



***I Peter 4–5;
II Peter 1–3;***

B R C

Study the Bible
and follow Jesus

NT #49 Bible Reading Class
Pastor: Wentang Wang

Oak Canyon, CA

W.Wang

A Bible Reader's Conviction

- *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and **training in righteousness**, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16-17, NIV)*

A Blessed Journey

1. *May you study God's Word with a reverent heart and walk in His will.*
2. *May the Lord's Word flourish, and may He add to the church those who are being saved.*
3. *May the Lord bless your days of reading the Scriptures.*

Study the Bible, follow Jesus



The Guiding Principles of BRC



- Christ-Centered
- Bible-Based
- Mission-Minded

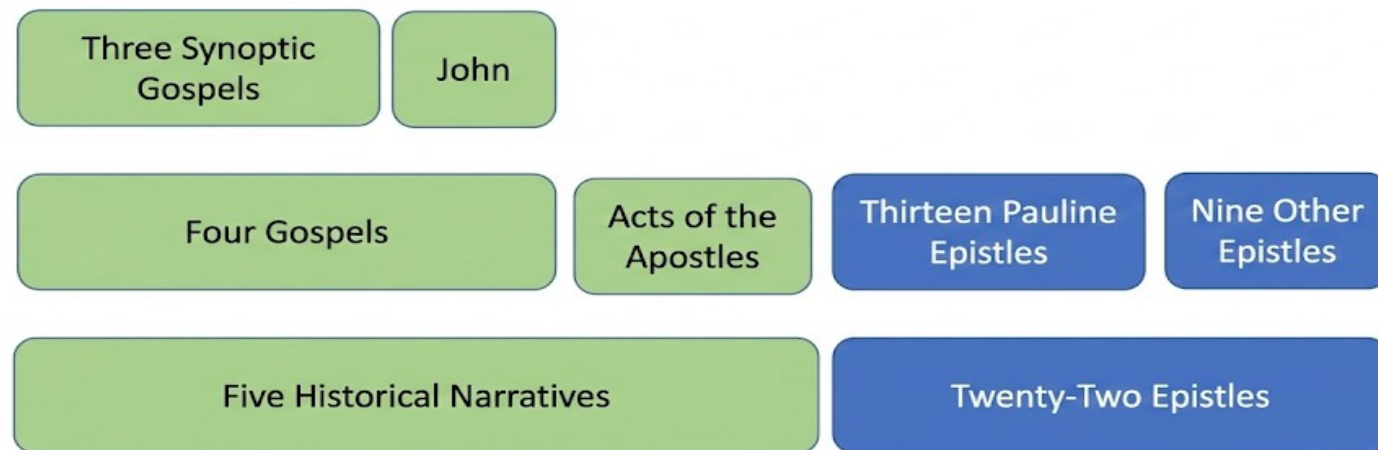
BRC: A Gentleman's Agreement

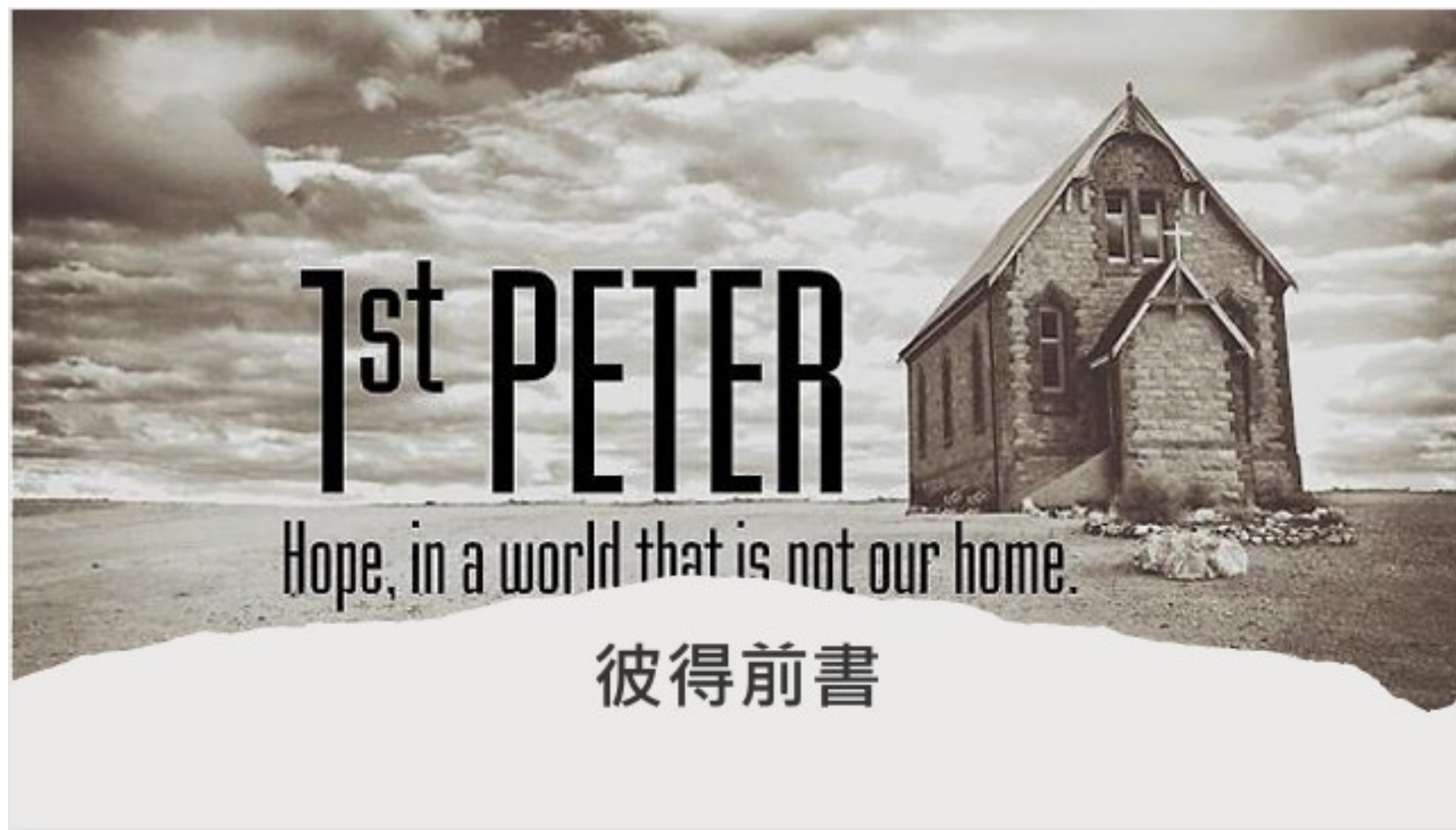


- *I'll complete weekly reading assignment*
- *I'll watch weekly teaching video in its entirety*
- *I'll complete weekly quiz (closed book)*

The Structure of the 27 Books of the New Testament

- *The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) John*
- *The Fourfold Gospel, Acts, The Thirteen Pauline Epistles, The Other Nine Epistles (General Epistles and Others)*
- *Five Books of Historical Narrative, Twenty-Two Books of Doctrinal Teaching*





W.Wang

“Can the dead hear the gospel?”

- *“For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to **those who are now dead**, so that they might be judged according to human standards in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.” (I Peter 4:6, NIV)*
- *The NIV adds the word “**now**” (“those who are **now** dead”) to make the meaning clear. Peter is referring to people who were alive when the gospel was preached to them, but who have since died. He is **not** saying that people can hear the gospel after death.*

The Most Important Thing

- “Above all, love one another deeply, because love covers many sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.” (I Peter 4:8–9)
- If we were to summarize the entire teaching of Scripture in a single word, that word would be **love**. God is love. Jesus is love. And we are called to love one another. Compared with love, everything else is secondary.
- A practical expression of love can begin with something very simple: **hospitality**. I welcome you, and you welcome me. I receive you into my home, and you receive me into yours. We visit one another, interact with kindness, and live together in goodwill.
