

February 2009 Newsletter

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SALVATION

If you are not a believer in Jesus Christ, or aren't sure and would like to become one, then you need to believe that Jesus Christ was and is the Son of God, that he was God who became a man, that he lived a sinless and perfect life, keeping the Law of God perfect in every way, that he kept faith perfectly, and that he was crucified on that cruel cross for your sins, mine and the entire world- he died for our sins! His death on the cross paid the penalty fully, one time for all sins that we have ever committed and that we will ever commit. He died; he went down into the bowels of the earth, even into Hell, and was raised from the dead on the third day in a resurrected, eternal body. He ascended back into heaven, was seated at the right hand of God, and is now Lord over heaven and earth. He is coming again to judge the world, to raise the dead, where he will give an eternal, resurrected, glorified body to everyone that has believed on him as their Lord and Savior, and to establish his kingdom one earth.

You come become a Christian right now as you read this, by personally placing your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior; believing that he is God's only begotten Son, that he died on the cross for you and that he was raised from the dead and is now seated in heaven at the right hand of God the Father. *"Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.."* Acts 16:31a And when you do trust Christ, and Christ alone, as your Lord and Savior, then go to God the Father in heaven in prayer and tell him so. Tell him that you have believed on his Son, thank him for his Son, and thank him for forgiving your sins and saving you! *"That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord", and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."* Romans 10:9,10 *"For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* Romans 10:13 *"Therefore, being justified by faith (declared righteous), we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."* Romans 5:1

Listen To The Chorus

“And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.” 2 Peter 1:5-7

Intro:

Throughout the NT metaphors are used to help us in our understanding of a spiritual concept. But not only to just help us understand it, but to give us a greater dimension and depth in our **understanding** of a spiritual concept and our **application** of it to our lives! There are military metaphors used in the NT, agricultural metaphors, metaphors of astronomy, the metaphor of the Greek mystery religion, and the one that the Apostle Peter uses here in 2 Peter 1:1-11, actually verses 3-11, is Greek drama. So the Greek stage is the back drop of this passage that we have to use to fully understand and appreciate this passage, especially in all its nuances.

For it is the stage of the Greek drama that creates the ambiance for the greatest play that you will ever go to see, for it is the one where **you are the key actor on the stage of your life on earth**. The lights are turned down low, the curtain is opened, and now you, the believer in Jesus Christ, walk out on stage. But to understand this, we will need to have a little understanding of Greek drama. So here's where I put my disclaimer in. I did not major in drama in school and I'm sure there are many students of the arts who are more familiar with the stage and especially Greek drama, but I do know enough of the terms to help us understand them and how they relate to the spiritual dynamics going on in the Christian life, and especially toward our application of them in our own life's drama.

There is a relationship between the Greek drama and the Christian's spiritual life. The story of the drama that took place on stage covered a certain day in the life of a hero who died, tragically, who could have lived victoriously and successfully, but didn't because he had a tragic flaw. It spoke of the hero who had so much going for him in life, who had such a great potential, but died suddenly, tragically, because of his own actions. It speaks of what could have been, and what should have been, and what would have been, if only he didn't have a tragic flaw.

The tragedy was used for religious purposes in the mystery cult of Dionysus, much like we find in some of the European classics of today. It was also used for a katharsis of the soul; the cleansing of the emotions from the soul, sort of like purifying, or cleansing, the heart. The story develops, the plot thickens, the hero is suddenly and tragically murdered, the heart bursts forth with tears and emotions, and the hearers are cleansed.

But there is another use for this Greek tragedy and that is for Christians in staying on course, dealing with and overcoming their soul sins, communion with God and going on to spiritual maturity. Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, not only uses Greek terms for the stage in his letter, he sets this entire passage in the context of the Greek tragedy! He's paralleling for us what he saw unfold on stage centuries ago to instruct us in the spiritual life dynamic!

The word tragedy comes from *tragodia*, the goat song. A goat was used in the performance of the drama where it was walked off stage. Apparently in ancient times human sacrifice was first used, but later on was replaced by a goat who was the hero.

