

1 Peter - Commentaries by Frank Binford Hole

1 Peter: Briefly Expounded, 1 Peter 3 (3:1-22)

THE OPENING VERSES of chapter 3 continue the exhortation to submission. The apostle commenced this exhortation at verse 13 of chapter 2. In verse 18 he applied it to those who socially are in the subject place. Now he applies it to those who hold the subject place in that great natural relationship which is the foundation of all human relationships.

The Christian wife is to be in subjection to her husband. If he is a Christian he obeys the word and she obeys him. A most excellent and delightful arrangement made according to the wisdom of God! Subjection, be it remembered, does not mean inferiority. In business partnerships two men may be equal partners and yet one is recognized as the senior with whom the final decision rests. So in the marriage bond the man has been creatorially fitted for the senior, directing place in the partnership, the woman for the subject place, though she is an heir together with her husband of the grace of life, and a sharer together with him in his exercises and prayers. If the husband loves and honors his wife as a fellow-heir and partner, and she honors and obeys him, an ideal marriage is the result.

But, as the first verse indicates, some believing women may have husbands who, not being converted, do not obey the word. In this case, the converted wife is still to act towards him as the word directs. She, at any rate, is to be a Christian woman and let her Christianity shine in her pure manner of life (v. 2), her avoidance of worldly artifices for self-adornment and self-display (v. 3), her meek and peaceful spirit, which is so great a thing in God's estimation (v. 4), and her subjection to him, coupled with the doing of good and a spirit of calm confidence in God (vv. 5-6). By such "conversation" or "manner of life" many a husband has been won "without the word" (ch. 3:1).

The "church," dominated by the principles of the twentieth-century world, may cut the word "obey" out of its marriage service, but see what you Christian wives are going to miss if you cut it out of your hearts and minds! Should your husband be unconverted you may miss the joy of winning him. Should he be a Christian, how much of the grace of life and of prayer may be forfeited.

Verse 8 brings us to the final word of the apostle in connection with the matter of subjection. The gracious, gentle, humble spirit is to characterize the whole Christian company. We are never to indulge in evil or recrimination on the principle of tit for tat, but always to be in the spirit of blessing since blessing we receive from God, and this because we are left to pursue our pilgrim way under His holy government.

The principles of God's government of His people do not change. When David wrote Psa. 34, it was the age of law and God's people were in the place of servants. Today is the age of grace and we are before God as His sons, as Gal. 3:23-4:7, shows. Yet the apostle Peter can quote David's words from Psa. 34 as applying equally to us. We reap what we sow in the government of God; and the way to "see good" is to "do good," as verses 10 to 13 of our chapter show. Many a disagreeable event in our lives is clearly the result of our own disagreeableness. If we sowed more good we should reap more good.

At this point let us notice the remarkable way in which the apostle has set before us in its main outlines the truth set forth typically and in historical fashion in the books of Moses.

Genesis is the book of ELECTION. It shows us how God chose Abel and Seth and not Cain, Shem and not Ham. Abram and not Nahor, Isaac and not Ishmael, Jacob and not Esau, Joseph and not Reuben, Ephraim and not Manasseh. Peter brings before us first of all God's electing mercy 2).

Exodus is the book of REDEMPTION. Israel was redeemed out of Egypt, and brought to God. Peter proceeds to tell us how we have been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ and brought to God with our faith and hope in Him (1:18-21).

Leviticus is the book of the PRIESTHOOD. It contains directions as to sacrifices for priestly guidance, and as to customs and cleanness for priestly fitness. Thirdly, Peter sets before us the Christian priesthood, its constitution and its privileges (1:22-2:10).

Numbers is the book of the WILDERNESS. It specially reveals the wilderness journey of Israel with all its vicissitudes and lessons. Fourthly, Peter instructs us as to our pilgrimage and the conduct that befits us in it (2:11-3:7).

Deuteronomy is the book of the GOVERNMENT OF GOD. In it Israel were warned of the consequence of their disobedience, the reward of obedience. And we have just got to the part of the epistle in chapter 3 where Peter warns us that though we are as Christians set in the grace of God we still come under His government and have to make our reckoning with it.

Verse 14 introduces another consideration. We may of course suffer for our own folly in the government of God. We may, on the other hand, be receiving blessing in the government of God, and yet be called upon to suffer for righteousness' sake. If so, God guarantees our happiness in it and under it. We are not to be afraid of men but, sanctifying the Lord God (or "Lord Christ" as it probably is) in our hearts, to testify meekly to the truth while maintaining a good conscience by holy living.

