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## THE JUDGMENT AS DISCLOSED IN 2 CORINTHIANS 5:10.

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### I. *Is There to Be a Great Public Judgment?*

This question is not, "Is there to be a private judgment of each one at death?" That there is to be such a private judgment is the teaching of the natural reason and of the word of God. The pagan myths concerning future judges, the terrors of man's guilty conscience and the necessity of some means to adjust the irregularities between men's histories in this life and their merits are so many grounds from which the natural reason argues with large probability to the fact of a private judgment ahead for each individual. The Scriptures make such a private judgment certain, in teaching that the human soul, when it leaves the body, meets God directly. Thus Eccles. 12:7: "The dust shall return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." This implies self-consciousness and self-knowledge and private individual judgment. In like manner, we read in Heb. 9:27, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this, judgment." In this passage, *krisis*, the word translated judgment, is without the article. The writer does not teach that *the* judgment immediately succeeds the death of the body, but that a judgment does. Our Lord's promise to the repentant thief on the cross

# THE TRUE GRACE OF GOD.

## *A Book Study of First Peter.*

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### 1. *Author and Date.*

The epistle itself claims to be the work of "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ" (1:1), and there is no reason for doubting the truth of this claim. Indeed, there are overwhelming reasons for accepting this book as written by Simon Peter, the great apostle of our Lord. From the first the Church universally regarded it as the work of Simon Peter. No doubt was ever entertained, no question was ever raised by any portion of the early Church as to the genuineness of this book of Scripture. It was probably written 63-64 A. D., shortly before the outbreak of the Neronian persecutions. Certainly, it was not written during these persecutions, for not a word is found in the epistle about men shedding their blood or laying down their lives for the gospel. There is no hint of an *organized* persecution either by individuals or by the State.

### 2. *Readers.*

The apostle writes to "the elect who are sojourners of the dispersion in Pontus, Galacia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia." The expression, "sojourners of the dispersion," seems to refer to the Jewish Christians who were scattered throughout these provinces of Asia Minor. But other passages in the epistle clearly refer to Gentile believers (see 1:14, 2:9-10; 3:6; 4:3-4). A study of 1:1, 1:17, and 2:11 will show that Peter uses the word "sojourners" in the sense of a people away from home, strangers in a strange land, an appropriate name for both Jewish and Gentile Christians, who confess that they have here no continuing city but seek one to come.

The readers were, then, both Jewish and Gentile believers of these parts of Asia Minor.

### 3. *Place.*

In 5:13 Peter clearly implies that he is in Babylon and that Mark is with him. But what place is meant by "Babylon"? Some regard it as literal Babylon on the Euphrates in Mesopotamia. This is possible. Others regard it as symbolical of Rome. We know that Mark was in Rome about this time (Col. 4:10). We further know that a little later the Christians did call Rome by the name of Babylon (Rev. 17:5). Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, who lived in the first half of the second century, seems to have had no doubt that Peter was martyred in Rome, and that by the Babylon of the epistle we are to understand the imperial city. It is probable that 1 Peter was written in Rome.

### 4. *Occasion and Purpose.*

The occasion was the condition of the Christians of these provinces of Asia Minor. From 5:12 we learn that Silvanus is to carry Peter's message to the churches. Silvanus was Paul's companion in the ministry to the Asiatic churches, and doubtless had spent much time among these churches. He gave Peter an account of the conditions in the provinces, the afflictions and persecutions of the Christians, and the deep need they had for sympathy and counsel. In 5:12 Peter intimates the purpose of his letter. That was to testify to the abundant sufficiency of the "true grace of God" and to exhort his readers to "stand fast therein." God's grace is sufficient for every trial.

### 5. *Theme and Structure.*

In 5:12 Peter gives an admirable description of his letter. "I have written unto you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God: stand ye fast therein." Note these points: his letter is brief, his method is two-fold—testimony and exhortation, and his theme is the true grace of God. When we examine the letter itself we find this descrip-

tion to be perfectly accurate. "Grace" is the master word of the epistle. "Grace to you be multiplied" (1:2). "The prophets . . . prophesied of the grace that should come unto you" (1:10). "Set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:13). "For this is grace (Greek) if for conscience toward God a man endureth griefs, suffering wrongfully" (2:19). "When ye do well and suffer for it, ye shall take it patiently, this is grace (Greek) with God" (2:20). Both husbands and wives are "joint-heirs of the grace of life" (3:7). Christians are called to be good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (4:10). "God giveth grace to the humble" (5:5). "The God of all grace . . . perfect, establish, strengthen you" (5:10). And the final passage, where Peter, looking back over his letter and its message, says: "This is the true grace of God" (5:12).