- Jesus said, “A new command I give you: Love one another.” (John 13:34)
Paul said, “The entire law is summed up in this one command: Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Galatians 5:14)
Peter said, “Above all, love one another deeply.” (I Peter 4:8)
John said, “Since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” (1 John 4:11)

Being Faithful Stewards of God's Many Gifts

- *“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.”(I Peter 4:10–11)*
- *Spiritual gifts are Christ’s gifts to His people, and **every believer has received at least one**. Gifts must be **shared**, not kept for oneself. If your gift is speaking, then speak **according to God’s Word**—not according to human opinions, and not according to your own preferences. This is the most basic integrity required of anyone who teaches. If your gift is serving, then serve **with the strength that God provides**, not relying on your own ability.*
- *The purpose of using our gifts is that **God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ**. Both the receiving and the using of our gifts are rooted in Christ: We **receive** our gifts because of Jesus; We **use** our gifts in the name of Jesus. And the **glory** returns to Jesus .The goal is not to draw attention to ourselves or to make others praise how well we speak or how well we serve. The goal is that **God’s name may be honored**.*

Looking Forward with Hope:

A World of Mutual Hospitality and Service

- *A few short verses in I Peter 4 once again stir up within me the hope I once had deep in my heart—a hope that was almost abandoned because of the coldness of reality.*
- *This passage says that brothers and sisters must love one another deeply. That means us—people with our own habits, our own flaws, people saved by Christ, people who just happen to encounter one another. We are to love one another deeply, not superficially or merely outwardly. We greet one another, exchange peace, rejoice in our hearts, and offer hospitality to one another. We serve one another with the gifts we have received; I am blessed through your service, and you are blessed through mine. When a community treats one another with love and sincerity, life is stirred up—vibrant and abundant, full and strong, overflowing with an atmosphere of joy that can heal the human heart. No one strives to be the greatest; only Jesus Christ is great among us.*
- *We look forward with hope, longing for that beautiful church and that beautiful world.*