Notice in passing how verse 15 makes manifest the true force of the word "sanctify." It is not primarily "to make holy," for the Lord cannot be more holy than He is. He can, however, in our hearts be set apart in His own proper place of glory and supremacy and authority. To sanctify is to set apart.

Now no one ever suffered as Christ. He is our supreme Example. Yet His sufferings as verse 18 presents them, were in a class by themselves and altogether beyond us, for He suffered for sins as a Substitute—the Just for the unjust ones. The actual word substitution does not occur in

our English version, but that which the word represents is very clearly in this verse. Note the object of His substitutionary sufferings—"that He might bring us to God," (ch. 3:18) making us thoroughly at home in His presence, having a fitness to be there. Are we all in our own hearts and consciences happily at home with God?

The Lord Jesus suffered for sins even to death and He rose again by or "in" the Spirit, the day of His flesh being over. In the Spirit also He had preached before the flood to those who now are spirits in prison. These people who now are spirits in prison once walked the earth as men and women in Noah's day and through Noah's lips Christ in Spirit (or, the Spirit of Christ) spoke. They were disobedient, hence their present imprisonment in hades, the unseen world. The Spirit of Christ spoke in the Old Testament prophets, as we noticed when reading chapter 1 verse 11. He also spoke in Noah.

If any of our readers have doubts as to whether this is the correct explanation of the passage, let them turn to Eph. 2 and read verses 13 to 18. Having done so they will find that the "He" of verse 16 (which "He" refers also to verse 17) is undoubtedly the Lord Jesus. In verse 17, "you which were far off" (Eph. 2:17) were Gentile: "them that were nigh" (Eph. 2:17) were Jews. The passage states then, that having endured the cross the Lord Jesus "came and preached peace" (Eph. 2:17) to the Gentiles. When? How? Never, in a personal way. Only by the lips of the apostles and others who were filled with His Spirit did He do so. Exactly the same figure of speech is used in this passage as in the one we are considering in Peter.

As a result of this antediluvian testimony of the Spirit of Christ only eight souls were saved through the waters of the flood; a tiny handful that, the merest remnant of the former age. Now baptism, which is but a figure, has just that force. The flood cut off that little remnant of the antediluvian age that through the waters of death they might be disassociated from the old world and enter the new. The converted Jews to whom Peter wrote were exactly in that position. They, too, were but a small remnant, and in their baptism they were dissociated from the mass of their nation that was under wrath and judgment, that they might come under the authority of their risen and glorified Messiah. Baptism is in figure dissociation by means of death and in that sense it saves. The Jews as a nation were like a foundering ship, and to be baptized was to formally cut one's last link with them which meant salvation from their national doom. Hence Peter's words in Acts 2:40. "Save yourself from this untoward generation." What followed? "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized" (Acts 2:41).

Baptism accomplishes nothing vital and eternal, for it is "a figure." It is, however, not a mere ceremonial washing as were Jewish "baptisms." It is rather the "answer" or "demand of a good conscience toward God," as we see with the eunuch and with Lydia (see Acts 8:36; 16:15). A good conscience gladly accepts it, and even demands it, accounting it as faithfulness to the Lord to be in figure cut off from the old life, even as He was actually cut off in death; and thus identified with Him.

All, however, is only effectual "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (ch. 1:3). For if there were not really and actually a new world of life and blessing opened for us by His resurrection who would cut their links with the old? It was by the resurrection that these Christians had been begotten again to a living hope, as chapter 1 verse 3 told us. They would cheerfully go down into the waters of baptism, and so bid a formal goodbye to the old Jewish footing with its impending judgment (See 1 Thess. 2:14-16), in view of the vast range of grace and glory with its living hopes, that stood revealed to them and secured for them in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Not only is Christ risen, however, but He is gone into heaven and is already at the right hand of God, which signifies that He is the appointed Administrator of all God's will. A man of large business interests who has someone of great ability acting for him and carrying out his wishes, will often speak of him as "my right-hand man" (Eccl. 9:1). The Lord Jesus is indeed the "Man of Thy right hand" (Psa. 80:17) of whom the Psalmist spoke (53:17), and we have been baptized to Him and come under His authority. To Him all angels and authorities and powers are subject.

