, and the demons can't. Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, and even the powers of hell can't keep God's love away. **39** Whether we are high above the sky or in the deepest ocean, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

FOOTNOTES:

F21: Or *Do not let sin reign in your body, which is subject to death.*

F22: Greek *brothers*.

F23: Exod 20:17; Deut 5:21.

F24: Greek *from this body of death?*

F25: Greek *the law*; also in 8:2b.

F26: Some manuscripts read *me*.

F27: Or *accomplished by us*.

F28: Or *the Spirit will bring you eternal life*.

F29: Greek *brothers*; also in 8:29.

F30: Greek *put it to death*.

F31: Greek *sons*; also in 8:19.

F32: Greek *You received a spirit of sonship*.

F33: Greek *"Abba, Father."* *Abba* is an Aramaic term for "father."

F34: Greek *wait anxiously for sonship*.

F35: Some manuscripts read *And we know that everything works together*.

F36: Ps 44:22.

Book of Galatians:1-26 -

1 So Christ has really set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law. **2** Listen! I, Paul, tell you this: If you are counting on circumcision to make you right with God, then Christ cannot help you. **3** I'll say it again. If you are trying to find

favor with God by being circumcised, you must obey all of the regulations in the whole law of Moses. **4** For if you are trying to make yourselves right with God by keeping the law, you have been cut off from Christ! You have fallen away from God's grace. **5** But we who live by the Spirit eagerly wait to receive everything promised to us who are right with God through faith. **6** For when we place our faith in Christ Jesus, it makes no difference to God whether we are circumcised or not circumcised. What is important is faith expressing itself in love. **7** You were getting along so well. Who has interfered with you to hold you back from following the truth? **8** It certainly isn't God, for he is the one who called you to freedom. **9** But it takes only one wrong person among you to infect all the others - a little yeast spreads quickly through the whole batch of dough! **10** I am trusting the Lord to bring you back to believing as I do about these things. God will judge that person, whoever it is, who has been troubling and confusing you. **11** Dear brothers and sisters, ^{F27} if I were still preaching that you must be circumcised - as some say I do - why would the Jews persecute me? The fact that I am still being persecuted proves that I am still preaching salvation through the cross of Christ alone. **12** I only wish that those troublemakers who want to mutilate you by circumcision would mutilate themselves. ^{F28}

13 For you have been called to live in freedom - not freedom to satisfy your sinful nature, but freedom to serve one another in love. **14** For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." ^{F29} **15** But if instead of showing love among yourselves you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another. **16** So I advise you to live according to your new life in the Holy Spirit. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. **17** The old sinful nature loves to do evil, which is just opposite from what the Holy Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, and your choices are never free from this conflict. **18** But when you are directed by the Holy Spirit, you are no longer subject to the law. **19** When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, **20** idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group, **21** envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God. **22** But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, and self-control. Here there is no conflict with the law. **24** Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. **25** If we are living now by the Holy Spirit, let us follow the Holy Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. **26** Let us not become conceited, or irritate one another, or be jealous of one another.

1 Dear brothers and sisters, if another Christian ^{F30} is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. **2** Share each other's troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ. **3** If you think you are too important to help someone in need, you are only fooling yourself. You are really a nobody. **4** Be sure to do what you should, for then you will enjoy the personal satisfaction of having done your work well, and you won't need to compare yourself to anyone else. **5** For we are each responsible for our own conduct. **6** Those who are taught the word of God should help their teachers by paying them. **7** Don't be misled. Remember that you can't ignore God and get away with it. You will always reap what you sow! **8** Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful desires will harvest the consequences of decay and death. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit. **9** So don't get tired of doing what is good. Don't get discouraged and give up, for we will reap a harvest of blessing at the appropriate time. **10** Whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone, especially to our Christian brothers and sisters.

11 Notice what large letters I use as I write these closing words in my own handwriting. **12** Those who are trying to force you to be circumcised are doing it for just one reason. They don't want to be persecuted for teaching that the cross of Christ alone can save. **13** And even those who advocate circumcision don't really keep the whole law. They only want you to be circumcised so they can brag about it and claim you as their disciples. **14** As for me, God forbid that I should boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of that cross, ^{F31} my interest in this world died long ago, and the world's interest in me is also long dead. **15** It doesn't make any difference now whether we have been circumcised or not. What counts is whether we really have been changed into new and different people. **16** May God's mercy and peace be upon all those who live by this principle. They are the new people of God. ^{F32} **17** From now on, don't let anyone trouble me with these things. For I bear on my body the scars that show I belong to Jesus. **18** My dear brothers and sisters, ^{F33} may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

FOOTNOTES:

F27: Greek *Brothers*.

F28: Or *castrate themselves*; Greek reads *cut themselves off*.

F29: Lev 19:18.

F30: Greek *Brothers, if a man*.

F31: Or *Because of him*.

F32: Greek *the Israel of God*.

F33: Greek *Brothers*.

Book of Ephesians:1-23 -

1 This letter is from Paul, chosen by God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus. It is written to God's holy people in Ephesus, ^{F1} who are faithful followers of Christ Jesus. **2**

May grace and peace be yours, sent to you from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

3 How we praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we belong to Christ. **4** Long ago, even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. **5** His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave him great pleasure. **6** So we praise God for the wonderful kindness he has poured out on us because we belong to his dearly loved Son. **7** He is so rich in kindness that he purchased our freedom through the blood of his Son, and our sins are forgiven. **8** He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding. **9** God's secret plan has now been revealed to us; it is a plan centered on Christ, designed long ago according to his good pleasure. **10** And this is his plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ - everything in heaven and on earth. **11** Furthermore, because of Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, ^{F2} for he chose us from the beginning, and all things happen just as he decided long ago. **12** God's purpose was that we who were the first to trust in Christ should praise our glorious God. **13** And now you also have heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. **14** The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us everything he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. This is just one more reason for us to praise our glorious God.

15 Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for Christians everywhere, **16** I have never stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, **17** asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. **18** I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the wonderful future he has promised to those he called. I want you to realize what a rich and glorious inheritance he has given to his people. ^{F3} **19** I pray that you will begin to understand the incredible greatness of his power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power **20** that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. **21** Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else in this world or in the world to come. **22** And God has put all things under the authority of Christ, and he gave him this authority for the benefit of the church. **23** And the church is his body; it is filled by Christ, who fills everything everywhere with his presence.