Exhortation to the Elders (Pastors)

- *To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. (5:1–4 NIV)*



- *Peter calls himself an elder and writes to exhort “those who are fellow elders with me.”*
- ***Elders are shepherds.*** *Their responsibility is not merely to hold meetings, but to shepherd God’s flock and to be examples to the sheep. The sheep belong to God, not to the elders—this is something elders must clearly understand. You do not need to compare whose congregation is larger or whose church building is more magnificent. You only need to be faithful to God’s commission and shepherd God’s flock.*
- *Jesus Christ is the “Chief Shepherd,” the great Shepherd of the sheep. Elders (pastors) are subordinates of the Chief Shepherd.*



The elder’s “three nots” and “three insteads”

- 1. Not because you must, but because you are willing*
- 2. Not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve*
- 3. Not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock*

Final Exhortations

- “Must” and “because”:

- *As I Peter comes to its conclusion, it gives three commands, and each command is accompanied by a reason:*

- 1. “In the same way, you who are younger, (likewise) submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, (must) clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because ‘God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.’” (5:5 NIV)*

- Meaning:

- 1) Girding the waist is for action, and action is for living. “Clothe yourselves with humility” means “live with an attitude of humility.”*
- 2) A believer’s life is under God’s rule. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. If you want to please God and live a blessed life, you must be humble.*

Final Exhortations

- Application:

- 1) *Do I acknowledge that everything I have is given by God? Therefore, I can only give thanks—there is nothing to be proud of.*
- 2) *Am I able to see strengths in others that I do not have? Am I able to “consider others better than myself”?*
- 3) *Can I maintain a humble attitude even toward those whose worldly conditions are not as good as mine?*

Final Exhortations

2. “Cast **all** your anxiety on him **because he** cares for you.” (5:7 NIV)

- Meaning:

- *Anxiety is a burden on the heart. If you want to live a peaceful and joyful life, you must first remove the burden within. The way to remove it is not to pretend the anxiety does not exist, but to cast it onto God.*
- *Because God cares for His children—He supplies our needs and arranges our path. Through prayer in faith, cast all your anxieties on God; do not keep one or two for yourself to carry.*

- Application:

- *Whenever burdens press upon your heart, pray to the Lord and acknowledge your anxiety. Believe that the Lord cares for you and also cares for those you love. In faith, hand your worries to the Lord, lay down your burden, and live joyfully.*

Final Exhortations

3. *“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, **standing firm in the faith, because** you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.” (5:8–9 NIV)*

- Meaning:

- *The devil is the enemy of Christians—real and malicious. The devil is like a “roaring lion,” seeking someone to devour. Who is the one he can devour? Those who are weak in faith. Those who are strong in faith cannot be swallowed by the devil!*
- *The way to deal with the devil is not to run away, but to resist. **We flee from temptation, but we resist the devil with firm faith.** When you resist the devil, “he will flee from you” (James 4:7).*
- *You are not the only one attacked by the devil; all “your brothers and sisters throughout the world” experience the same. Therefore, encourage one another and resist the devil together.*

Final Exhortations

- Application:

- *The devil's attacks often come through suffering, blows, and illness. In such situations, a person's faith may weaken. If you realize you are beginning to doubt God, that is when you must hold even more tightly to God's promises. Read Romans 8:31–39, and ask God to strengthen your faith.*
- *Say in faith to the devil: “Satan, get behind me! No hardship or distress can separate me from the love of God.”*
- *Treat this as faith training—pray daily, entrust yourself to the Lord, and resist the devil with firm faith until peace and joy return to your heart.*

2 PETER

Growing in Grace and Knowledge

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The Most Important Knowledge in Life

- *“Grace and peace be multiplied to you through the **knowledge** of God and of Jesus our Lord.*
- *His divine power has already given us everything we need for life and godliness, through our **knowing** Him who called us by His own glory and goodness. Through these He has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them you may escape the corruption in the world caused by sinful desires and become partakers of the divine nature.” (II Peter 1:2–4)*
- *This letter begins by speaking about knowledge—not religious knowledge, not theological knowledge, but your personal knowledge of Jesus Christ. Through this knowledge, God multiplies grace and peace to you. Through this knowledge, He gives you everything you need for life and godliness. The more you know Jesus, the more grace and peace you experience. The more you know Jesus, the better your relationship with God becomes, the happier your life becomes, and the more your life glorifies Him. Religion and theology cannot produce this. Only your personal knowledge of Jesus Christ can.*

The Most Important Knowledge in Life

- *Some people mistakenly think that religion will make their lives abundant. They come to church, follow the rituals—worship, singing, prayer, sermons, offerings, service—thinking that these things alone will bring spiritual fullness. Others think theology will make their lives abundant. They go to seminary, study systematic theology, Old Testament, New Testament, Romans, Genesis—thinking that knowledge alone will transform them. But has their life truly become abundant?*
- *Peter knew well that nothing else can give life its fullness—only the Son of God, Jesus Christ. He personally witnessed how the most learned religious leaders of his time—the Pharisees and Sadducees—persecuted Jesus and His disciples. He also saw how ordinary, uneducated people who knew Jesus lived out the richness of Christ’s life.*