How great an encouragement for us! All these verses (15-22) have sprung, remember, out of the thought that we may have to suffer for righteousness' sake. It was just when the converted Jew formally severed his links with Judaism by being baptized that he did suffer. But then being baptized to the Lord Jesus he came under the authority of the One who sat in the place of supreme authority and administration and since all powers were subject to Him, no power could touch them without His permission.

Similarly, when we, who are converted Gentiles, cut our links with the world, we have to taste suffering, but we, too, are under the mighty authority of Christ and need have no fear.

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1 Peter: Briefly Expounded, 1 Peter 4 (4:1-19)

THOSE OF YOU who have carefully followed our Scripture Portion thus far, have possibly noticed that the thought of suffering, both for Christ Himself and for His followers, has been very prominent from chapter 2 verse 11, where we started the practical and hortatory part of the epistle.

That suffering must be expected by the Christian is very clear. His life is to be one of well doing, but he may suffer for doing well (2:20). It is to be a life of righteousness, but he may suffer for righteousness' sake (3:14). The first verse of chapter 4 reverts to this matter, and instructs us that we are to be armed for the conflict with the mind to suffer. It was the mind that animated Christ. He suffered for us in the flesh, and that even unto death (3:18). There is, of course, a difference. He suffered for us in atonement, and this we can never do. He "suffered being tempted" (Heb. 2:18), because being perfectly holy, the very thought of sin was abhorrent to Him. We suffer in refusing temptation and in ceasing from sin, because, alas! sin is alluring to the flesh within us. If we gratify the flesh we do not suffer, but we sin. If we refuse temptation and have done with sin, the flesh suffers instead of being gratified. But it is just that suffering that is incumbent upon us.

In our unconverted days we lived in the gratification of our natural desires without any reference to the will of God. Now we are on exactly opposite lines, as verse 2 indicates. We do well to remember that God divides up our lives into two parts; “the time past of our life,” (ch. 4:3) and “the rest of our time in the flesh,” the hour of conversion marking the boundary between them. In the earlier part we wrought the will of the nations who never were put under the law of God. Now we are to carry out the will of God, which has been made known to us not merely in the law but in Christ.

By the very fact however that we do not act as the world does we are open to the world’s dislike and criticism. There are always many to be found who think and speak evil of what they cannot understand. This need not disturb the believer for there is One who is ready to judge the living and the dead and the accusers will stand before Him.

Now the ground of all judgment will be the testimony as regards God and His truth which may have been rendered to those who are subject to judgment; in other words, the responsibility of each will be measured by the divine testimony they have heard. “The gospel” of verse 6 is not the Christian gospel in particular. It is just “glad tidings” such as has at different times been preached to people of bygone ages, now dead. In particular it refers to the glad tidings of salvation by the ark through the flood, for “the dead” refers to the same people as the Apostle had alluded to in chapter 3 verses 19 and 20. All through the bygone ages there was also glad tidings of a coming Deliverer and always then, as now, the glad tidings separates those who hear it into two classes; those who refuse or neglect it and have to stand their judgment as men in the flesh, and those who receive it and consequently live in the spirit as regards God. Those who thus pass from death to life by the hearing of Christ’s word of glad tidings do not come into judgment, as another Scripture assures us.

Now we Christians have to remember that we have come to the end of all things. Obviously Peter did not mean that when he wrote—somewhere about A.D. 60,—the end of this dispensation was reached, but rather that the end dispensation was reached, that it is “the last time.” The judge is quite ready as verse 5 has told us. He stands “before the door” (James 5:9), ready to enter the court and take His seat so that the judgment may begin. All things then were quite ready for judgment at the very start of this epoch in which we are living, and it is only the long-suffering of God which holds the judgment back as Peter’s second epistle tells us. How sober and watchful unto prayer should we therefore be.

More than this, we should be marked by fervent love amongst ourselves, and the utilization of every gift and ability to the glory of God, from whom all such things proceed. The world is a cold and critical place, the Christian circle should be a place of warm love. When love amongst Christians exists in fervor it expresses itself passively in covering a multitude of sins and actively in giving and hospitality. There are alas many sins even with true believers. The antagonistic world delights to advertise the sins of believers, proclaiming them upon the housetops. Love in the Christian circle feels them as though they were its own and covers them. When a Christian busies himself in advertising the sins of some other Christian, he thereby advertises his own carnal condition. Many of us would be rather careful not to advertise the sin of some other believer who happens to meet with us in our public gatherings. Are we as careful in regard to believers who do not meet with us?