2:1-22 -

1 Once you were dead, doomed forever because of your many sins. **2** You used to live just like the rest of the world, full of sin, obeying Satan, the mighty prince of the power of the air. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. **3** All of us used to live that way, following the passions and desires of our evil nature.

We were born with an evil nature, and we were under God's anger just like everyone else.

4 But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so very much, **5** that even while we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's special favor that you have been saved!) **6** For he raised us from the dead along with Christ, and we are seated with him in the heavenly realms - all because we are one with Christ Jesus. **7** And so God can always point to us as examples of the incredible wealth of his favor and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us through Christ Jesus. **8** God saved you by his special favor when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. **9** Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. **10** For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

11 Don't forget that you Gentiles used to be outsiders by birth. You were called "the uncircumcised ones" by the Jews, who were proud of their circumcision, even though it affected only their bodies and not their hearts. **12** In those days you were living apart from Christ. You were excluded from God's people, Israel, and you did not know the promises God had made to them. You lived in this world without God and without hope. **13** But now you belong to Christ Jesus. Though you once were far away from God, now you have been brought near to him because of the blood of Christ.

14 For Christ himself has made peace between us Jews and you Gentiles by making us all one people. He has broken down the wall of hostility that used to separate us. **15** By his death he ended the whole system of Jewish law that excluded the Gentiles. His purpose was to make peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new person from the two groups. **16** Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death, and our hostility toward each other was put to death. **17** He has brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from him, and to us Jews who were near. **18** Now all of us, both Jews and Gentiles, may come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us. **19** So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family. **20** We are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. **21** We who believe are carefully joined together, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. **22** Through him you Gentiles are also joined together as part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

3:1-21 -

1 I, Paul, am a prisoner of Christ Jesus because of my preaching to you Gentiles. **2** As you already know, God has given me this special ministry of announcing his favor to you Gentiles. **3** As I briefly mentioned earlier in this letter, God himself revealed his secret plan to me. **4** As you read what I have written, you will understand what I know about this plan regarding Christ. **5** God did not reveal it to previous generations, but now he has revealed it by the Holy Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets. **6** And this is

the secret plan: The Gentiles have an equal share with the Jews in all the riches inherited by God's children. Both groups have believed the Good News, and both are part of the same body and enjoy together the promise of blessings through Christ Jesus. **7** By God's special favor and mighty power, I have been given the wonderful privilege of serving him by spreading this Good News. **8** Just think! Though I did nothing to deserve it, and though I am the least deserving Christian there is, I was chosen for this special joy of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ. **9** I was chosen to explain to everyone this plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning. **10** God's purpose was to show his wisdom in all its rich variety to all the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. They will see this when Jews and Gentiles are joined together in his church. **11** This was his plan from all eternity, and it has now been carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord. **12** Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come fearlessly into God's presence, assured of his glad welcome. **13** So please don't despair because of what they are doing to me here. It is for you that I am suffering, so you should feel honored and encouraged.

14 When I think of the wisdom and scope of God's plan, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, ¹⁴ **15** the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. **16** I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will give you mighty inner strength through his Holy Spirit. **17** And I pray that Christ will be more and more at home in your hearts as you trust in him. May your roots go down deep into the soil of God's marvelous love. **18** And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love really is. **19** May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great you will never fully understand it. Then you will be filled with the fullness of life and power that comes from God. **20** Now glory be to God! By his mighty power at work within us, he is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope. **21** May he be given glory in the church and in Christ Jesus forever and ever through endless ages. Amen.

4:1-32 -

1 Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.

2 Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. **3** Always keep yourselves united in the Holy Spirit, and bind yourselves together with peace. **4** We are all one body, we have the same Spirit, and we have all been called to the same glorious future. **5** There is only one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **6** and there is only one God and Father, who is over us all and in us all and living through us all. **7** However, he has given each one of us a special gift according to the generosity of Christ. **8** That is why the Scriptures say, "When he ascended to the heights, he led a crowd of captives and gave gifts to his people." ¹⁵ **9** Notice that it says "he ascended." This means that Christ first came down to the lowly world in which we live. ¹⁶ **10** The same one who came down is the one who ascended higher than all the heavens, so that his rule might fill the

entire universe. [11](#) He is the one who gave these gifts to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. [12](#) Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ, [13](#) until we come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature and full grown in the Lord, measuring up to the full stature of Christ. [14](#) Then we will no longer be like children, forever changing our minds about what we believe because someone has told us something different or because someone has cleverly lied to us and made the lie sound like the truth. [15](#) Instead, we will hold to the truth in love, becoming more and more in every way like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. [16](#) Under his direction, the whole body is fitted together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

[17](#) With the Lord's authority let me say this: Live no longer as the ungodly ^{f7} do, for they are hopelessly confused. [18](#) Their closed minds are full of darkness; they are far away from the life of God because they have shut their minds and hardened their hearts against him. [19](#) They don't care anymore about right and wrong, and they have given themselves over to immoral ways. Their lives are filled with all kinds of impurity and greed. [20](#) But that isn't what you were taught when you learned about Christ. [21](#) Since you have heard all about him and have learned the truth that is in Jesus, [22](#) throw off your old evil nature and your former way of life, which is rotten through and through, full of lust and deception. [23](#) Instead, there must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes. [24](#) You must display a new nature because you are a new person, created in God's likeness - righteous, holy, and true. [25](#) So put away all falsehood and "tell your neighbor the truth" ^{f8} because we belong to each other. [26](#) And "don't sin by letting anger gain control over you." ^{f9} Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, [27](#) for anger gives a mighty foothold to the Devil. [28](#) If you are a thief, stop stealing. Begin using your hands for honest work, and then give generously to others in need. [29](#) Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them. [30](#) And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he is the one who has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption. [31](#) Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of malicious behavior. [32](#) Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

5:1-33 -

[1](#) Follow God's example in everything you do, because you are his dear children. [2](#) Live a life filled with love for others, following the example of Christ, who loved you and gave himself as a sacrifice to take away your sins. And God was pleased, because that sacrifice was like sweet perfume to him.