Dear brothers and sisters, religion and theology have their place, but they are secondary. The most important knowledge—the knowledge that changes your life and shapes your entire future—is your personal knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Partakers of the Divine Nature

- **To be “partakers of the divine nature” (NASB, KJV)** *means to share in what belongs to God. Whenever the New Testament speaks of “sharing” or “having a part,” such as sharing in Christ’s sufferings or sharing in God’s nature, it is speaking of **koinonia**—a participation, a sharing in common. By the grace of Christ, we are allowed to share in His sufferings, and by the grace of Christ, we are allowed to share in His nature.*
 - *The “divine nature” refers to God’s attributes, especially those revealed through Jesus Christ and cultivated in us by the Holy Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There are two prerequisites for sharing in God’s nature:*
 - 1. Knowing the Lord Jesus Christ***
 - 2. Escaping the corruption in the world caused by sinful desires***
-

Spiritual Progress



- *The Eight Steps of Christian Growth (II Peter 1:5–7):*
- Scripture : “For this very reason, make every **effort** to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.” (II Peter 1:5–7)
- Characteristics: This is a remarkable passage. The repeated pattern—“add to this... and add to that...”—reveals **eight stages of spiritual progress**. Peter says that because we share in God’s divine nature, we must be **diligent**.

II Peter emphasizes diligence (1:5, 1:10, 3:14):

God’s grace is abundant, yet believers must still make every effort. Having one virtue is not enough; we must keep adding, step by step, moving upward.

Spiritual Progress

1. Faith (*pistis*)

- “Faith” refers to faith in Jesus Christ. Faith begins when you hear the true gospel and submit to Christ. Then, through regular reading of Scripture, you come to know the Jesus revealed in the Bible, accept His teachings by faith, and live them out.

For example, Jesus said the blessed ones are the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, the hungry for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and those persecuted for righteousness.

When you follow His words and trust that such a life is blessed, that is faith.

- Faith is not about declarations, tongues, or claiming promises. In an age obsessed with power, competition, performance, and self-promotion, following Jesus’ footsteps and practicing His teachings—that is true faith.



Spiritual Progress

2. Goodness (*arete*)

- *Different English versions translate this word as goodness(NIV), moral excellence(NASB) , or virtue(KJV) .*
- *It carries two layers of meaning:*
 - 1) **Effectiveness**—*fulfilling the purpose for which something exists. Good soil is “virtuous” because it produces abundantly. A virtuous person reflects God’s glory and fulfills God’s purpose for their life—living with love, justice, kindness, and goodness like Jesus.*
 - 2) **Courage**—*showing one’s true character in difficult circumstances Like plum blossoms that bloom more beautifully in the cold, a Christian must display Christlike character even in adversity. Faith must be followed by goodness—a life that glorifies God with courage and integrity.*



Spiritual Progress

3. Knowledge (*gnosis*)

- *A person with moral courage may still act rashly. Their intentions may be pure, yet they may cause harm because they lack wisdom. “Knowledge” here means **practical wisdom**—knowing how to live out Christ’s teachings wisely in complex human situations. Jesus described this as being “wise as serpents.” Such a person is not worldly, but perceptive—seeing with a kind heart, listening carefully, considering many factors, all for the sake of practicing the Lord’s way.*
- *A knowledgeable believer understands Jesus Christ, understands how the world works, and understands the deceitfulness of the human heart. Faith must be followed by goodness, and goodness must be followed by **practical knowledge**.*



Spiritual Progress

4. Self-control (*egkrateia*)



- *Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23). Paul’s words—“I discipline my body and make it my slave” (1 Corinthians 9:27) describe self-control.*
- *Every person experiences emotions and desires—joy, anger, sorrow, pleasure, and all the impulses that come with being human. Some people are ruled by their desires, while others learn to rule over them. Self-control is the ability not to be mastered by your passions, and it is this ability that brings true freedom. To faith we must add goodness, to goodness we must add knowledge, and to knowledge we must add self-control. Self-control not only keeps a person from indulging in sinful desires; it also keeps a person from overdoing what is good. Some display their faith excessively, some display their virtue excessively, and some display their knowledge excessively—becoming proud and unattractive. Self-control teaches a person to restrain themselves, to act with balance, and to carry themselves with quiet discipline.*

Spiritual Progress

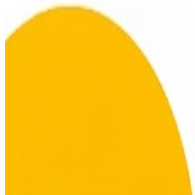
5. Perseverance (hupomone)