A **tragic flaw** is a defect in the character of the hero that brings about his own downfall. Where the hero's death, or demise, is caused, not by things happening to him, but by his own actions! All of which could have been avoided, but because of the hero's flaw, or series of flaws, which he couldn't see in himself, (or wouldn't see), he became responsible for his own death or demise. Interestingly enough, the Greek word for the tragic flaw was *hamartia*, our word for **sin**!

The Greek tragedy was played out on stage where there was the main actor portraying the hero, such as Agamemnon, and several minor actors who composed the **chorus**. During the play the chorus would be warning the hero of the tragedy that lay in wait for him. But, because of the hero's tragic flaw, he did not listen to them, and because he didn't listen he died tragically. The hero's tragic flaw, or series of flaws, was error in judgment, sin, and overwhelming pride. And his death was as the result of his own actions, or failure to act, not on anyone else.

And so we have the drama of the Christian's life, our life, being played out before our eyes. Will it end in death? Will it end in tragic loss or failure? Or will we overcome these flaws that we all have and go on to victory, spiritual completion and fulfill the plan of God for our lives? That is to be seen and it all depends upon whether we *listen to the chorus* and apply what they are trying to tell us!

One of the plays centered around Agamemnon, who not only was a king, but the commanding general of the Greek army. In the course of time they went to war against Troy, and as they set sail the winds died down making it impossible. To keep the story short, he was advised by his soothsayer to sacrifice his daughter, Iphigenia, to the Olympian goddess Artemis. The winds then picked up and he went on to Troy. While he was gone for ten years word of this had reached his wife, Clytemnestra, who burned in seething rage against her husband seeking revenge.

While Agamemnon was off fighting the Trojans for these ten years his wife had taken a lover. And then one evening a watchman on the roof of Agamemnon's palace sees the night sky reddened with the signal of a burning fire on a mountaintop signaling Agamemnon's victory over Troy. Which meant that he would be home soon. And so the plot thickens with his wife and her lover.

When Agamemnon arrives he comes with a captive, a prophetess named Cassandra, who is also his concubine, further enraging his wife Clytemnestra. When Agamemnon shows up, his wife pretends to be joyful at his arrival, and that all is well, and how much she has missed him all those years. But in her heart she hates him and is planning his death.

Well the gist of the story is that his bath is made ready for him, and while he is bathing unsuspectingly his wife comes in and plunges a knife into him and avenges her daughter's death. Saying that his blood spurting forth was as sweet as the rain falling from the heavens to the fields of corn.

Now what is the chorus doing all this time? The chorus of elders is suspicious that the Queen is plotting her husband's death and so they keep trying to warn Agamemnon. Saying, "*At home there tarries like a lurking snake, [snake: Clytemnestra]; Biding its time, a wrath unreconciled; A wily watcher, passionate to slake; In blood, resentment for a murdered child.*"

Even though Agamemnon had done a terrible wrong in his life, and even though he had many tragic flaws (sin), if he had listened to the chorus, he would not have died. But it was his arrogance that downplayed the seriousness of his act, its impact on his wife and any actions she might take, and his pride disregarded the advice that the chorus was trying to give him!

A. Equal Privilege v.1

“Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:” 2 Peter 1:1 *σιμων πετρος δουλος και αποστολος ιησου χριστου τοις ισοτιμον ημιν λαχουσιν πιστιν εν δικαιοσυνη του θεου ημων και σωτηρος ιησου χριστου*

Peter first states his position as a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, then he begins with the matter of our faith in Christ and how it is that we obtained it.

The word used for **precious** is *isotimos* and it meant of equal value, or held in equal honor, equal in the sense of the same kind. It was used in secular Greek to denote having the same status and rank in civic life. The idea being that men are equal to each other only under the law. Only equals can enter into legal relationships, so that in civic life, where all men are governed by law, they become equals.