[3](#) Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God's people. [4](#) Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes - these are

not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God. [5](#) You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a greedy person is really an idolater who worships the things of this world. [6](#) Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins, for the terrible anger of God comes upon all those who disobey him. [7](#) Don't participate in the things these people do. [8](#) For though your hearts were once full of darkness, now you are full of light from the Lord, and your behavior should show it! [9](#) For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true. [10](#) Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. [11](#) Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, rebuke and expose them. [12](#) It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret. [13](#) But when the light shines on them, it becomes clear how evil these things are. [14](#) And where your light shines, it will expose their evil deeds. This is why it is said, "Awake, O sleeper, rise up from the dead, and Christ will give you light." [15](#) So be careful how you live, not as fools but as those who are wise. [16](#) Make the most of every opportunity for doing good in these evil days. [17](#) Don't act thoughtlessly, but try to understand what the Lord wants you to do. [18](#) Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, let the Holy Spirit fill and control you. [19](#) Then you will sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, making music to the Lord in your hearts. [20](#) And you will always give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[21](#) And further, you will submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. [22](#) You wives will submit to your husbands as you do to the Lord. [23](#) For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of his body, the church; he gave his life to be her Savior. [24](#) As the church submits to Christ, so you wives must submit to your husbands in everything. [25](#) And you husbands must love your wives with the same love Christ showed the church. He gave up his life for her [26](#) to make her holy and clean, washed by baptism and God's word. ^{f10} [27](#) He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. [28](#) In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man is actually loving himself when he loves his wife. [29](#) No one hates his own body but lovingly cares for it, just as Christ cares for his body, which is the church. [30](#) And we are his body. [31](#) As the Scriptures say, "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one." ^{f11} [32](#) This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one. [33](#) So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

6:1-24 -

[1](#) Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do. [2](#) "Honor your father and mother." This is the first of the Ten Commandments that ends with a promise. [3](#) And this is the promise: If you honor your father and mother, "you will live a long life, full of blessing." ^{f12} [4](#) And now a word to you fathers. Don't make your children angry by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction approved by the Lord. [5](#) Slaves, obey your earthly masters

with deep respect and fear. Serve them sincerely as you would serve Christ. [6](#) Work hard, but not just to please your masters when they are watching. As slaves of Christ, do the will of God with all your heart. [7](#) Work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. [8](#) Remember that the Lord will reward each one of us for the good we do, whether we are slaves or free. [9](#) And in the same way, you masters must treat your slaves right. Don't threaten them; remember, you both have the same Master in heaven, and he has no favorites.

[10](#) A final word: Be strong with the Lord's mighty power. [11](#) Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies and tricks of the Devil. [12](#) For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and against wicked spirits in the heavenly realms. [13](#) Use every piece of God's armor to resist the enemy in the time of evil, so that after the battle you will still be standing firm. [14](#) Stand your ground, putting on the sturdy belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. [15](#) For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News, so that you will be fully prepared. ^{F13} [16](#) In every battle you will need faith as your shield to stop the fiery arrows aimed at you by Satan. ^{F14} [17](#) Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. [18](#) Pray at all times and on every occasion in the power of the Holy Spirit. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all Christians everywhere.

[19](#) And pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words as I boldly explain God's secret plan that the Good News is for the Gentiles, too. ^{F15} [20](#) I am in chains now for preaching this message as God's ambassador. But pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should. [21](#) Tychicus, a much loved brother and faithful helper in the Lord's work, will tell you all about how I am getting along. [22](#) I am sending him to you for just this purpose. He will let you know how we are, and he will encourage you. [23](#) May God give you peace, dear brothers and sisters, ^{F16} and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. [24](#) May God's grace be upon all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.

FOOTNOTES:

- F1: Some manuscripts do not include *in Ephesus*.
F2: Or *we have become God's inheritance*.
F3: Or *realize how much God has been honored by acquiring his people*.
F4: Some manuscripts read *the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*.
F5: Ps 68:18.
F6: Or *to the lowest parts of the earth*.
F7: Greek *Gentiles*.
F8: Zech 8:16.
F9: Ps 4:4.
F10: Greek *having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word*.
F11: Gen 2:24.
F12: Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16.

F13: Or *For shoes, put on the readiness to preach the Good News of peace with God*.

F14: Greek *by the evil one*.

F15: Greek *explain the mystery of the gospel*.

F16: Greek *brothers*.

Book of Colossians:1-29 -

[1](#) This letter is from Paul, chosen by God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and from our brother Timothy. [2](#) It is written to God's holy people in the city of Colosse, who are faithful brothers and sisters ^{F1} in Christ. May God our Father give you grace and peace.

[3](#) We always pray for you, and we give thanks to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, [4](#) for we have heard that you trust in Christ Jesus and that you love all of God's people. [5](#) You do this because you are looking forward to the joys of heaven - as you have been ever since you first heard the truth of the Good News. [6](#) This same Good News that came to you is going out all over the world. It is changing lives everywhere, just as it changed yours that very first day you heard and understood the truth about God's great kindness to sinners. [7](#) Epaphras, our much loved co-worker, was the one who brought you the Good News. He is Christ's faithful servant, and he is helping us in your place. ^{F2} [8](#) He is the one who told us about the great love for others that the Holy Spirit has given you.