- *The NIV, NASB, and KJV all translate this word as perseverance, meaning endurance and steadfastness, and it is an excellent translation.*
- *The word is formed from hupo (“under”) and mone (“abide, remain”), meaning **“to stay under.”** When circumstances are difficult and the pressure is heavy, you do not walk away—you remain, you endure. It is like a farmer laboring under the hot sun, refusing to leave, persevering until he sees the harvest.*
- *Even those who already have faith, virtue, knowledge, and self-control still need the perseverance to keep going and not give up halfway. Following Jesus is a lifelong journey; it is not a hundred-meter sprint, nor a short race, but a marathon. If you walk in the right way, you will surely face opposition—so persevere.*

Spiritual Progress

6. Godliness (*eusebeia*)



- *Godliness has two directions—one toward God and one toward people. Pure prayer, sincere worship, obedience to God’s commands, and diligence in reading Scripture are certainly expressions of godliness, but so are kindness toward others, generous sharing, and caring for orphans and widows. Even someone who laughs, jokes, or shows emotion freely can still be truly godly.*
- *A godly person helps others encounter God. Such a person reveres God deeply and also cares deeply for people. Just look at Jesus. No one was more godly than He was, yet He ate with tax collectors and sinners, touched those with leprosy, and showed compassion to widows and children. The Pharisees thought Jesus was not godly enough and accused Him of breaking religious rules—violating the Sabbath, not washing His hands before meals. So who was truly godly—Jesus or the Pharisees? You know the answer?*

Spiritual Progress

7. Brotherly affection (*philadelphia*)

- “Brotherly affection” is a single word in the original text—***philadelphia***. It does not mean love only for fellow believers, but a genuine kindness toward other human beings. The best example is the Good Samaritan Jesus spoke of: when he saw someone in need, he was moved with compassion and helped him, even though they were strangers and of different ethnic backgrounds.
- The NIV translates this as “**mutual affection**,” while the NASB and KJV render it as “**brotherly kindness**,” all of which capture the meaning well.
- As spiritual life rises step by step, we discover that the landscape above is love; the higher we go, the more love we see.

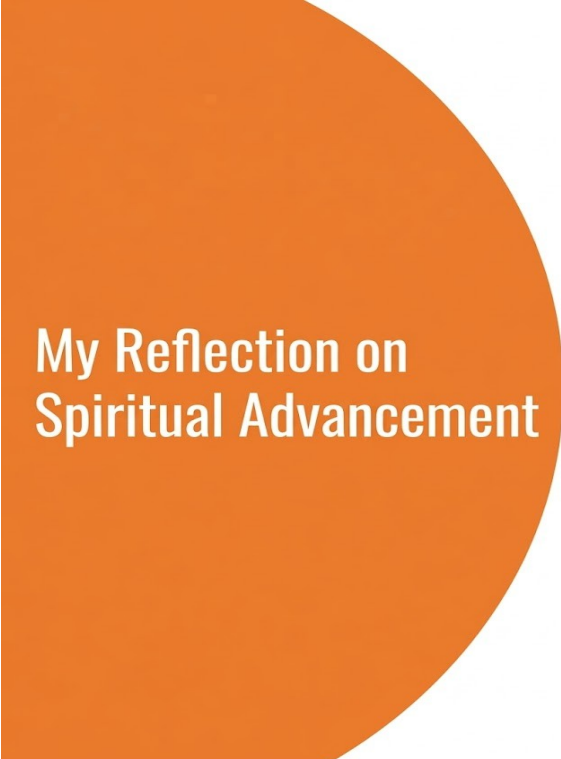


Spiritual Progress

8. Love (agape)

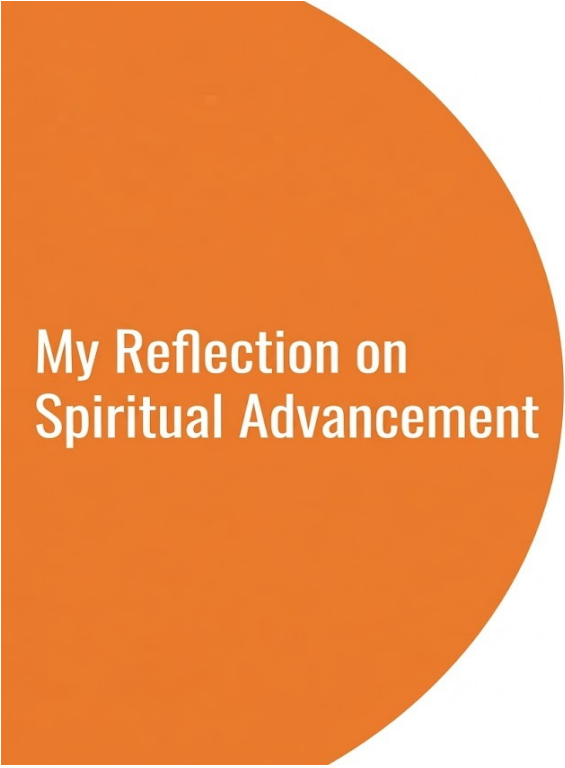
- *The original text does not say “love for all people”; it simply uses the single word agape. After philadelphia, we must add agape—for after brotherly affection among people, we still need the self-giving love of Christ.*
- *This is the ladder of spiritual growth: beginning with faith, climbing through goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, and brotherly affection, and at the summit we find the love of Christ.*
- *Peter urges us to be diligent. If we possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep us from being ineffective and unfruitful in our knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, every believer must climb to the top; every believer must grow in all these virtues in order to know the Lord Jesus Christ more deeply.*