"Grace is flowing from Calvary,  
 Grace as fathomless as the sea;  
 Grace for time and eternity,  
 Grace enough for me."

So much for the theme. Let us glance at the structure. Peter says he has employed testimony and exhortation in setting forth his theme. "Wherefore," standing at the beginning of 1:13, is the link that binds the testimony and the exhortation together. We have, then, two main divisions: (1) Testimony as to what this true grace of God is (1:1—12), and (2) Exhortation to stand fast therein (1:13—5:14). This leads us to

#### 6. *Analysis and Exposition.*

The first topic that claims our attention is

##### *The Salutation 1:1-2.*

1. The writer is "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ" (1:1).
2. The readers are "the elect who are sojourners of the dispersion in Pontus, Galacia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia" (1:1). They are both Jewish and Gentile Christians who live in these provinces of Asia Minor. In vs. 2 we have three

great statements in regard to their election: first, the efficient cause of their election is "the fore-knowledge of God the Father—where knowledge is used, as in Ps. 1:6, Amos 3:2, Rom. 8:29, in the broad sense of electing love; second, the instrumental cause is "sanctification of the Spirit"; and the final cause is "obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." These words mark the two-fold end contemplated in their election. As ancient Israel was consecrated to be God's own peculiar people at Sinai by the sprinkling of the blood of an animal, so new Israel was consecrated to be utterly God's by the shedding of Christ's blood at the cross. "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (Luke 22:20). The two-fold goal of election is obedience to Jesus Christ and entire consecration to him and his cause.

3. The greeting—grace, the fountain of all mercies, and peace, the crown of all blessings, be multiplied. "Multiplied" is found again in 2 Peter 1:2 and in Jude 2, but Paul never uses it. Peter desires his readers to possess the fullness of God's grace.

#### *I. The Glorious Character of the True Grace of God 1:3-12.*

Here we enter upon the main body of the epistle. Peter begins by giving his testimony to the wonders of the grace of God. This is one of the richest passages in the Bible.

God's grace is glorious,

1. Because of what God the Father does for the Christian in this grace. He does three things for the believer which the believer could never do for himself.

(a) He begets. "Who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope" (1:3). He effects a new birth and imparts a new nature. Peter begins at the very beginning, at the first great act of God for us.

(b) He reserves for the believer in heaven an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and fadeless (1:4).

(c) He guards the believer until that inheritance is fully possessed. "Who by the power of God are guarded unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1:5).

2. Because of what the Christian, possessing the grace of God, is enabled to do for himself (1:6-9).

Here are three things the believer can do by the grace of God:

(a) He can rejoice even in manifold trials, which purify his faith and prepare him for the coming of his Lord (1:6-7).

(b) He can love the unseen, yet real, Saviour (1:8).

(c) He can have a realizing sense now of his perfected salvation. "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (1:9).

3. Because this grace of God, as manifested in the coming of the Saviour, was the theme of the inspired Old Testament prophets, and even now the angels are not able to estimate its full meaning and value. "The prophets prophesied the grace that should come,—which things angels desire to look into" (1:10-12).

II. *God's True Grace is Sufficient for the Christian for Time and Forever* (1:13—5:11).

This section reaches a fitting climax in the great words of 5:10-11: "And the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after that ye have suffered a little while, shall Himself perfect, establish, strengthen you. To whom be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

1. *God's grace is Sufficient for the Christian in his personal life.*

The apostle names five blessed fruits of divine grace in the believer's life:

(a) Hope (1:13).

"Set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:13).

(b) Holiness (1:14-16).

Hope is a purifying principle, promoting holiness. "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3).

(c) Godly fear (1:17-21).

"Pass the time of your sojourning in fear" (1:17). As we

grow in holiness, we grow in reverence and awe at God's wondrous grace. As Robert Rainy, of whom Gladstone said, "He is unquestionably the greatest of living Scotsmen," grew in grace, he dwelt more and more on what he loved to call "the wonder of it all," meaning the amazing grace of God in sending His Son for the salvation of men. Paul spoke of "perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord" (2 Cor. 7:1).

