1Peter 10-10-08b

Let's resume our study now. We're in our initial steps into the epistle of 1st Peter, and I've deferred a little bit of the introduction of the second session since I had a bit of technical difficulty here. But it really kind of fits as we look at some of these later parts of verse 1 and into verse 2 anyway, so no harm done.

But we're interested, as always, when we start a letter to know who's writing it and who is he writing it to. And one of the ways to do that is to dive right in and find out what the letter says about itself. So we've seen in verse 1 that this is a letter written by Peter, and scholarly opinion, you know, varies from book to book in the New Testament, and there are a lot of them that they think are, especially your modern liberal scholars, so-called, think that, you know, various letters that are ascribed to Paul weren't written by Paul, and there's a lot of skepticism that 2nd Peter was written by Peter because it has various differences.

I think we will do 2nd Peter right after we finish 1st Peter, and I'll address those issues at that time. But generally speaking, there hasn't been a lot of contention over 1st Peter. They kind of think Peter more than likely wrote it, and this is based on a lot of testimony in the very earliest church fathers, Eusebius quotes Pappius and so on, and this tradition is as old as any tradition that Peter is responsible for this.

And 1st Peter is quoted in some of the oldest church father material that we have, not so 2nd Peter, but 1st Peter is quoted, and there are direct and indirect allusions to it in the earliest writings, and when it is ascribed, it is ascribed to Peter, so they can't really throw too many rocks at it on that score. And of course, we have no trouble believing that if the Bible says Peter is writing, then it is in fact the apostle Peter. There weren't a lot of Petrosses running around to choose from.

So, and certainly Peter as an apostle of Jesus Christ, that narrows you down to one guy, and it says he is writing to the eclectoes par epidemios diasporas. I read an extended opinion piece by a guy who was trying to make the case that Peter was actually writing to the Gentiles, even though there is evidence throughout here where he talks about the foundation is laid in Zion, and he says, you're, you know, the diaspora, is a almost a clinical term for the scattered Jews, and he makes all of these references to them as a chosen race, a holy nation, a priesthood, and all of these appeals that are made to the heritage of the Jews, coupled with the, what they would call non-scientific evidence that we understand about Peter's commission to be an apostle to Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria. The evidence to me is overwhelming that Peter's audience is primarily, if not exclusively, Jewish Christians, but just so you know, the case has been made by some that this is sort of a conceit, and he's sort of referring to them as Jews, but they're really Gentiles because they want Peter to be the apostle that starts the church, and they want it to be the Gentile church because he can't very well be the Pope if he goes down that road, and this, once again, is where you start reading into Scripture your preconceptions, and I'm sure that all of

us end up being guilty of that in some area to which we are blind, but we want to endeavor to let Scripture speak for itself, and you can see that you've got your Catholics with access to grind about Peter, and the reference that we had to Matthew 16, 17, 18, where Peter makes what we call the Great Confession, is the context is pressed into service to make Peter the Pope, and a lot of Catholicism rests on the foundation of this apostolic succession that is supposed to begin with Peter, so just by way of review, if you want to look real quickly at Matthew chapter 16, this does pertain to our study of 1 Peter, and it needs to be fresh in our minds.

Matthew 16, 13, when Jesus was come into the parts of Caesarea Philippi, he demanded of his disciples, saying, Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? They said, Some, John the Baptist, others, Elias or Elijah, others again, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He says to them, But you, who do you say that I am? Simon Peter answering said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. You are the Christ.

You, Jesus, are Christ, the Son of the living God. Remember the living stones? Dr. Livingstone, I presume? That's where the name comes from. Jesus answering said to him, Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah.

That's no accident either. You remember what Yonah, the dove, means in the Old Testament canon. That book, the story of Jonah, the capricious, indecisive, skittish nature of Israel and not sticking with their belief and their obedience is reflected in that book.

Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed it to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also, I say to you that you are Petras. And on this Petra, different form of the word, I will build my assembly, my ecclesia.

And the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I could spend a lot of time going through this passage, but we will probably, when we finish the epistles of Peter, do the gospel of Matthew. This is how far out my plan goes, but we've done the other three gospels and poor Matthew's been kind of pulling up the rear.