[9](#) So we have continued praying for you ever since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you a complete understanding of what he wants to do in your lives, and we ask him to make you wise with spiritual wisdom. [10](#) Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and you will continually do good, kind things for others. All the while, you will learn to know God better and better. [11](#) We also pray that you will be strengthened with his glorious power so that you will have all the patience and endurance you need. May you be filled with joy,

[12](#) always thanking the Father, who has enabled you to share the inheritance that belongs to God's holy people, who live in the light. [13](#) For he has rescued us from the one who rules in the kingdom of darkness, and he has brought us into the Kingdom of his dear Son. [14](#) God has purchased our freedom with his blood ^{F3} and has forgiven all our sins. [15](#) Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before God made anything at all and is supreme over all creation. ^{F4} [16](#) Christ is the one through whom God created everything in heaven and earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see - kings, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities. Everything has been created through him and for him. [17](#) He existed before everything else began, and he holds all creation together. [18](#) Christ is the head of the church, which is his body. He is the first of all who will rise from the dead, ^{F5} so he is first in everything. [19](#) For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, [20](#) and by him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of his blood on the cross. [21](#) This includes you who were once so far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions, [22](#) yet now he has brought you back as his friends. He has done this through

his death on the cross in his own human body. As a result, he has brought you into the very presence of God, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault. [23](#) But you must continue to believe this truth and stand in it firmly. Don't drift away from the assurance you received when you heard the Good News. The Good News has been preached all over the world, and I, Paul, have been appointed by God to proclaim it. [24](#) I am glad when I suffer for you in my body, for I am completing what remains of Christ's sufferings for his body, the church. [25](#) God has given me the responsibility of serving his church by proclaiming his message in all its fullness to you Gentiles. [26](#) This message was kept secret for centuries and generations past, but now it has been revealed to his own holy people. [27](#) For it has pleased God to tell his people that the riches and glory of Christ are for you Gentiles, too. For this is the secret: Christ lives in you, and this is your assurance that you will share in his glory. [28](#) So everywhere we go, we tell everyone about Christ. We warn them and teach them with all the wisdom God has given us, for we want to present them to God, perfect ^{fb} in their relationship to Christ. [29](#) I work very hard at this, as I depend on Christ's mighty power that works within me.

2:1-23 -

[1](#) I want you to know how much I have agonized for you and for the church at Laodicea, and for many other friends who have never known me personally. [2](#) My goal is that they will be encouraged and knit together by strong ties of love. I want them to have full confidence because they have complete understanding of God's secret plan, which is Christ himself. [3](#) In him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

[4](#) I am telling you this so that no one will be able to deceive you with persuasive arguments. [5](#) For though I am far away from you, my heart is with you. And I am very happy because you are living as you should and because of your strong faith in Christ. [6](#) And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to live in obedience to him. [7](#) Let your roots grow down into him and draw up nourishment from him, so you will grow in faith, strong and vigorous in the truth you were taught. Let your lives overflow with thanksgiving for all he has done. [8](#) Don't let anyone lead you astray with empty philosophy and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the evil powers of this world, ^{fz} and not from Christ. [9](#) For in Christ the fullness of God lives in a human body, ^{fb} [10](#) and you are complete through your union with Christ. He is the Lord over every ruler and authority in the universe. [11](#) When you came to Christ, you were "circumcised," but not by a physical procedure. It was a spiritual procedure - the cutting away of your sinful nature. [12](#) For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to a new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.

[13](#) You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ. He forgave all our sins. [14](#) He canceled the record that contained the charges against us. He took it and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ's cross. [15](#) In this

way, God disarmed the evil rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross of Christ.

[16](#) So don't let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days or new-moon ceremonies or Sabbaths. [17](#) For these rules were only shadows of the real thing, Christ himself. [18](#) Don't let anyone condemn you by insisting on self-denial. And don't let anyone say you must worship angels, even though they say they have had visions about this. These people claim to be so humble, but their sinful minds have made them proud. [19](#) But they are not connected to Christ, the head of the body. For we are joined together in his body by his strong sinews, and we grow only as we get our nourishment and strength from God. [20](#) You have died with Christ, and he has set you free from the evil powers of this world. So why do you keep on following rules of the world, such as, [21](#) "Don't handle, don't eat, don't touch." [22](#) Such rules are mere human teaching about things that are gone as soon as we use them. [23](#) These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, humility, and severe bodily discipline. But they have no effect when it comes to conquering a person's evil thoughts and desires.

3:1-25 -

[1](#) Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits at God's right hand in the place of honor and power. [2](#) Let heaven fill your thoughts. Do not think only about things down here on earth. [3](#) For you died when Christ died, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. [4](#) And when Christ, who is your ^{fb} real life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.

[5](#) So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual sin, impurity, lust, and shameful desires. Don't be greedy for the good things of this life, for that is idolatry. [6](#) God's terrible anger will come upon those who do such things. [7](#) You used to do them when your life was still part of this world.

[8](#) But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. [9](#) Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old evil nature and all its wicked deeds. [10](#) In its place you have clothed yourselves with a brand-new nature that is continually being renewed as you learn more and more about Christ, who created this new nature within you. [11](#) In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, ^{f10} circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, ^{f11} slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.

[12](#) Since God chose you to be the holy people whom he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. [13](#) You must make allowance for each other's faults and forgive the person who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. [14](#) And the most important piece of clothing you must wear is love. Love is what binds us all together in perfect harmony. [15](#) And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are all called to live in peace.

And always be thankful. [16](#) Let the words of Christ, in all their richness, live in your hearts and make you wise. Use his words to teach and counsel each other. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. [17](#) And whatever you do or say, let it be as a representative of the Lord Jesus, all the while giving thanks through him to God the Father.

[18](#) You wives must submit to your husbands, as is fitting for those who belong to the Lord. [19](#) And you husbands must love your wives and never treat them harshly. [20](#) You children must always obey your parents, for this is what pleases the Lord. [21](#) Fathers, don't aggravate your children. If you do, they will become discouraged and quit trying. [22](#) You slaves must obey your earthly masters in everything you do. Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you. Obey them willingly because of your reverent fear of the Lord. [23](#) Work hard and cheerfully at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. [24](#) Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and the Master you are serving is Christ. [25](#) But if you do what is wrong, you will be paid back for the wrong you have done. For God has no favorites who can get away with evil.

4:1-18 -

[1](#) You slave owners must be just and fair to your slaves. Remember that you also have a Master - in heaven.

[2](#) Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart. [3](#) Don't forget to pray for us, too, that God will give us many opportunities to preach about his secret plan - that Christ is also for you Gentiles. That is why I am here in chains. [4](#) Pray that I will proclaim this message as clearly as I should.

[5](#) Live wisely among those who are not Christians, and make the most of every opportunity. [6](#) Let your conversation be gracious and effective so that you will have the right answer for everyone.