Whatever we may have received from God we are to hold it in trust for the benefit of all saints. The grace of God is very manifold and various. This one may speak, that one may serve. He who speaks is to speak as God’s mouthpiece. He who serves as in strength that God supplies; and thus those who benefit by the speaking or serving will trace all up to God and glorify Him and not the one who happens to be the vessel or channel of supply. Speaking “as the oracles of God” (ch. 4:11) does not mean, “according to the Word of God,” though of course we always should so speak. It means, speaking as a mouthpiece of His word. If a speaker comes to us telling us what he thinks, what are his impressions and conceptions, we end by thinking him a very wonderful man, and doing him homage as a kind of spiritual hero! If he, on the other hand, just gives us what really is the word of God, we are subdued and we glorify God instead of glorifying him.

If fervent love prevails we shall not only give one another our due but give God His due also. Things will be right within the Christian circle even if the world without is very antagonistic.

In verse 12 The Apostle returns to the matter of suffering for the Christian, and he speaks of it with increased plainness and with prophetic foresight. There lay before these early Christians a “fiery trial,” it was indeed already upon them. It very soon became as we know literally a trial by fire. They were not to account it “some strange thing” (ch. 4:12). We are taught by this remark that suffering from the world is the normal thing for the Christian. We may hardly realize this, living, as we do, in a land of christianized culture and toleration. We may easily come to regard a life of ease and pleasantries in the world as the normal thing for us and persecution as a very abnormal thing. Then should persecution come upon us we would feel aggrieved and scandalized.

It is this wrong view of things and the “softness” which shrinks from “hardness” (2 Tim. 2:3) which largely accounts for the great weakness of today. Only a small minority of Christians are prepared to stand up for anything, or stand out against anything in the world. A weak spirit of compliance and compromise is in the air. Suffering is avoided but power and joy are lost.

How does Peter present this matter of suffering? In verse 13 he holds out to us the honor of partaking in Christ’s sufferings—i.e., we enter into sufferings that have the same character as those which He endured as the great witness to God in a rebellious world. This is, according to his account a matter of rejoicing, —and here he only preaches what he himself practiced as recorded in Acts 5:41. We are to rejoice now, while the suffering proceeds, and thus shall we be manifestly conquerors in the presence of our foes. The day of Christ’s glory hastens on however and then we shall be glad “with exceeding joy” (ch. 4:13). We shall “rejoice with exultation,” (ch. 4:13) the suffering being over and the day of reward having arrived. Christ’s supreme sufferings are to be crowned with His supreme glory. It will be our honor and joy to share in both. Which shall we see to be the greater honor in that day? Let us call shame on our faint and cowardly hearts!

But we shall get not only persecution in the world, but reproach, and often this is the harder to bear. Well, supposing reproach rolls in upon us, are we to be specially commiserated? Not at all. We are declared to be happy or blessed if the reproach be “for” the name, or “in” the name of Christ; which means that the world sees in us His representatives. The Lord Jesus was once in this world as the Great Representative of Jehovah, and He consequently had to say “The reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon Me” (Psa. 69:9). That was assuredly no disgrace to Him, and to be reproached in the name of Christ is an honor to us. Men may blaspheme Him and reproach us, but we glorify Him and the Spirit who indwells us rests upon us as the Spirit of glory and of God. Many a Christian who has been through reproach of this sort looks back afterward to the occasion as a time of the greatest spiritual exaltation and blessing.

We are to be most careful not to suffer for evil doing of any sort but only as Christians. Then we have no need to be ashamed for we can glorify God “on this behalf,” or “in this name.” Here we have the Spirit of God accepting and sanctioning the name Christian as applied to believers. It was first used as a descriptive nickname at Antioch (Acts 11:26). It had come into general use later (See, Acts 26:28) and now is formally accepted by the Spirit of God. We may accept it therefore, and as Christians we glorify God even as Christ Himself did.

One further thought as to suffering is expressed by the Apostle in verse 17. Though it comes upon Christians from the world it is overruled of God to serve the ends of His government—the government of which he had spoken to us in chapter 3. Now God’s governmental dealings especially apply to His own. He is of course the Judge of all, and beneath His judgment all will ultimately come. But He keeps specially short accounts with those acknowledged as in relationship with Him, those who are of His household. When failure supervenes and sin invades the holy precincts of His house He begins to make the weight of His judgment felt in the way of His governmental dealings.