So we'll probably go ahead and do the gospel of Matthew. It will have been quite some time since we did a gospel at that point. I don't mean my brother, Matthew.

I mean, the gospel of Matthew has been bringing up the rear. So, you know, the last shall be first. The first shall be last.

So, but quickly, what does this mean? I used to scratch my head over this. Jesus says, I'm going to build an assembly and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. Well, I've never been attacked by gates.

I haven't seen gates being used as weapons of war or, you know, a gate prevailing, I suppose in a tornado or something, you could be dodging flying gates, but what does it mean that the gates

of Hades will not prevail against it? Well, what do the gates represent? Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be lifted up ye everlasting doors. Why? So that the king of glory will come in, right? Get all your obstacles and protective barrier stuff out of the way so the king can come in. What do gates do? This goes all the way back to our study of Ezekiel and the Lucifer, the shining one, the son of darkness, who was the guardian cherub.

And when it talks about the workmanship of his timbrels and his pipes and all that, we went through the Hebrew and he was the angel who did the stops and goes. He guarded the gates of God's throne room. The door of God's throne room was guarded by Lucifer, the highest of the archangels, the highest of all of God's creation.

Ingress and egress, who is allowed in, what is allowed out? This is what gates mean. And judgment took place at the gates and it was symbolic. This is where power will issue forth from the city.

This is where returning victorious armies will enter in grand procession. This is where we will stop those that we do not want to allow to enter. Power is at the gates.

Judicial power, ruling power, military power, civic power, defensive power, offensive power is expressed at the gates. That's what gates are. And why would the scriptures say, lift up your heads O ye gates and be lifted up ye everlasting doors so that the king of glory may come in.

All earthly power is subject to the king of glory. You get your power and you're opening and shutting out of the way because the king of glory, the king of kings, the Lord of lords is going to enter in. And if you don't open, he'll knock you down.

That's, but the gates, this is the place where power is expressed, where power is revealed, where power issues forth, where power returns after victory. So the gates of Hades shall not prevail against Christ's assembly. The power represented by Hades.

What is Hades? What's the city of Hades? What is it that's fenced in and has a gate that you call Hades? Well, is it synonymous with death? Gotta be careful there. Remember in Revelation, the sea gives up the dead that is in it. Death gives up its dead and hell, death and hell, death and Hades cast into the lake of fire.

So they're not synonymous, right? So what is Hades? How is Hades different than death? If he was saying the gates of death shall not prevail against it, you could say, well, Christ is the victor of life. But Hades is something different. This is the realm of, of course, Hades is the Greek expression of the idea of Sheol.

Death is the process by which you leave this life. Death is what takes your life away. So to speak, but the power that reigns over you after death has carried you away captive is Sheol.

You reside in Sheol. There's no memory of you in the grave. And it's, it's more synonymous with

the grave.

The grave is not death. The grave is where you go after death. So the gates of Hades will not prevail.

So this comes to represent everything that is on the dark side, separation from God, the powers of darkness, Satan's realm. Although this is really kind of by implication, the idea that Satan is the king of some domain called Hades is not accurate either. In fact, he is going to essentially be imprisoned and his minions are going to be imprisoned in that realm of darkness.

And the bottomless pit is associated with this idea. But Jesus says, I say to you, Simon, that you are Petras. Why would Jesus suddenly pick this name for him? And this is what gets missed when the whole Pope idea and I'm going to build the church on you and so on.

There are a couple of things that get missed. First of all, of all of the different names that Jesus could give Simon at the point that he makes this confession, you are the Christ, the son of the living God. Jesus says, you are gatekeeper.

You are pearly gate man. You are golden street guy. You are sky boy.

You are, there's any number of things that Jesus could have named him. You are little horn. You are olive oil bearer.

You know, something to do with Christ or life. You are zoane. You are living man.

Anything associated with this. Why of all of the available concepts would Jesus say, you are Petras? If you think about it, pretend like that you'd never heard the verse before, or never heard the episode before, had no knowledge of any of that. And somebody says, well, who do you think I am? Jesus is talking.

Who do you think I am? Somebody says, well, I think you're the anointed one. You're the son of the living God. And so Jesus comes back and says, from now on I'm calling you Rocky.