[7](#) Tychicus, a much loved brother, will tell you how I am getting along. He is a faithful helper who serves the Lord with me. [8](#) I have sent him on this special trip to let you know how we are doing and to encourage you. [9](#) I am also sending Onesimus, a faithful and much loved brother, one of your own people. He and Tychicus will give you all the latest news. [10](#) Aristarchus, who is in prison with me, sends you his greetings, and so does Mark, Barnabas's cousin. And as you were instructed before, make Mark welcome if he comes your way. [11](#) Jesus (the one we call Justus) also sends his greetings. These are the only Jewish Christians among my co-workers; they are working with me here for the Kingdom of God. And what a comfort they have been! [12](#) Epaphras, from your city, a servant of Christ Jesus, sends you his greetings. He always prays earnestly for you, asking God to make you strong and perfect, fully confident of the whole will of God. [13](#) I can assure you that he has agonized for you and also for the Christians in Laodicea and Hierapolis. [14](#) Dear Doctor Luke sends his greetings, and so does Demas. [15](#) Please give my greetings to our Christian brothers and sisters ^{F12} at Laodicea, and to Nympha and those who meet in her house. [16](#) After you have read this letter, pass it on to the

church at Laodicea so they can read it, too. And you should read the letter I wrote to them. [17](#) And say to Archippus, "Be sure to carry out the work the Lord gave you." [18](#) Here is my greeting in my own handwriting - PAUL. Remember my chains. May the grace of God be with you.

FOOTNOTES:

F1: Greek *faithful brothers*.

F2: Greek *he is ministering on your behalf*; other manuscripts read *he is ministering on our behalf*.

F3: Some manuscripts do not include *with his blood*.

F4: Greek *He is the firstborn of all creation*.

F5: Greek *He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead*.

F6: Or *mature*.

F7: Or *from the basic principles of this world*; also in 2:20.

F8: Greek *in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily*.

F9: Some manuscripts read *our*.

F10: Greek *Greek*.

F11: Greek *Barbarian, Scythian*.

F12: Greek *brothers*.

Book of 1 Peter

[1](#) This letter is from Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ. I am writing to God's chosen people who are living as foreigners in the lands of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, the province of Asia, and Bithynia. [2](#) God the Father chose you long ago, and the Spirit has made you holy. As a result, you have obeyed Jesus Christ and are cleansed by his blood. May you have more and more of God's special favor and wonderful peace.

[3](#) All honor to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for it is by his boundless mercy that God has given us the privilege of being born again. Now we live with a wonderful expectation because Jesus Christ rose again from the dead. [4](#) For God has reserved a priceless inheritance for his children. It is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. [5](#) And God, in his mighty power, will protect you until you receive this salvation, because you are trusting him. It will be revealed on the last day for all to see.

[6](#) So be truly glad! ^{F1} There is wonderful joy ahead, even though it is necessary for you to endure many trials for a while. [7](#) These trials are only to test your faith, to show that it is strong and pure. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold - and your faith is far more precious to God than mere gold. So if your faith remains strong after being tried by fiery trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world. [8](#) You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him, you trust him; and even now you are happy with a glorious, inexpressible joy. [9](#) Your reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls.

[10](#) This salvation was something the prophets wanted to know more about. They prophesied about this gracious salvation prepared for you, even though they had many questions as to what it all could mean. [11](#) They wondered

what the Spirit of Christ within them was talking about when he told them in advance about Christ's suffering and his great glory afterward. They wondered when and to whom all this would happen. [12](#) They were told that these things would not happen during their lifetime, but many years later, during yours. And now this Good News has been announced by those who preached to you in the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. It is all so wonderful that even the angels are eagerly watching these things happen.

[13](#) So think clearly and exercise self-control. Look forward to the special blessings that will come to you at the return of Jesus Christ. [14](#) Obey God because you are his children. Don't slip back into your old ways of doing evil; you didn't know any better then. [15](#) But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God - who chose you to be his children - is holy. [16](#) For he himself has said, "You must be holy because I am holy." [17](#) And remember that the heavenly Father to whom you pray has no favorites when he judges. He will judge or reward you according to what you do. So you must live in reverent fear of him during your time as foreigners here on earth. [18](#) For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And the ransom he paid was not mere gold or silver. [19](#) He paid for you with the precious lifeblood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. [20](#) God chose him for this purpose long before the world began, but now in these final days, he was sent to the earth for all to see. And he did this for you. [21](#) Through Christ you have come to trust in God. And because God raised Christ from the dead and gave him great glory, your faith and hope can be placed confidently in God. [22](#) Now you can have sincere love for each other as brothers and sisters [23](#) because you were cleansed from your sins when you accepted the truth of the Good News. So see to it that you really do love each other intensely with all your hearts. [23](#) For you have been born again. Your new life did not come from your earthly parents because the life they gave you will end in death. But this new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living word of God.

[24](#) As the prophet says, "People are like grass that dies away; their beauty fades as quickly as the beauty of wildflowers. The grass withers, and the flowers fall away. [25](#) But the word of the Lord will last forever." [25](#) And that word is the Good News that was preached to you.

2:1-25 -

[1](#) So get rid of all malicious behavior and deceit. Don't just pretend to be good! Be done with hypocrisy and jealousy and backstabbing. [2](#) You must crave pure spiritual milk so that you can grow into the fullness of your salvation. Cry out for this nourishment as a baby cries for milk, [3](#) now that you have had a taste of the Lord's kindness.