In Greek or Roman society every citizen had certain rights and privileges under the law. By being a citizen, or by becoming a citizen, each individual now had equal access to all the rights, privileges and protections of the law.

This underlines the fact that every Christian has equal access to God as his Judge, Ruler and Father. So the idea here is not so much upon the preciousness of our faith, although it is precious, but **the privilege and right of access to God that all Christians equally hold**, regardless of race or sex.

Now it says that we have **received** a faith, but is this faith objective faith as in the body of doctrine, or the doctrine that we have believed? Or is this to be taken in the subjective sense of the ability to trust Christ as our Savior?

Usually when faith is to be taken in the objective sense it will have the definite article with it - the faith, for when the meaning of faith is clearly objective, the definite article is used. But it is omitted here, leading us to conclude, which the context also bears out by the subjective use of faith in v.5, that it is subjective faith being discussed, that is, **our faith in Jesus Christ**. Which reveals that our ability to trust Christ as our Savior was given to us by God.

God deals with us on the basis of grace. Only faith can appropriate the grace of God. Therefore God gives man the faith needed to believe on Christ as his Savior, and he gives believers the faith which is necessary to appropriate his grace in their post salvation experience.

This is what so many mean when they say we are saved by God's grace. What they are saying is that God, in his grace, gave us the faith to believe on Christ! *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that (the ability to believe on Christ) not of yourselves: it (the ability to believe on Christ) is the gift of God: Not of works (human activity), lest any man should boast (brag about what he has or what he has done).”* Ephesians 2:8,9

Now the passage tells us that we have **received** this faith, and if we have received it, then it says that we did not possess it ourselves. Now the word for to **receive** is the aoist active participle of *lanchano*, which meant to obtain by lot, to draw lots, to receive by lot, to get something by drawing lots. It's the root idea for the lottery. Now before anyone thinks that one draws lots to see who gets the faith, which is a wrong interpretation, we need to see what it meant back then.

It was used for a variety of ideas back then, one of them was to draw a lot to see who could bring their suit into court. But the idea behind getting something by drawing a lot was like getting something “out of the blue”. It denoted the idea that something happened more by luck or chance, rather by one's desire or effort, along with the idea of being unexpected.

It came to mean, and this is how it was regarded, as divine appointment. One's lot in life was what he drew, that is, it had been allotted to him by God. We have a similar expression today in, “that's the hand I drew”, or, “we have to play the cards we're dealt”. Men drew lots as a means of trying to determine divine will and appointment. Whoever received the lot was the one that God had chose. So when they said that a man *drew his lot*, it was an idiom which meant that he was appointed by God apart from any desire or effort of his own.

It's significant that the Holy Spirit uses *lanchano*, to draw a lot, to explain how we receive faith. It's significant in itself that we receive the faith necessary to believe on Christ as our Savior, because that tells us **that saving faith is not and cannot be generated by the person, but is received from God**. And it's significant, because out of the nineteen words used to define *receive* he uses the word for the drawing of lots.

Men in those times would look at this phenomenon of *lanchano* from the standpoint of luck, or chance, or fate, maybe out of the blue, or the luck of the draw. **It was their way of expressing something out of the ordinary, such as, cause and effect, decisions and consequences, hard work and reward. So when something happened to them out of the ordinary**, especially if it was good or involved money, they would say that it happened by way of *lanchano*, “that he got lucky”!

But *lanchano* takes a different spin when it comes into the world of God and men and our receiving of faith to believe on Christ. Here we have the ideas that it happened suddenly, or unexpectedly, out of the blue. One of your buddies or coworkers, who always was going out drinking and carousing, comes in after the weekend and now he's saved! He's believed on Christ and is a changed man.

There's something else about the using of this word and that is the drawing of lots is a great equalizer. For here it does not matter how rich, poor, tall, short, smart, dumb, good or bad you are, because all human merit, will and efforts are set aside. One simply has drawn his lot, that is, it happened to him out of the blue and not because of anything he had done.