Rocky, what's that got to do with Christ the son of the living God? Why would he pick that name? Because the great confession is the acknowledgement that Jesus Christ is the foundation of salvation. The foundation upon which God's plan and purpose for mankind rests. And when you figure that out and state it and summarize it like Simon did, you've gotten a piece of the rock.

You've laid hold of the rock. That is the recognition, the truth that has been stated. That's the rock that was spoken of in the Old Testament.

That Jesus had spoken of already in the New Testament. And he says, remember they used to say, get your insurance from Prudential and own a piece of the rock. And they had the rock of Gibraltar as their symbol.

They still do. Own a piece of the rock. Well, spiritually speaking, Peter is really the first and foremost of the disciples to express this.

And Jesus says, you really get who I am. You recognize this rock that I represent. So I'm going to call you little rock, Petras.

You are a piece. And it is a recovery of the image of God. Man was made in the image of God.

We fall through sin, we're separated. We're lost and in darkness. Acknowledging the Lord Jesus Christ, placing faith in him, trusting him.

We regain a part of that image of God that we lost. Jesus Christ is the image of God. He is the rock.

And when we regain that image, we become little rocks. We become Christians. We are pebbles like the rock.

Small versions of that great rock. So Jesus says, you are Petras. And on this Petra that you have recognized that I am naming you after, the truth of my identity and function and fulfillment of God's plan of salvation, I will build.

And what did they build with in the ancient world? If you built to last, you built with stone. Why are the pyramids still standing? Why is the Colosseum still standing? They're built of stone. On this foundation stone, I will build with other Petroi, my assembly.

I will assemble more stones like you. Everyone who comes to this confession and to this acknowledgement is going to be built on the foundation of me, on that Petra. That's what this means.

That's what Peter alludes to in chapter two. So Petras, it sets the stage for what Peter is going to talk about. When he talks about the Lord Jesus Christ and mentions him four times in three verses, it's because this is the foundation.

This is what the letter rests on, just as it's what the Christian faith rests on. So it's important to understand that Petras and Petra refer to two different things. Petra is the identity, the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we recognize it and partake of it, Jesus Christ builds us, joins us together, and look, we are an assembly. Ecclesia means assembly. There is no New Testament church in Matthew chapter 16.

It's not even visible. It's not even anticipated. The disciples, when they heard Jesus say on this rock, I will build my ecclesia, they had no, not the faintest notion that there would be any sort of church with steeples and baptisteries and parking lots and pastors or popes and bishops or any

of the rest of that.

Ecclesia, ekkaleo, you call an assembly together. Jesus Christ is going to assemble these stones and he's going to make something out of them. And this goes back to what we just saw in our study of Philippians.

We are greater than the sum of our parts when we are assembled. This is why all of the one another commands glue us together, be of like mind, be united, be one in the faith, one in hope, one in love, one in recognition of the plan and purpose of God. Be like minded, look out for the interests of others.

We are interrelated. We are piled stones. We are carefully constructed building.

We are an assembly of stones. We are not designed to be a single stone out there by itself. You know what happens to a single stone that's out there by itself? It becomes a stepping stone.

It's just something to walk on, to get to the building. You're just there to step on when it rains. Got to be built into the building.

Well, this is in view and Peter's going to allude to it specifically. But back to our passage. That's who is writing and he is sent by the Lord Jesus Christ.

And he represents, because of that confession, he is going to continue to express that confession to others. Two, and the chosen, eclectoes. And again, you say of all of the different ways that Peter could greet these people, why would he start out with chosen? To the chosen.

They might say, well, we're the castoffs. We're the, you know, all of that happy Pentecostal spirit stuff happened in Jerusalem in the years since. You know, this starts to bear on the time of writing.

I had a good question right at the beginning of the break about, you know, what might be the time of writing here? Is there anything we can deduce from this? And the timing can be nailed down somewhat. It is in the later career of Peter. And the reason we know this is when we get toward the end of the letter, he talks about those in Babylon greet you.

He's writing essentially from Babylon and Babylon is code for Rome. Well, when is it that Peter ends up in Rome? Not till the end of his career. And we'll see that when we get there, but suffice it to say that the time of writing is very late in Peter's career.

My understanding is once he went to Rome, he didn't go home. That is the place of his upside down crucifixion according to church tradition. So this is one of his final messages.