[4](#) Come to Christ, who is the living cornerstone of God's temple. He was rejected by the people, but he is precious to God who chose him. [5](#) And now God is building you, as living stones, into his spiritual temple. What's more, you are God's holy priests, who offer the spiritual sacrifices that please him because of Jesus Christ. [6](#) As the Scriptures express it, "I am placing a stone in Jerusalem, [6](#) a chosen cornerstone, and anyone who believes in him will

never be disappointed. [7](#) Yes, he is very precious to you who believe. But for those who reject him, "The stone that was rejected by the builders has now become the cornerstone." [8](#) And the Scriptures also say, "He is the stone that makes people stumble, the rock that will make them fall." [9](#) They stumble because they do not listen to God's word or obey it, and so they meet the fate that has been planned for them. [9](#) But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are a kingdom of priests, God's holy nation, his very own possession. This is so you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light. [10](#) "Once you were not a people; now you are the people of God. Once you received none of God's mercy; now you have received his mercy." [11](#) Dear brothers and sisters, you are foreigners and aliens here. So I warn you to keep away from evil desires because they fight against your very souls. [12](#) Be careful how you live among your unbelieving neighbors. Even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will believe and give honor to God when he comes to judge the world. [11](#)

[13](#) For the Lord's sake, accept all authority - the king as head of state, [14](#) and the officials he has appointed. For the king has sent them to punish all who do wrong and to honor those who do right. [15](#) It is God's will that your good lives should silence those who make foolish accusations against you. [16](#) You are not slaves; you are free. But your freedom is not an excuse to do evil. You are free to live as God's slaves. [17](#) Show respect for everyone. Love your Christian brothers and sisters. [18](#) Fear God. Show respect for the king. [18](#) You who are slaves must accept the authority of your masters. Do whatever they tell you - not only if they are kind and reasonable, but even if they are harsh. [19](#) For God is pleased with you when, for the sake of your conscience, you patiently endure unfair treatment. [20](#) Of course, you get no credit for being patient if you are beaten for doing wrong. But if you suffer for doing right and are patient beneath the blows, God is pleased with you. [21](#) This suffering is all part of what God has called you to. Christ, who suffered for you, is your example. Follow in his steps. [22](#) He never sinned, and he never deceived anyone. [23](#) He did not retaliate when he was insulted. When he suffered, he did not threaten to get even. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly. [24](#) He personally carried away our sins in his own body on the cross so we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. You have been healed by his wounds! [25](#) Once you were wandering like lost sheep. But now you have turned to your Shepherd, the Guardian of your souls.

3:1-22 -

[1](#) In the same way, you wives must accept the authority of your husbands, even those who refuse to accept the Good News. Your godly lives will speak to them better than any words. They will be won over [2](#) by watching your pure, godly behavior. [3](#) Don't be concerned about the outward beauty that depends on fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes. [4](#) You should be known for the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God. [5](#) That is the way the holy women of old made themselves beautiful. They trusted God and accepted the authority of their husbands. [6](#) For instance, Sarah obeyed her husband,

Abraham, when she called him her master. You are her daughters when you do what is right without fear of what your husbands might do. [7](#) In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat her with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. If you don't treat her as you should, your prayers will not be heard.

[8](#) Finally, all of you should be of one mind, full of sympathy toward each other, loving one another with tender hearts and humble minds. [9](#) Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate when people say unkind things about you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God wants you to do, and he will bless you for it. [10](#) For the Scriptures say, "If you want a happy life and good days, keep your tongue from speaking evil, and keep your lips from telling lies. [11](#) Turn away from evil and do good. Work hard at living in peace with others. [12](#) The eyes of the Lord watch over those who do right, and his ears are open to their prayers. But the Lord turns his face against those who do evil." ^{F13} [13](#) Now, who will want to harm you if you are eager to do good? [14](#) But even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it. So don't be afraid and don't worry. [15](#) Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if you are asked about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it.

[16](#) But you must do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak evil against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ. [17](#) Remember, it is better to suffer for doing good, if that is what God wants, than to suffer for doing wrong!

[18](#) Christ also suffered when he died for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners that he might bring us safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit. ^{F14} [19](#) So he went and preached to the spirits in prison - [20](#) those who disobeyed God long ago when God waited patiently while Noah was building his boat. Only eight people were saved from drowning in that terrible flood. ^{F15}

[21](#) And this is a picture of baptism, which now saves you by the power of Jesus Christ's resurrection. Baptism is not a removal of dirt from your body; it is an appeal to God from ^{F16} a clean conscience. [22](#) Now Christ has gone to heaven. He is seated in the place of honor next to God, and all the angels and authorities and powers are bowing before him.

4:1-19 -

[1](#) So then, since Christ suffered physical pain, you must arm yourselves with the same attitude he had, and be ready to suffer, too. For if you are willing to suffer for Christ, you have decided to stop sinning. [2](#) And you won't spend the rest of your life chasing after evil desires, but you will be anxious to do the will of God. [3](#) You have had enough in the past of the evil things that godless people enjoy - their immorality and lust, their feasting and drunkenness and wild parties, and their terrible worship of idols.

[4](#) Of course, your former friends are very surprised when you no longer join them in the wicked things they do, and they say evil things about you. [5](#) But just remember that they will have to face God, who will judge everyone, both the living and the dead. [6](#) That is why the Good News was preached even to those who have died - so that although their bodies were punished with death, they could still live in the spirit as God does.

[7](#) The end of the world is coming soon. Therefore, be earnest and disciplined in your prayers. [8](#) Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins. [9](#) Cheerfully share your home with those who need a meal or a place to stay. [10](#) God has given gifts to each of you from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Manage them well so that God's generosity can flow through you. [11](#) Are you called to be a speaker? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Are you called to help others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then God will be given glory in everything through Jesus Christ. All glory and power belong to him forever and ever. Amen.

[12](#) Dear friends, don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you. [13](#) Instead, be very glad - because these trials will make you partners with Christ in his suffering, and afterward you will have the wonderful joy of sharing his glory when it is displayed to all the world. [14](#) Be happy if you are insulted for being a Christian, for then the glorious Spirit of God will come upon you. [15](#) If you suffer, however, it must not be for murder, stealing, making trouble, or prying into other people's affairs. [16](#) But it is no shame to suffer for being a Christian. Praise God for the privilege of being called by his wonderful name! [17](#) For the time has come for judgment, and it must begin first among God's own children. And if even we Christians must be judged, what terrible fate awaits those who have never believed God's Good News? [18](#) And "If the righteous are barely saved, what chance will the godless and sinners have?" ^{F17} [19](#) So if you are suffering according to God's will, keep on doing what is right, and trust yourself to the God who made you, for he will never fail you.