And this faith we received to believe on Christ comes to us “*through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*”. There are those who believe that man initiates in his faith toward God compelling God to respond in his grace. Rather it is God who initiates toward man in his grace giving man the faith needed to trust his Son as their Savior.

We have received this faith through the righteousness of God, because it is his righteousness that condemns all of man's works, efforts, or merits. So if God condemns everything that man could do, then he had to provide the means of saving man in his grace. This is why God gives us the faith to trust Christ as our Savior. Which reveals that man in himself does not possess saving faith.

One only needs to look at the apostle Paul to see this matter of faith and salvation. He was on the road to Damascus to persecute more Christians because of his hatred of Jesus Christ, when the Lord suddenly and unexpectedly appeared to him, “out of the blue”, and saved him. In a moment of time Paul received the faith to believe on Christ as his Savior and became a changed man.

B. Multiplication of grace and peace. v.2

“Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,”
2 Peter 1:2 χάρις υμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη πληθυνθεῖη ἐν ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν

The first part of Peter's greeting begins with, as in the other NT letters, of grace and peace to the people of God. But he adds that they would be ours in abundance, or that they would be multiplied to us. Grace is that characteristic of God that wants to bless his people, to do things for them, to do things to them that are beneficial in nature.

Grace is that attribute of God that is based upon his character and integrity, not ours. If it was based upon our character and works, and what we deserve, then we would receive nothing but his judgment. But basing what he does for us on the concept of grace and not justice opens the door for God to do all sorts of wonderful things for us.

The second thing we see here is that Peter wishes that God's peace would be multiplied to us. Peace is that tranquility of soul that is beyond comprehension and true definition. It is the very state of soul that God has existed in for all eternity. The peace that he gives us is his very own peace! He doesn't give us a sort of separate peace for human beings, but he gives to us his peace!

But our attention must be brought to the word used for *grace and peace being ours in abundance or being multiplied to us*, and it's the aorist passive optative of *plethuno*. The optative mood is the real qualifier in this, for if it was in the indicative mood it would mean that grace and peace **would** be the reality in our lives. But in the optative mood it means it **could** be!

The optative mood is used to express a wish or desire that something would be, but it's no guarantee that it will be! Peter is simply expressing to them, and all believers in Christ, that God's grace and peace would be the reality in our lives, and that it would be ever expanding. But is not a guaranteed reality, because it is conditioned on something else taking place. There is the use of the optative mood to express the desire that something will happen, but it's doubtful that it will. But here it's used to express the apostle's genuine desire for them.

The means by which this happens is through the epignosis knowledge of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. What this tells us is that the apostle's desire for grace and peace to be an expanding reality in our lives is **directly related to having an epignosis knowledge of God through his Word.**

To look at the words for knowledge in a simple overview we have: **gnosis** - the factual knowledge taught to us, or Bible Doctrine, **ginosko** – the process of learning doctrine, **oida** – having a full and complete understanding of a doctrine, **sophia** – the doctrine that we have learned, understood, believed and applied to a situation, which we call wisdom.

Epignosis is different in that it is the doctrine that we have learned, understood and believed! For when we combine our faith to the Word of God, then it is converted into spiritual phenomena, where it edifies, enlightens, strengthens and renews the inner man. We begin the Christian life by believing the gospel and placing our faith in Christ. And we walk in the spiritual life by placing our faith in the promises and teachings of God's Word! And there in the center of faith in the Word of God we find ourselves living in the sphere of peace. So **grace and peace are multiplied to us as we exercise faith in the Word of God.** The three legs of the Christian life: grace, faith and truth.

C. Life and godliness with *epignosis*. v.3

“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:” 2 Peter 1:3 ως παντα ημιν της θειας δυναμεως αυτου τα προς ζωην και ευσεβειαν δεδωρημενης δια της επιγνωσεως του καλεσαντος ημας δια δοξης και αρετης

And because *dia* is used *doxes* and *aretas*, glory and virtue, it's **by** his own glory and virtue. “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us **by** his own glory and goodness.”