And it's later rather than earlier in the first generation church period. And this also accounts for the people that he is writing to. Why are they scattered in Pontius, Galatia, Cappadocia? Because

they're not just scattered Jews, they are scattered Christian Jews.

And how long does it take? How many decades after the ascension of Jesus Christ before you have that collection of saints that began in Jerusalem and that grew from a few hundred to some thousand to 3,000 to an innumerable company. And then there is persecution and you think about Nero and you think about the growing perception of threat on the part of the Romans and they and the militant Jews and Judaizers begin to actively persecute what Saul was doing in the early days and what happened to Stephen in the early days only gets worse as time goes on. And these people are hounded and harassed and driven out and scattered and they are Jewish Christians.

So we know that there's been a significant amount of time passed, something measured in decades. And that's why they are. But Peter says, you are chosen.

Don't think that this was an accident or God just couldn't manage to protect you, couldn't manage to preserve you. You are supposed to be scattered. You were chosen specifically because remember, there were others that simply didn't survive at all.

They were executed. They were stoned to death. They were caused to suffer other fates and they didn't survive to be scattered.

These individuals were chosen to be where they are. Chosen par epidemois. This is really a great word.

It's made up of three different parts. You have para, which means alongside. You have epi, which means upon.

And then you have demos. And we'll start with the last part first, demos, which is the root. You know what demographics are, right? This is writing down or picturing what's up with people.

What kind of people live in a place? That's gonna be your demographic. A democracy is when the demos rule. The people rule themselves.

Demoscracy, if you will. Demos means people. And in biblical Greek, it generally is used for the people of a non-Jewish place, a non-Gentile city.

The pagan dwellers, they are the demos. So you have, you know, people at the root there. And this is gonna be the, the demos make up the ethnoi.

These are the non-Jewish people. Epi means upon. So you've got epi, demos.

What happens when you have an epi, demic? A plague comes upon the people. An epidemic means it's upon all the people. Epidemic comes from this, epi, demos.

Well, this is para epi, demos, translated pilgrims or dwellers alongside the epidemic. The dwellers

alongside the heathen people. So they have settled down alongside these who are not Christian and who are not Jewish.

And we're gonna find this same word used in chapter two, where he says in verse 11, "'Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, "'abstain from fleshly lusts.'" Same word is gonna be used again, para epi, demos. And so he reminds his audience at the very outset that he knows where they are and that God has chosen them to be in this, you know, how the Jews don't like being amongst the Gentiles. They didn't even like being amongst the Samaritans that were fairly closely related to them.

And they certainly didn't wanna dwell amongst the heathen. They wanted to be in the holy land and let all the heathen live outside. Instead, they are now scattered like salt amongst the nations.

And then you have diasporas. And this is, you know what a spore is, right? It's a seed. And dia means through.

The diameter is the measurement through the center of a circle, right? Diasporas. So you've got seed scattered through the area. And it comes to mean scattered.

This was used to translate the Hebrew in Deuteronomy 28, 25, where Moses told Israel, if you are disobedient, if you are faithless, if you depart from the commands of the living God with whom you have entered into covenant, the Lord will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them. And you shall be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth, scattered into all the kingdoms of the earth.

And in the Septuagint, this is translated by the word diaspora, scattered. They use this word in John 7, 35. We saw it when the Jews said among themselves, where does he intend to go that we shall not find him? Does he intend to go to the diaspora among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? Is he going to go to the Jews that have already departed the region? James 1, 1, James writes to the 12 tribes, which are diaspora abroad, Jews living outside of Palestine.

So Peter uses it in the same way. These are Christian Jews living outside the land. They're living among the Gentiles in these provinces.

And then he's going to talk about where they are, but dia and spiro, which is the verb to scatter as scatter seeds. And this is ultimately where you get the word sperma from spiro, which also is the Greek word for seed. And this scattering isn't the final scattering that took place when Jerusalem was destroyed.

Jerusalem is still standing when Peter writes, but not for much longer. Some of the Jews had scattered into Gentile regions because they had financial reasons or commercial reasons. They had better business opportunities.

They could go and make money. Their business expanded into the Roman empire and they could go set up satellite offices. They could be at the other end of a delivery mechanism.