5:1-14 -

[1](#) And now, a word to you who are elders in the churches. I, too, am an elder and a witness to the sufferings of Christ. And I, too, will share his glory and his honor when he returns. As a fellow elder, this is my appeal to you: [2](#) Care for the flock of God entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly - not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. [3](#) Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your good example. [4](#) And when the head Shepherd comes, your reward will be a never-ending share in his glory and honor.

[5](#) You younger men, accept the authority of the elders. And all of you, serve each other in humility, for "God sets himself against the proud, but he shows favor to the humble." ^{F18} [6](#) So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and in his good time he will honor you. [7](#) Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about what happens to you.

8 Be careful! Watch out for attacks from the Devil, your great enemy. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for some victim to devour. **9** Take a firm stand against him, and be strong in your faith. Remember that your Christian brothers and sisters ^{F19} all over the world are going through the same kind of suffering you are.

10 In his kindness God called you to his eternal glory by means of Jesus Christ. After you have suffered a little while, he will restore, support, and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation. **11** All power is his forever and ever. Amen. **12** I have written this short letter to you with the help of Silas, ^{F20} whom I consider a faithful brother. My purpose in writing is to encourage you and assure you that the grace of God is with you no matter what happens. **13** Your sister church here in Rome ^{F21} sends you greetings, and so does my son Mark. **14** Greet each other in Christian love. ^{F22} Peace be to all of you who are in Christ.

FOOTNOTES:

F1: Or *So you are truly glad.*

F2: Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7.

F3: Greek *can have brotherly love.*

F4: Some manuscripts read *with a pure heart.*

F5: Isa 40:6-8.

F6: Greek *in Zion.*

F7: Or *will never be put to shame.* Isa 28:16.

F8: Ps 118:22.

F9: Isa 8:14.

F10: Hos 1:6, 9; 2:23.

F11: Or *on the day of visitation.*

F12: Greek *Love the brotherhood.*

F13: Ps 34:12-16.

F14: Or *spirit.*

F15: Greek *saved through water.*

F16: Or *for.*

F17: Prov 11:31.

F18: Prov 3:34.

F19: Greek *your brothers.*

F20: Greek *Silvanus.*

F21: Greek *The elect one in Babylon.* Babylon was probably a code name for Rome.

F22: Greek *with a kiss of love.*

Book of 2 Peter:1-21

1 This letter is from Simon ^{F1} Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ. I am writing to all of you who share the same precious faith we have, faith given to us by Jesus Christ, our God and Savior, who makes us right with God. **2** May God bless you with his special favor and wonderful peace as you come to know Jesus, our God and Lord, ^{F2} better and better. **3** As we know Jesus better, his divine power gives us everything we need for living a godly life. He has called us to receive his own glory and goodness! **4** And by that same mighty power, he has given us all of his rich and wonderful promises. He has promised that you will escape the decadence all around you caused by evil desires and that you will share in his divine nature.

5 So make every effort to apply the benefits of these promises to your life. Then your faith will produce a life of moral excellence. A life of moral excellence leads to

knowing God better. **6** Knowing God leads to self-control. Self-control leads to patient endurance, and patient endurance leads to godliness. **7** Godliness leads to love for other Christians, ^{F3} and finally you will grow to have genuine love for everyone. **8** The more you grow like this, the more you will become productive and useful in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** But those who fail to develop these virtues are blind or, at least, very shortsighted. They have already forgotten that God has cleansed them from their old life of sin. **10** So, dear brothers and sisters, ^{F4} work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Doing this, you will never stumble or fall away. **11** And God will open wide the gates of heaven for you to enter into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

12 I plan to keep on reminding you of these things - even though you already know them and are standing firm in the truth. **13** Yes, I believe I should keep on reminding you of these things as long as I live. **14** But the Lord Jesus Christ has shown me that my days here on earth are numbered and I am soon to die. ^{F5} **15** So I will work hard to make these things clear to you. I want you to remember them long after I am gone.

16 For we were not making up clever stories when we told you about the power of our Lord Jesus Christ and his coming again. We have seen his majestic splendor with our own eyes. **17** And he received honor and glory from God the Father when God's glorious, majestic voice called down from heaven, "This is my beloved Son; I am fully pleased with him." **18** We ourselves heard the voice when we were there with him on the holy mountain.

19 Because of that, we have even greater confidence in the message proclaimed by the prophets. Pay close attention to what they wrote, for their words are like a light shining in a dark place - until the day Christ appears and his brilliant light shines in your hearts. ^{F6} **20** Above all, you must understand that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophets themselves ^{F7} **21** or because they wanted to prophesy. It was the Holy Spirit who moved the prophets to speak from God.

2:1-22

1 But there were also false prophets in Israel, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will cleverly teach their destructive heresies about God and even turn against their Master who bought them. Theirs will be a swift and terrible end. **2** Many will follow their evil teaching and shameful immorality. And because of them, Christ and his true way will be slandered.

3 In their greed they will make up clever lies to get hold of your money. But God condemned them long ago, and their destruction is on the way. **4** For God did not spare even the angels when they sinned; he threw them into hell, ^{F8} in gloomy caves ^{F9} and darkness until the judgment day. **5** And God did not spare the ancient world - except for Noah and his family of seven. Noah warned the world of God's righteous judgment. Then God destroyed the whole world of ungodly people with a vast flood. **6** Later, he turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into heaps of ashes and swept them off the face of the earth. He made them an example of what will happen to ungodly people.

7 But at the same time, God rescued Lot out of Sodom because he was a good man who was sick of all the immorality and wickedness around him. **8** Yes, he was a righteous man who was distressed by the wickedness he saw and heard day after day. **9** So you see, the Lord knows how to rescue godly people from their trials, even while punishing the wicked right up until the day of judgment.