What we need for physical life and our very own spiritual life has already been provided to all believers by the **divine power** of God. *Theias* is the word for deity, or that which pertains to deity, telling us that this power, *dunameos*, originates from God himself, the all powerful one.

The word for to *give* is *doreomai*; *doron* would be a gift. It meant to grant or give something to someone as a gift. It carried the regal sense of large handed generosity giving to someone way more than they needed or asked for, and was used in an extra biblical sense by Homer of a complementary gift of the gods.

God gave us his only Son to pay the penalty for our sins on the cross. He gave us to his Son to be our Savior. He gave us the faith to believe on Christ. He has given us everything we need for our physical lives here on earth. He has given us everything that we need to live our very own personal spiritual life. He will give us a resurrection body, a home with him forever, an eternal inheritance and countless blessings throughout eternity.

It's also significant that the perfect passive participle of to *give* is used here to stress the permanence of this gift! The perfect tense describes completed action in the past with results that continue on into the future. And the passive voice, the voice of grace, tells us that we merely received the action of the verb; God did it for us.

This shows that, as a permanent gift from the hand of God, **our spiritual life is ours forever!** God won't take it back from us; we can't lose it or forfeit it due to sin or anything else. It is ours and only ours. But we can fail to live within its dynamic. **But failure to live within the spiritual dynamic given to us does not mean loss of the spiritual life!**

The word for *life* is *zoen* and it denotes every single thing that every single one of us needs for our physical lives here on earth. If you were to sum up human beings, other than their obvious sinfulness, it would be that we're **needy!** We need food, water, clothing, shelter, love, help, goals, purposes, hope, friends, social life, health needs, diet needs, medical needs, and all sorts of other needs as we go through life here on earth. **And so, *zoe* sums that all up and tells us that God, out of the largeness of his generosity, and because of his great love for us, has given to us, as a permanent gift, everything that we will ever need in this life! (And we need to note, it's need, not want).**

And we can avoid worry in our lives by realizing that God provided everything that we will ever need in this life at the time when he created the universe. “For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world, καταβολης κόσμου.” Hebrews 4:3

The next thing that we see that God has given to every believer in Christ is everything they need for *godliness*, ευσεβειαν, *eusebeian*. But the word *godliness* is a terrible translation for *eusebeia*. The English word *godliness* means that one possesses the quality or state of being like God. Which flies in the face of everything that the Bible teaches that, who can be like God? No one!

As *zoe* refers to the believer's physical life, *eusebeia* refers to the believer's spiritual life, but *eusebeia* means so much more than that.

First of all, it does refer to the **spiritual life** that God created in each believer at the moment of salvation, when we were regenerated by the Holy Spirit, which is what being born again is all about, this made us a new man, or a new species of humanity.

Second, this **spiritual life is eternal**. That which God created in us he took from himself. And this spiritual side of our nature, because it is from God, is eternal. Which is another one of the many reasons why believers cannot lose their salvation. The new nature is spiritual, made of spirit and truth, and because it is spiritual it is eternal in nature.

The third thing is that **our spiritual life is unique to us!** There are no two spiritual lives alike. We may be all spiritual in substance, and we are, but our spiritual life is our very own unique to only us. It is what makes you, you, and makes you different than every other believer in Christ!

The fourth thing is that we will be living in this spiritual life; **we will be living in our very own spiritual life for all eternity!** What is in you now, that is, your spiritual life that God created in you and only for you, is **what you will be living in forever!**

The fifth thing is that Jesus Christ is the prototype for this new man. Adam was unique in all of God's creation because he was the first of a new species, the species of humanity. And Jesus Christ is unique in God's new species of humanity, because he is the prototype after which all Church Age believers are patterned, with each one of us having our own uniqueness. The new man, the new nature, **the spiritual man and life in us is patterned after Jesus Christ!**

The sixth thing is that **this spiritual life in us needs the metabolization of Bible Doctrine by faith and the filling of the Holy Spirit**. This is what strengthens us, edifies us, renews us, gives us faith, hope, love, joy, peace, creates spiritual growth inside us and conforms us to the image of Christ.