And they would live in the same way that Americans will go and work abroad because their company wants to put an office out there, whatever, it was not that different in the ancient world. But the Jewish Christians were generally scattered by persecution, both by Jews and by the Romans. And others of these Jewish Christians had already gone there by choice and then were evangelized by the likes of Paul or Barnabas and Silas and some of the others that had traveled around and had come to faith.

And, but they were still very Jewish in their mindset and in their customs and in their culture. And being Jewish Christians, they were kind of on a different side of the fence than those to whom Paul would write, where he really focused a lot on the Greeks and the barbarians and the Macedonians and so on that had come to faith. So these Jews, even though they're outside the land are still those to whom Jesus had sent the 11, Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria until the end of the world, that's your domain.

And they, maybe they're Jerusalemites or Judahites or Samaritans that are scattered abroad, but they're still your target audience. So wherever they may providentially have ended up, God knows where they are. God chose them and knew that they would be there regardless of how they got there or how they got saved.

So now we have reviewed who's writing, who commissioned him to write, the Lord Jesus, and to whom he is writing, specifically this Jewish Christian audience and specifically those that have been scattered. He doesn't include Judea or Jerusalem or Samaria in the recipients. He didn't send a copy of this back down to Israel.

So our next question is gonna be, all right, we know who's writing. We know who's receiving the writing. We know who has initiated the correspondence to begin with.

Jesus has commissioned Peter to tell these people something. What is it he is going to tell them? Well, this brings us to the next verse or two here. You can put elect back up where it belongs and begin verse two, where it says, according to the prognosis, the prognosis, and so much gets read into prognosco and whom he foreknew.

We use this word all the time. They say, well, what's the prognosis? How do we understand prognosis? If a doctor gives you a prognosis, what's he saying? I'm telling you now what's gonna happen later, right? I know now that this is the progress of this condition. It's gonna get better or it's gonna get worse.

The prognosis is good or the prognosis is bad. We use it almost as a synonym for prediction, don't we? What does predict mean? Predict is just the Latin form of, pre means beforehand and dictum means to, like dictaphone, dictate. You're gonna say something beforehand.

I'm gonna tell you now what's gonna happen later. So predict and to know now what's about to happen. If you put your computer in one of these little desk things that has a little door to hide it and it doesn't have any ventilation, I prognosco what is gonna happen to your computer.

It is gonna overheat and it is gonna lock up and you're gonna lose your data. Your hard drive is gonna get hot and it's gonna crash. I prognosco that.

If you drive your car when the oil light comes on and you ignore it and you don't put any oil in it, I prognosco what is gonna happen to that car. I know what's gonna happen. You're going to be by the side of the road looking for your cell phone to call roadside assistance or a tow truck.

So to know something beforehand, to be aware of what will happen and the consequences and causes and so on, that's all prognosco means. It doesn't have a great, grand, overarching theological meaning except as context dictates. So Peter says, I'm writing to you who are scattered out here living amongst the Gentiles, you Jewish Christians, and you're out there according to, God knew this was going to happen.

It's no surprise. The foreknowledge of God the Father or as predicted by God the Father. Remember the Deuteronomy passage I gave you? If you disobey, if you fail to be obedient, Deuteronomy 28, 25, I will scatter you to all the kingdoms of the earth.

So really this is according to the prediction of God, according to the prophecy of God, according to what God told you beforehand. This shouldn't be a big surprise that the people of God would be scattered when as a people they are disobedient, apathetic, indifferent. Why are you surprised? That's one aspect, one facet of this.

You are scattered dwellers among the Gentiles in sanctification of the spirit for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Now, how does he get to this set of ideas? You can imagine him sitting there in Rome, perhaps in prison, perhaps under house arrest. We don't know what his circumstances were, but he's writing this letter and he says, I'm writing to you scattered people, probably people that he's not personally familiar with, sending it to provinces.

He knows it's going to be distributed. It's going to be sent to people he doesn't even know. And he says, God, the father knew this ahead of time, told you about it ahead of time, you're out there.

So put yourself in a historical context here, put yourself in a national spiritual Old Testament context. Then he says, in Hagiazmoi Numitas, in holiness or sanctification of the spirit, ace with a view toward for the purpose of, looking in the direction of, unto in the figurative or non literal sense, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. You are scattered with God's knowledge in holiness of spirit.