10 He is especially hard on those who follow their own evil, lustful desires and who despise authority. These people are proud and arrogant, daring even to scoff at the glorious ones ^{F10} without so much as trembling. **11** But the angels, even though they are far greater in power and strength than these false teachers, never speak out disrespectfully against ^{F11} the glorious ones. **12** These false teachers are like unthinking animals, creatures of instinct, who are born to be caught and killed. They laugh at the terrifying powers they know so little about, and they will be destroyed along with them. **13** Their destruction is their reward for the harm they have done. They love to indulge in evil pleasures in broad daylight. They are a disgrace and a stain among you. They revel in deceitfulness while they feast with you. **14** They commit adultery with their eyes, and their lust is never satisfied. They make a game of luring unstable people into sin. They train themselves to be greedy; they are doomed and cursed. **15** They have wandered off the right road and followed the way of Balaam son of Beor, ^{F12} who loved to earn money by doing wrong. **16** But Balaam was stopped from his mad course when his donkey rebuked him with a human voice. **17** These people are as useless as dried-up springs of water or as clouds blown away by the wind - promising much and delivering nothing. They are doomed to blackest darkness. **18** They brag about themselves with empty, foolish boasting. With lustful desire as their bait, they lure back into sin those who have just escaped from such wicked living. **19** They promise freedom, but they themselves are slaves to sin and corruption. For you are a slave to whatever controls you. **20** And when people escape from the wicked ways of the world by learning about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and then get tangled up with sin and become its slave again, they are worse off than before. **21** It would be better if they had never known the right way to live than to know it and then reject the holy commandments that were given to them. **22** They make these proverbs come true: "A dog returns to its vomit," ^{F13} and "A washed pig returns to the mud."

3:1-18

1 This is my second letter to you, dear friends, and in both of them I have tried to stimulate your wholesome thinking and refresh your memory. **2** I want you to remember and understand what the holy prophets said long ago and what our Lord and Savior commanded through your apostles.

3 First, I want to remind you that in the last days there will be scoffers who will laugh at the truth and do every evil thing they desire. **4** This will be their argument: "Jesus promised to come back, did he? Then where is he? Why, as far back as anyone can remember, everything has remained exactly the same since the world was first created." **5** They deliberately forget that God made the heavens by the word of his command, and he brought the earth up from the water and surrounded it with water. **6**

Then he used the water to destroy the world with a mighty flood. **7** And God has also commanded that the heavens and the earth will be consumed by fire on the day of judgment, when ungodly people will perish.

8 But you must not forget, dear friends, that a day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day.

9 The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise to return, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to perish, so he is giving more time for everyone to repent. **10** But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and everything in them will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be exposed to judgment. ^{F14}

11 Since everything around us is going to melt away, what holy, godly lives you should be living! **12** You should look forward to that day and hurry it along - the day when God will set the heavens on fire and the elements will melt away in the flames. **13** But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised, a world where everyone is right with God. **14** And so, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to live a pure and blameless life. And be at peace with God. **15** And remember, the Lord is waiting so that people have time to be saved. This is just as our beloved brother Paul wrote to you with the wisdom God gave him - **16** speaking of these things in all of his letters. Some of his comments are hard to understand, and those who are ignorant and unstable have twisted his letters around to mean something quite different from what he meant, just as they do the other parts of Scripture - and the result is disaster for them. **17** I am warning you ahead of time, dear friends, so that you can watch out and not be carried away by the errors of these wicked people. I don't want you to lose your own secure footing. **18** But grow in the special favor and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be all glory and honor, both now and forevermore. Amen.

FOOTNOTES:

F1: Greek *Simeon*.

F2: Or *come to know God and Jesus our Lord*.

F3: Greek *brotherly love*.

F4: Greek *brothers*.

F5: Greek *I must soon put off this earthly tent*.

F6: Or *until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts*.

F7: Or *is a matter of one's own interpretation*.

F8: Greek *Tartaros*.

F9: Some manuscripts read *chains of gloom*.

F10: *The glorious ones* are probably evil angels; also in 2:11.

F11: Greek *never bring blasphemous judgment from the Lord against*.

F12: Other manuscripts read *Bosor*.

F13: Prov 26:11.

F14: Some manuscripts read *will be burned up*.

Book of James:1-27

Greetings from James

¹This letter is from James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is written to Jewish Christians scattered among the nations. ^{f1} Greetings!

Faith and Endurance

²Dear brothers and sisters, ^{f2} whenever trouble comes your way, let it be an opportunity for joy. ³For when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. ⁴So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be strong in character and ready for anything.

⁵If you need wisdom—if you want to know what God wants you to do—ask him, and he will gladly tell you. He will not resent your asking. ⁶But when you ask him, be sure that you really expect him to answer, for a doubtful mind is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷People like that should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. ⁸They can't make up their minds. They waver back and forth in everything they do.

⁹Christians who are ^{f3} poor should be glad, for God has honored them. ¹⁰And those who are rich should be glad, for God has humbled them. They will fade away like a flower in the field. ¹¹The hot sun rises and dries up the grass; the flower withers, and its beauty fades away. So also, wealthy people will fade away with all of their achievements.

¹²God blesses the people who patiently endure testing. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. ¹³And remember, no one who wants to do wrong should ever say, "God is tempting me." God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else either. ¹⁴Temptation comes from the lure of our own evil desires. ¹⁵These evil desires lead to evil actions, and evil actions lead to death. ¹⁶So don't be misled, my dear brothers and sisters.

¹⁷Whatever is good and perfect comes to us from God above, who created all heaven's lights. ^{f4} Unlike them, he never changes or casts shifting shadows. ¹⁸In his goodness he chose to make us his own children by giving us his true word. And we, out of all creation, became his choice possession.

Listening and Doing

¹⁹My dear brothers and sisters, be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. ²⁰Your anger can never make things right in God's sight.

²¹So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the message God has planted in your hearts, for it is strong enough to save your souls.

²²And remember, it is a message to obey, not just to listen to. If you don't obey, you are only fooling yourself. ²³For if you just listen and don't obey, it is like looking at your face in a mirror but doing nothing to improve your appearance. ²⁴You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. ²⁵But if you keep looking steadily into God's perfect law—the law that sets you free—and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.

²⁶If you claim to be religious but don't control your tongue, you are just fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless. ²⁷Pure and lasting religion in the sight of God our Father means that we must care for orphans and widows in their troubles, and refuse to let the world corrupt us.

FOOTNOTES:

F1: *Greek To the twelve tribes in the dispersion.*

F2: *Greek brothers; also in 1:16, 19.*

F3: *Greek The brother who is.*

F4: *Greek from above, from the Father of lights.*