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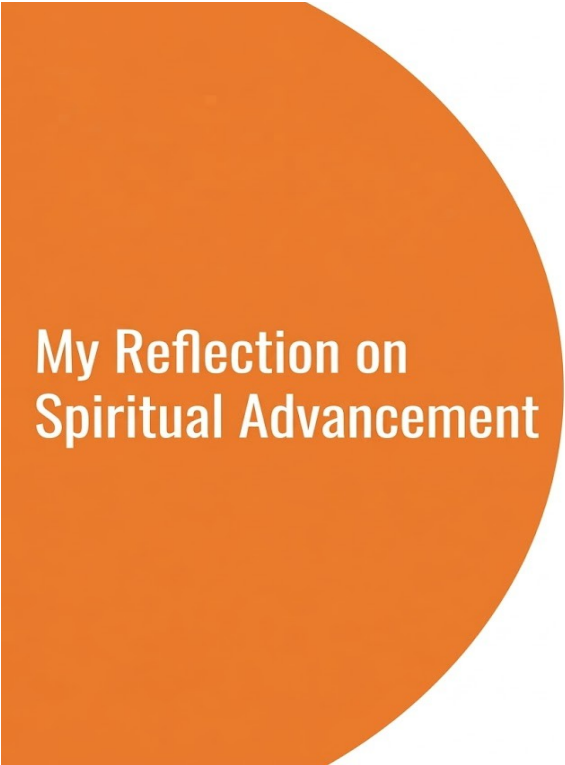
My Reflection on Spiritual Advancement

- *Peter's repeated pattern of "having this, then add that" expresses the Lord's expectation for His people, the abundance we often miss, and the true measure of an "average" Christian life.*
- 1. **The Lord's expectation:** *Peter begins by fixing our eyes on Jesus—"through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness," and "He has given us His very great and precious promises," so that we may "share in the divine nature." The Lord Jesus desires that those who believe in Him would reflect His glory and His goodness, and share in God's own nature. Because His expectation for us is so high, the call to spiritual progress appears: having one virtue, we must add another; having gained one step, we must climb further. The Lord wants us to receive the fullness of life.*

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My Reflection on Spiritual Advancement

2. **The Abundance We Have Missed:** *Peter says that in this way “you will be **richly** welcomed into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Hidden within the call to spiritual progress is the fullness of the life of Christ. “Having this, add that” is not a harsh demand; it is an invitation not to take too little and not to miss what has been prepared for us. Peter also says that if we “**possess** these qualities in increasing measure,” they will keep us from being ineffective and unfruitful in our knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. He speaks of being richly supplied and abundantly provided, because on every step of this ladder the Lord Jesus has prepared fullness and blessing. To stop short at any step is to receive less of Christ’s abundance and to miss part of the Father’s blessing.*

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My Reflection on Spiritual Advancement

3. **Setting the average level of faith:** *With the progression of spiritual life, the standard we set for the “average level” of faith is lifted. There are eight steps in total, and faith is only the first; surely we cannot set the average at the very first step. We cannot say, “Although he lacks virtue, speaks harshly, breaks his word, and shows little compassion, at least he believes in Jesus—that is already good enough.” Virtue is only the second step, and if a person cannot even reach the second step, it is clear that he has not yet reached the average. The progression of spiritual growth raises our standards of evaluation and our expectations for moral conduct. The church must not depart from Christ. If a church embraces lies, acts self-righteously, creates division, and fractures society, yet proudly claims to believe in Jesus without any sense of guilt, then its moral level has fallen below that of the world.*

Such a church loses its credibility as a witness for the Lord and loses the strength to sustain itself from within. A house with a weak and unstable foundation may stand for a time, but in the end it will collapse.