That this is God’s way was manifest in Old Testament times. Read chapter 8 and 9 of Ezekiel and see. Judgment was to be set in Jerusalem and the instruction was “Begin at My sanctuary” (Ezek. 9:6). So it had begun to be in the church of God. These early Christians had to accept these fires of persecution as permitted by God for the purifying of His house. We all know there is nothing like persecution for weeding the false out of the midst of the true.

But if judgment thus starts at God’s house, if God does not spare these, what about those that are not in relationship with Him at all? What shall their end be? If the righteous is saved with difficulty where shall the ungodly and sinner appear? These are tremendous questions which only admit of answers of most terrible import.

The righteous may come through with difficulty, as many an Old Testament Scripture illustrates, but he IS SAVED, nevertheless. He may have even to suffer to the extreme point of death according to God’s will, as verse 19 indicates. If so he has but to go on doing well and thus commit his soul into the hands of God “as unto a faithful Creator” (ch. 4:19). We know God not merely as Creator but as Saviour and Father. Still we do not lose the benefit of knowing Him as Creator, and as faithful to His own handiwork.

How happy for us to know God in all these varied ways.

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1 Peter: Briefly Expounded, 1 Peter 5 (5:1-14)

WHEN CHRISTIANS ARE passing through times of persecution and suffering, so much depends upon there being a right and happy condition amongst themselves. The Apostle Peter, therefore, supplements his warnings as to the persecution with some words of admonition addressed respectively to the elder and the younger amongst the disciples. Between such friction may easily develop, as we know right well.

The tendency to develop friction has always existed but never more so than now, inasmuch as the rapidity with which world changes have occurred has never been as pronounced as in the last few decades. The consequence of this is that great changes in thought and habits and outlook have supervened within the limits of a single generation; and hence children look upon their parents as behind the times and their grandparents as thoroughly antique, and the older people look upon the younger as revolutionary in their ideas. If verses 1-7 of our chapter be observed and obeyed, all friction would cease and harmony reign inside the Church of God whatever conditions prevail without.

Peter addresses himself first to the elders as being the more responsible. These were men recognized as holding the office of an elder, and not merely Christian men advanced in years. He claims a right to exhort them as being an elder and more than an elder—a witness of Christ’s sufferings. To those sufferings he could render testimony since he had seen them, having been with Him in the days of His flesh. Once he thought that he could easily share in those sufferings, even to prison and death, and we all know the painful breakdown in which his self-confidence involved him. If, however, he then failed, the Lord in His grace indicated to him that he should partake in some measure before his course was finished (see, John 21:18-19). Here he simply speaks of himself as a partaker of the coming glories as the fruit of grace.

His one exhortation to the elders is, “Feed,” or “Shepherd the flock of God” (ch. 5:2). The Holy Ghost thus gives exactly the same injunction to the elders by the lips of Paul in Acts 20:28, and by the pen of Peter here. The elders should extend towards their younger brethren all the care which a shepherd takes of his sheep. Nothing but the outflow of divine love in their hearts will produce the watchful oversight which such care demands, and it is well for the younger believers to see in the care of their older brethren an expression of the love of Christ the Chief Shepherd, which He will richly reward at His appearing.

It is most important that the “elder” should exert his spiritual authority in the right way and spirit, hence the three things stipulated in verses 2 and 3. He is to take up his service willingly, readily, and as himself a model to the flock. The Holy Ghost who inspired these words foresaw what a tendency there would be to take up such work, either from compulsion, or for love of gain, or for desire for power and influence. How much these words were needed is borne witness to by church history, which tells us how the simple “elders” or “bishops” of apostolic days were gradually magnified into “princes of the church,” who lorded it over God’s people as though they were their own possessions. It is, indeed, remarkable with verse 3 before us, that anyone professing to be a Christian “bishop” should call himself, or suffer himself to be called, “lord.”