(d) Brotherly love, heartfelt and without reserve (1:22-25).

"Love one another from the heart fervently" (1:22). Hope and holiness and Godly fear will inevitably lead to love of the brethren. Men who are sojourners in a strange land with their hope fixed on their coming Lord, and redeemed together by the same great price and begotten again by the same word of God are bound to love one another.

(e) Growth in grace (2:1-10).

Of His fulness we all receive and grace upon grace. This growth is effected in four ways:

First, by renouncing all base feelings, words and acts (2:1).

Such things are inconsistent at once with brotherly love, with a right use of the word and with growth unto final salvation.

Second, by making God's word the soul's very food (2:2-3).

Third, by continuous efforts to build on Jesus Christ, the one foundation (2:4-8).

Fourth, by keeping fresh in the mind the great mission and lofty destiny of the child of God (2:9-10). "Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellences of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (2:9).

2. *God's grace is Sufficient for the Christian in his social life—in all his relationships in the world and in the brotherhood* (2:11—3:12).

God's grace in the heart redeems and transfigures every relation of life. To show this the apostle names five social transformations that are wrought by divine grace in the individual heart.

(a) The world transformed (2:11-12).

The pure and unselfish life of the Christian will disarm the world's hostility and will lead it to glorify God.

(b) Human government transformed (2:13-17).

The Christian makes the best citizen. Even godless rulers learn this at length. Constantine found that his best subjects and bravest soldiers came from the ranks of the Christians.

(c) Slavery transformed (2:18-25).

God's grace in the heart will cause the slave to become obedient, faithful and industrious (2:18-20); and the example of the suffering Christ robs slavery of its sting and degradation (2:21-25). He suffered more than any slave ever suffered.

Marriage transformed (3:1-7).

God's grace in the heart is the solvent of all troubles between husbands and wives. Husbands, whom nothing else will win, will be won to Christ by the Christ-like lives of their wives (3:1-6). The husband's attitude towards his wife should be controlled by the great truth that she is "heir with him of the grace of life" (3:7).

(e) The Church transformed (3:9-12).

God's grace will promote unity, compassion and love within the Christian brotherhood.

3. *God's grace is Sufficient for the Christian in his sufferings* (3:13—5:11).

This section is the classic passage on suffering in the whole Bible, and forms a splendid climax to the epistle. In afflictions God's grace is put to the hardest test. But by divine grace the Christian's sufferings are turned into blessings and made the opportunities for enlarged service.

(a) Sufferings, submitted to in the spirit of Christ, may win over others to God (3:13-17).

Thus grace in the heart transmutes our afflictions into blessings for others and for ourselves.

(b) Sufferings even unto death may result in our case, as they did so result in Christ's case, in enlarging our sphere of service and exalting us to the right hand of God (3:18-22).

The sufferings and death of Christ, so far from destroying him and his power to serve others, only enlarged his sphere

of usefulness. As a disembodied spirit he went and preached to certain other spirits in Hades. A similar blessed result may occur in the case of the suffering Christian. His afflictions and even death may only increase his power to bless and to serve. By his death in Africa Samuel Lapsley has been preaching ever since in thousands of pulpits and doubtless has accomplished far more than had he lived. One of the most glorious days in Southern Presbyterian history was the day when this man lay down and died in the jungles of the Dark Continent. For the Christian, as with the Christ, death is entrance upon a more blessed service. "And his servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face; and His name shall be on their foreheads—and they shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 22:3-5).

(c) Sufferings purify us from sin (4:1-6).

(d) Sufferings, by reminding us that the end of all things is at hand, stimulate intense activity throughout the Christian brotherhood (4:7-11).

(e) By our sufferings we become partakers of Christ's sufferings (4:12-19).

(f) Finally, through sufferings we enter into God's eternal glory in Christ (5:1-11).

"The God of all grace, who called you unto His eternal glory in Christ, after that ye have suffered a little while, shall Himself perfect, establish, strengthen you" (5:10). "These are they that come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, are they before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple" (Rev. 7:14-15).

Our study of the book ends with a brief notice of the

#### *Conclusion 5:12-14.*

1. The apostle explains why he has written (5:12).
2. He sends greetings (5:13-14a).
3. He pronounces the benediction (5:14b).