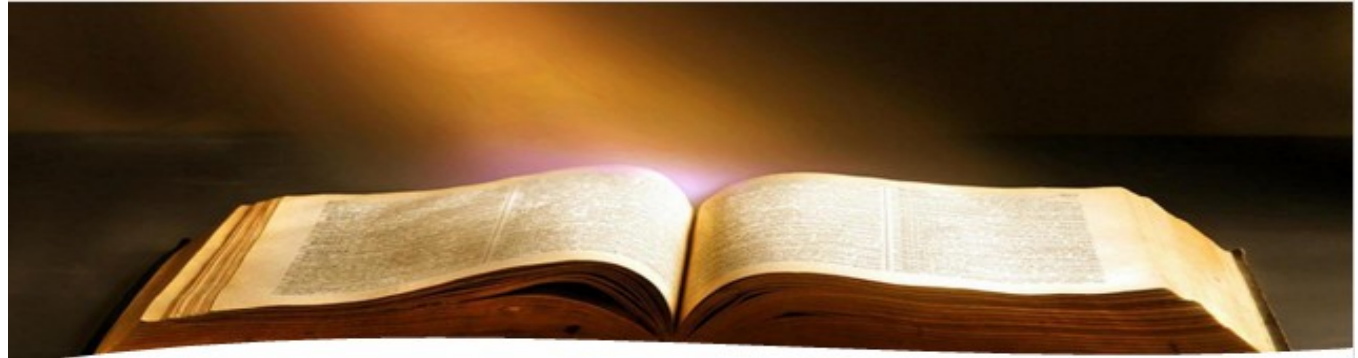
Peter's final words

- *“I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that the time has come for me to put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will make every effort to see that **after my departure** you will always be able to remember these things” (1:13–15).*
- *Many people know Paul's final words (“I have fought the good fight...”), but few know Peter's. To me, Peter's words are just as great and just as moving.*
- *Tradition tells us that Peter was arrested during Nero's persecution of Christians and was cruelly executed by being crucified upside down. Peter said he knew that the time for him to “put aside this tent” was near, and what weighed most heavily on his heart was the Lord's church. While he was still “in this tent,” he wanted to remind the brothers and sisters so that after his departure they would continually remember these things.*

Peter's final words

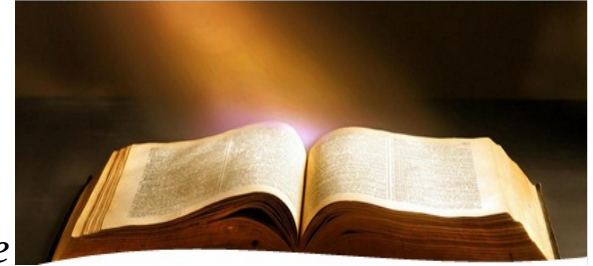
1. *Peter spoke of “the tent.” He repeatedly reminded believers that we are strangers and exiles in this world, people living in tents. Death, for him, meant leaving the tent and returning to the heavenly home. Christians view death differently from the world, and therefore have courage, peace, and a testimony.*
2. *As he approached death, he encouraged and stirred others. Normally, a dying person feels weak, lonely, and afraid, needing encouragement and support. Yet Peter, at the point of death, was not weak; instead, he strengthened and encouraged others, showing the great power within him.*
3. *He reminded believers of essential spiritual truths and bore witness to the Lord Jesus. He said, “I saw His majesty with my own eyes and heard the Father say, ‘This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.’” Most people, when dying, give instructions about earthly matters, but Peter used his final moments to testify for the Lord.*

No Private Interpretation of Scripture



- *Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture comes from one's own interpretation, for prophecy never had its origin in human will, but people spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (1:20–21).*
- *First, when Scripture speaks of “prophecy,” it refers to the words God commanded His prophets to speak. These words may be predictions, but they may also be words of comfort or words of rebuke. Whatever God instructed His prophets to say is called prophecy; it is not limited to foretelling the future. The clearest example is Jesus’ own use of the term. **Jesus said, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. They worship Me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.’ You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions” (Mark 7:6–7).***

No Private Interpretation of Scripture



- The prophet Isaiah rebuked the people of Israel, saying that they honored God with their lips while their hearts were far from Him. Isaiah did not speak predictive words—he did not announce when the end of the world would come or when an earthquake would occur—yet Jesus said that Isaiah **was speaking prophecy**. Jesus, along with all Jews, understood that whatever God commanded a prophet to speak was prophecy.
- Peter says that prophecy is spoken when **“people are moved by the Holy Spirit and speak from God.”** Since it comes from God, it must be proclaimed according to God’s intention. It must not be preached carelessly, nor interpreted carelessly. The phrase **“no prophecy is a matter of one’s own interpretation”** exposes a deadly weakness in today’s church. Look at many pulpits today: some preach according to personal opinion, some interpret everything allegorically, and some do not interpret Scripture at all but instead speak about current events, politics, psychology, or success principles. If God’s Word is not even present, what Scripture is there to interpret? Whatever they wish to say becomes the message. When the pulpit is corrupted, how can the church remain healthy?

Guarding against heresy

- “But there were also false prophets **among the people**, just as there will be false teachers **among you**. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed, they will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping” (3:1–3).
- **False prophets and false teachers:** Peter says that just as there were false prophets in the past, there will be false teachers in the future. Where are these false prophets and false teachers? Peter says they are among the people, right in your midst. What do they do among the people? They secretly introduce destructive heresies that lead people away from the Lord Jesus.