Those of us who rank amongst the younger believers, have to pay special attention to verse 5. The elder may indeed be willing and ready in the exercise of oversight, and also may himself carry out what he enjoins on others, so as to be an example himself; all will be in vain if the younger are not prepared to listen to him and be subject. We beg every young Christian to remember that though there may be much advance in certain branches of human discovery and knowledge, so that the older generation may in these things easily fall behind the times, there is no such advance in the revealed truth of God. Consequently, spiritual maturity is still only to be gained as the fruit of years well spent in the school of God—and by that we mean, the study of His Word, supplemented by Christian life, experience and service. The younger

Christian may indeed have superior zeal, energy endurance and possibly superior mental equipment, even so he will more effectually serve his Master if he is subject to the mature and wise guidance of the “elder,” who may be in most other respects decidedly his inferior.

All this will be easy if the humble spirit prevails. All are to be clothed with humility in their dealings with each other. The person of humble mind is not uppish, and hence does not readily come into collision with others. Better still, he does not come into collision with God; for God sets Himself against the proud, whilst He gives grace to the humble. The mighty hand of God is upon His people in the way of training, and often in very painful dealings, as was the case in the persecutions of these early Christians, yet under it we are to bow and in due time we shall be exalted. Meanwhile, we are to cast all the cares, which this painful state of things might produce, upon Him in the full assurance that He cares for us.

Although as believers we are privileged to take all our trials, even our persecutions, as connected with “the mighty hand of God,” (ch. 5:6) yet we are not to overlook the fact that the devil has a hand in them. The case of Job in the Old Testament illustrates this, and the fact is recognized here. In the persecution of saints the devil moves about as a roaring lion, aiming thereby at breaking down our faith. If faith be a mere matter of mental enlightenment, mere head-conviction and not heart-trust, it fails and he devours us. We are therefore to be sober and watchful. We must recognize that the devil is our adversary, and that he is to be resisted in the energy of a live faith which cleaves to the faith made known to us in Christ, remembering also, that if we taste suffering we are only sharing what is the common lot of our brethren in the world.

The “But” that opens verse 10 lifts us in the most glorious way out of the murky atmosphere of the world with its persecutions and trials and the power of Satan. We are suddenly transported in thought into the presence of “the God of all grace” (ch. 5:10). Are we conscious of needing grace in an infinite variety of ways? Well, He is the God of all grace. The powers of the world and the devil may be against us, but He has called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, and nothing shall frustrate His purpose. He will permit us to suffer for a little while, but even that He will overrule. He will, as it were, take up the suffering and use it as material which He weaves into the pattern and design of His own choice as regards our characters and lives; and thus make it contributory to the perfecting, the establishing, the strengthening, the settlement of our souls.

As to His purpose for us, He has called us to His eternal glory. As to His disciplinary ways with us, He overrules even the activities of the adversary against us, for our spiritual perfecting and establishment. Grace, all grace, shines out in both His purposes and His ways. Who would not ascribe glory and dominion to the ages of ages to such an One as this?

The last three verses give us Peter’s closing words. It is interesting to find Silvanus (or, Silas) and Mark mentioned, both of them brethren who had intimate relations with the Apostle Paul, since the latter part of verse 12 is evidently an allusion to the Apostle Paul’s labors.

These scattered Jewish Christians had been evangelized, be it remembered, by Paul and his companions. If they stood in grace it was the fruit of his labors, and the grace in which they stood had been opened out to them through his ministry. Now Peter is led to write to them, in fulfillment of his commission as Apostle to the Jews, testifying as to the grace of God, and thus confirming that the grace in which they stood was the “true grace of God” (ch. 5:12). When we remember how once at Antioch, Peter and Paul came into pretty sharp collision over questions concerning law and grace, and how Paul had to exclaim, “I do not frustrate the grace of God” (Gal. 2:21), for Peter was committing himself to a line of action which threatened to do this very thing, we can rejoice in noting how thoroughly now they are in accord. We find a similar happy spirit of accord at the close of the second epistle (3:15, 16).

Let us never forget that we stand in grace—the true grace of God. All our relations with God are on the basis of grace. He began with us in grace at our conversion to Himself. He continues with us on the footing of grace through all the vicissitudes of our Christian life and service. With grace He will end— only, there is no end—for we shall enter His eternal glory as called to it and brought into it by the “God of all grace,” (ch. 5:10) as verse 10 has told us.

We are not so likely to overlook the start and the finish as we are the course between. It is now, amidst the failures and difficulties of our pilgrimage that we need an abiding sense of the grace that carries us through, the grace in which we stand. Soon, as we sometimes sing,

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