The seventh thing is that *eusebeia* takes all these things into account and then applies it to life. *Eusebeia* is the intake and metabolization of Bible Doctrine by faith, under the filling and power of the Holy Spirit, and then being applied to life's experiences! **So *eusebeia* refers to the believer in Christ living life in their very own spiritual life while here on the earth**. Which will be followed by them living in their own spiritual life for all eternity in a resurrection body.

God has provided for us our salvation, the indwelling Holy Spirit, a new nature, the provision of confessing our sins to him, the filling of the Holy Spirit, the local church ministry, the spiritual gift of Pastor-teacher, the teaching of Bible Doctrine, the Word of God, the faith to believe his Word, access to his throne through prayer, a life that has been planned out for us and so many other things that give us the opportunity to walk in our spiritual life and glorify him. He has provided for us everything that we need for our physical lives and everything that we need for our spiritual life. And all this is through the omnipotence of his power.

This next statement now tells us how God's grace and peace are multiplied to us, “*through the knowledge of him that hath called us*”, that is, “*through the (epignosis) knowledge of the one who called us*”, δια της επιγνωσεως του καλεσαντος ημας.

As we have seen, ***gnosis*** - is the factual knowledge taught to us, or Bible Doctrine, or the knowledge of the Word of God, ***ginosko*** – is the process of learning doctrine in one category or another, ***oida*** – is having a full and complete understanding of a doctrine, and ***sophia*** – is the doctrine that we have learned, understood, believed and applied to a situation, which we call wisdom. The wise man or woman is the one who applies the teaching of God's Word to their life.

Epignosis is different in that it is the doctrine that we have learned, understood and believed! It is when we combine our faith with the Word of God, that it is converted into spiritual phenomena, where it edifies, enlightens, strengthens and renews the inner man.

It is similar to the process of metabolizing food. We place the food in our mouth, which is analogous to coming to church and taking in the Word of God, then we chew the food, which has the idea of breaking it down into smaller pieces, which is analogous to understanding the doctrine we are being taught, next we swallow the food, which is analogous to believing the doctrine that we have just learned, and then the body automatically takes over, where the food is then digested and the nutrients that were in the food, now through the process of metabolization, are released and distributed throughout the body by the circulatory system. And so it is in the new nature, for when faith is brought into the equation, through the process of spiritual metabolization, the spiritual energy (nutrients) that is in the Word is released throughout the new man where it now can be edified, grow, strengthened and renewed. **There must be both – the Word of God and the believer's faith for this to take place!**

We begin the Christian life by believing the gospel and placing our faith in Christ. And it was the teaching about Christ that gave us the faith to believe on him! “*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*” Romans 10:17 And afterward we are to walk in the spiritual life by placing our faith in the promises and teachings of God's Word! “*This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*” Galatians 3:2,3 And there in the sphere of faith in the Word of God we find ourselves living in the sphere of peace. “*Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace **in believing**, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.*” Romans 15:13 **So grace and peace are multiplied to us as we exercise faith in the Word of God!**
The three legs of the Christian life: grace, faith and truth.

Metabolized Bible Doctrine is the means by which God's grace and peace are multiplied to believers in Christ, but that means that the pulpits of America are to be teaching it! But what if they aren't? What if they are instead giving them programs, music, entertainment, keeping them busy, steering them into legalism and the rest? Then that means that those believers are being deprived of, robbed of, what they need to live in God's peace and appropriate God's grace! It is the Pastor's job, his function, his **duty** to accurately and faithfully teach the Word of God to the people to give them what their souls need.

But such is the state of affairs in the churches in America that this is a rarity. What we do find are men, (males), leading them into emotionalism, entertaining them, babysitting the kids, crusaderism, steering them down the path of Laodicea after the promise of prosperity, all things of the flesh. Anything and everything other than faithfully and accurately teaching them the things of the Word of God, about God's grace, the need for faith and the rest.