Now your new King James has a capital S on spirit, is Numitas going to be capital or small? That's a little puzzle we'll solve next time. But N-E-N means in or by means of or with. We'll just

say for now in sanctification of spirit.

There is no definite article here with a view toward obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. So what we're going to be looking at next time is why people always want to know why, why didn't things turn out the way I expected? Why am I not more prosperous? Why am I not where I thought I would be? Why am I out here among the nations and what should I be doing as a Christian Jew? Well, this is according to the foreknowledge of God in holiness of spirit with a view toward obedience and sprinkling the blood of Jesus Christ. What is the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ? If you sprinkle something, what do you do? It scatters it, right? If you dip hyssop in blood and shake it, you scatter the blood.

These people have been scattered among the nations and to the extent that their spiritual life reflects holiness, reflects sanctification and obedience, they have been scattered because of national disobedience. But if they're spiritually holy, spiritually sanctified, their presence among the nations is a sprinkling of the blood of Christ. It is a dispersion of holiness with a view toward obedience.

Looking at the purpose of obedience, what kind of obedience? Obedience in the nations. They are missionaries. This is where Israel finally enters into the missionary endeavor.

God never sent the Israelites out before to bless the nations. Nations had to come to Israel. If you are an Old Testament person interested in God, you come to Israel.

Now, Israel and the centralized presence of God is in the process of being eliminated and these sanctified Jewish Christians are scattered and God has a purpose in it. He is going to sprinkle the blood of Christ. He has a view toward obedience, both theirs and, you know, this is obedience that's mutually beneficial.

They obey and other people are going to come to obedience, to the faith and so on. But God has a purpose in it. God knew ahead of time, I am going to use the discipline of the nation to bless the nations.

I'm gonna use the hardening that has happened in part to Israel, as Paul puts it, to make an opening for the Gentiles. And your scattering is going to work out for holiness, for obedience, for sanctification. You are the sprinkling of the blood of Christ.

You yourself have been cleansed and sanctified by his blood and as you scatter out, you're going to spread, you're going to sprinkle that sanctification out among the nations. So rather than trying to twist this into some sort of a statement about individual predestination, Peter is actually telling these people, look at the way God is using you. Your scattering may seem like a personal deficit, whether you got there volitionally or you were driven there.

You say, well, you know, I'd sure like to be back home. There's trouble in the homeland. I'd like to

be back there and, you know, rally around the Mount of Zion.

He says, no, you're there for a purpose. God knew ahead of time that these things would come to pass and you are his means of sprinkling the blood of Christ among the nations. You Jewish Christians are the first generation and through you, truly all nations of the earth will be blessed.

And in Cappadocia and Bithynia and Asia and Galatia and these other places, you are going to be the means of shining the light of Jesus Christ. So it is an outward looking view of sanctification and obedience and the salvific effects of the blood of Christ, not an inward you are elect according to the foreknowledge of God kind of a thing. God went in and changed your heart and made you be saved.

No, he has sent you to the nation so that they may be saved. And if you wanted an idea of evangelism in the New Testament, here's a good passage to come to. This is how God evangelizes.

He moves the people who know Jesus Christ out next to people who need to know Jesus Christ. God does it. It's his foreknowledge.

It's his election. It's his choosing to put people in specific places at specific times so that those who are needing to hear and are ready to hear can hear and can come to obedience and sanctification. That's how it works.

And that's what Peter is getting at. He's encouraging them in the very greeting of the letter. God is using you right where you are.

He knew about it ahead of time. He chose you. And this is going to read down to the praise of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You are the sprinkling of his blood on the nations. So it's a wonderful opening to the letter. And we'll pick up at this point and continue our analysis of Peter's greeting and into his discussion of heavenly inheritance and the blessings that come from God next time.

But we'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for this great letter. Thank you for this section of scripture and the truth that it contains.

May God the Holy Spirit find us teachable and impressionable. May each of us find in these passages truth that will be pertinent and meaningful, that will return to our minds as we face circumstances and challenges and seek to overcome the weaknesses that persist and that plague us. We know that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

And we know that that strength comes through truth and through your spirit. We know that these are present with us and we ask your blessing on us in the days ahead that our lives can truly reflect your glory and in so doing reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus. We ask it in his name, amen.