Guarding against heresy

- **False prophets and false teachers.**
- Moses said that the way to discern a false prophet is to see whether what he says comes to pass: **“If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken presumptuously” (Deut. 18:22).**



Let me take the risk of giving a sensitive modern example: In 2020, during the heated atmosphere of the U.S. presidential election, several pastors declared that God had spoken to them personally, telling them that Trump had already won. When the election results came out, Trump lost. What happened to those pastors afterward? A few apologized, but most did not. They continued serving as pastors, and their congregations continued supporting them. The congregation still supported them—how is that possible? It is possible because the congregation itself had already been altered. Their passion for politics had surpassed their passion for Christ. As long as the pastor said what they wanted to hear, even if he was wrong, they tolerated him. When a church reaches this point, it is not enough to deal only with the false prophets; the church must also examine itself.

Guarding against heresy

- ***False prophets and false teachers.***
- *Peter says that they “secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them.” The word “secretly” is translated in English as “secretly” (NIV, NASB, KJV), meaning that they operate in hidden ways, making them difficult to detect. With subtle methods they bring heresies into the church, and the congregation, being led by them, ends up denying Jesus Christ without even realizing it.*
- *You may say, “No, I have never seen a church that denies Jesus!” Yes, it is true that almost no church openly denies Jesus Christ. Yet their words and actions tell a different story. Whether in the pulpit or in their activities, the focus of the church has shifted elsewhere. Jesus Christ has been “faded out,” becoming merely a figure in slogans rather than the foundation and cornerstone of the church. The church’s doctrines may still be correct, and the statement of faith on the website may still say that they believe in Jesus—but where is Jesus?*



The Lord will surely return

- The theme of II Peter chapter 3 is the return of Christ, especially 3:8–13, which is an important passage on eschatology.
- ***Scripture:*** “But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance” (3:8–9).
- ***Teaching:*** The Lord promised that He would return, yet as the years pass and He has not yet come, some begin to doubt whether the Lord has forgotten His promise. In reality, the Lord views time differently from us. What feels long to us—like a thousand years—He considers short, as if it were a single day. What feels short to us—only a day—He considers long, as if it were a thousand years, with ample time to accomplish His purposes. Moreover, the Lord’s desire is that all should repent and be saved. He is patient with the world, giving people the opportunity to turn back to Him.

The Lord will surely return

- ***Scripture:*** “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God” (3:10–12a).
- ***Teaching:*** First, the Lord will surely return—like a thief. At a time you do not expect and are not prepared for, the Lord will come. Just as you cannot calculate the day a thief will strike, you cannot calculate the day the Lord will come. Second, when the Lord comes, the old creation will be destroyed and the new creation will arrive (Rev. 21:1). Third, believers do not face the Lord’s return with fear but with expectation. During the waiting, we ought to live holy lives, be godly, love the Lord, and look forward to His coming.

The Lord will surely return

- **Scripture:** *“On that day the heavens will be dissolved by fire, and the elements will melt in the intense heat. But in keeping with His promise, we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells” (3:12b–13).*
- **Teaching:** *When the Lord comes, the new heaven and new earth will also arrive. What will be in the new heaven and new earth? Scripture says that **righteousness will dwell there**. “Righteousness” means what is right in God’s eyes. When the prophets called God’s people to “act justly and love mercy,” they were calling them to live in ways that God considers right. When Jesus said, “Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness,” He was calling us to pursue a way of life that God sees as right. When Paul said that God gives His righteousness to all who believe in Jesus Christ, he meant that God grants grace to those who believe—counting them as righteous the moment they trust in Him. Everything we see now is temporary. When the new heaven and new earth come, they will be filled with God’s righteousness. From the human heart to the entire world, everything will exist in a state that is right in God’s sight.*

A Beautiful Story

- *“Just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you with the wisdom that was given to him. He writes about these things in all his letters. Some things in them are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction” (3:15–16).*
- ***Paul was firm, and Peter was gracious—both for the Lord.***
- *At the end of his letter, Peter mentions Paul and calls him “our beloved brother,” urging everyone to pay attention to the letters Paul wrote. Peter had personally followed Jesus and was more senior than Paul, yet Paul once confronted him to his face. Paul wrote, “When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong” (Gal. 2:11). He then recounted the embarrassing incident in which Peter, out of fear of the circumcision group, separated himself from the Gentile believers—something that certainly did not save Peter’s face.*

A Beautiful Story

- **Paul was firm, and Peter was gracious—both for the Lord.**
 - *It is human nature to feel upset or hold a grudge when publicly confronted by someone younger or less experienced. Yet Peter let the matter go. He praised Paul for the wisdom God had given him and called him a beloved brother. Paul's steadfastness for the truth and Peter's gracious largeness of heart—together with their fellowship in Christ—became a beautiful story in church history.*
 - *Paul and Peter were able to act this way for the sake of the Lord Jesus, for the sake of the gospel, and for the benefit of the believers. In contrast, when someone speaks or acts contrary to the truth of the gospel, we often hesitate to speak up for fear of offending others. On the other hand, when someone offends us, we often remember it endlessly and lack the generosity to let it go. The ancient path still shines; the examples of our predecessors remain before us, worthy of admiration.*
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