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GENERAL SUBJECT:

LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE UNDER THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD TO EXPERIENCE CHRIST AND GROW IN LIFE FOR GOD'S BUILDING

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GENERAL SUBJECT:
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Message One
The Universal Government of God

Scripture Reading: 1 Pet. 1:2, 17; 2:21-25; 3:15; 4:12, 15-19; 5:5-8; 2 Pet. 1:1-4; 3:13

I. The Epistles of 1 and 2 Peter are on the universal government of God:

A. The subject of 1 Peter is the Christian life under the government of God, showing us the government of God especially in His dealings with His chosen people—1 Pet. 1:2.

B. The subject of 2 Peter is the divine provision and the divine government, showing us that as God is governing us, He supplies us with whatever we need—2 Pet. 1:1-4; 3:13.

C. God governs by judging; this judgment of God is for the carrying out of His government—1 Pet. 1:17; 4:17:

1. Because 1 and 2 Peter are concerned with the government of God, in these Epistles the judgment of God and of the Lord is referred to repeatedly as one of the essential items—1 Pet. 2:23; 4:5-6, 17; 2 Pet. 2:3-4, 9; 3:7.
2. Through various kinds of judgments, the Lord God will clear up the entire universe and purify it so that He may have a new heaven and a new earth for a new universe filled with His righteousness for His delight—2 Pet. 3:13.

D. The judgment in 1 Peter 1:17, which is carried out by the Father, is not the future judgment but is the present, daily judgment of God's governmental dealings with His children:

1. The Father has regenerated us to produce a holy family—a holy Father with holy children—1 Pet. 1:3, 15, 17.
2. As holy children, we should walk in a holy manner of life (1 Pet. 1:15-16); otherwise, in His government God the Father will become the Judge and will deal with our unholiness—1 Pet. 4:17; Heb. 12:9-10.

E. The disciplinary judgment in the government of God begins from the house of God—1 Pet. 4:17:

1. God judges everything that does not match His government; therefore, in this age we, the children of God, are under the daily judgment of God—1 Pet. 1:17.
2. God uses fiery ordeals to deal with the believers in the judgment of His governmental administration, which begins from His own house—1 Pet. 4:12, 17.
3. The purpose of this judgment is that we would live according to God in spirit—1 Pet. 4:6.

II. In his writings Peter combines the Christian life and God's government, revealing that the Christian life and the government of God go together as a pair—1 Pet. 1:17; 2:21, 24; 3:15; 4:17; 5:5-8:

A. The Triune God has passed through a long process in Christ and has become the life-giving Spirit to indwell us; this is for our Christian life—John 1:14; 14:17; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 6:17.

B. At the same time, the Triune God is still the Creator of the universe and its Ruler—1 Pet. 4:19.

C. Although we have been born of God to have a spiritual life and to be a new creation, we are still in the old creation—John 1:12-13; 3:3, 5-6; 2 Cor. 5:17:

1. For this reason we need God's governmental dealings—1 Pet. 1:17.

2. In order for the Christian life to grow, we need the discipline of God's government—1 Pet. 2:2; 4:17; 2 Pet. 1:5-7.

III. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He lived a human life that was absolutely under the government of God, and He committed everything related to Him to God's government—John 6:38; 1 Pet. 2:21-24:

A. The Lord kept committing all His insults and injuries to Him who judges righteously in His government, the righteous God, to whom He submitted Himself; He put His trust in this righteous One, recognizing His government—1 Pet. 2:23.

B. When God counseled Christ as a man, Christ's inward parts were one with God and instructed Him through His contact with God—Psa. 16:7; Isa. 50:4.

Message Two

The Christian Life under the Government of God

Scripture Reading: 1 Pet. 1:6-8, 17; 4:13-19; 5:6

I. As believers in Christ and children of God, we should live a Christian life under the government of God—John 3:15; 1:12-13; 1 Pet. 4:13-19; 5:6-8.

II. The Epistles of Peter reveal the Christ who enables us to take God's governmental dealings administered through sufferings—1 Pet. 1:6-8; 2:3-4, 19, 21-25; 3:18, 22; 4:1, 15-16; 5:8-9.

III. We should be humbled under the mighty hand of God, which carries out the government of God—1 Pet. 5:6:

A. In 1 Peter 5:6 *the mighty hand of God* refers to God's administrating hand seen especially in His judgment—1 Pet. 1:17; 4:17.

B. To be humbled under God's mighty hand is to be made humble by God; however, we must cooperate with God's operation and be willing to be made humble, lowly, under His mighty hand—1 Pet. 5:6.

IV. As we live under the government of God, we will be made sorrowful by various trials and experience the proving of our faith—1 Pet. 1:6-7:

A. *The trials* in 1 Peter 1:6 are suffering that test the quality of our life as believers.

B. These trials are used by God to prove and try our faith to see whether we will follow Christ in suffering for doing good—1 Pet. 2:19-23; 3:14-18.

C. The emphasis in 1 Peter 1:7 is not on faith but on the proving of faith by trials that come through sufferings.

V. Although we have not seen the Lord Jesus Christ, we love Him, and although we do not see Him at present, we believe, exulting with "joy that is unspeakable and full of glory"—1 Pet. 1:8:

A. It is a wonder and a mystery that we, the believers, love One whom we have not seen.

B. We love Him whom we have not seen because of believing, because of the faith that has been infused into us through hearing the living word of God—Gal. 3:2.

C. This faith is under the proving, the trying, mentioned in 1 Peter 1:7.

D. Joy full of glory is joy immersed in glory; it is joy that is filled with the expression of Christ—1 Pet. 1:8.

VI. We should commit our souls to the faithful Creator—1 Pet. 4:19:

A. God can preserve our soul, and His loving and faithful care accompanies His justice in His governmental administration.

B. While God judges us in His government, He cares for us faithfully in His love; as we are suffering His disciplinary judgment, we should commit our souls to the faithful care of our Creator—Matt. 10:28; 11:28-29.

VII. In the death of Christ we have died to sins so that in the resurrection of Christ we might live to righteousness under God's government—1 Pet. 2:24:

A. God's government is established upon righteousness (Psa. 89:14a); as God's people living under His government, we must live a righteous life.

B. The expression *live to righteousness* is related to the fulfilling of God's governmental

requirements—1 Pet. 2:24:

1. We were saved so that we might live rightly under the government of God, that is, in a way that matches the righteous requirements of His government.
2. In Christ's death we have been separated from sins, and in His resurrection we have been enlivened so that in our Christian life we might live spontaneously to righteousness under the government of God—Rom. 6:8, 10-11, 18; Eph. 2:6; John 14:19; 2 Tim. 2:11.

Message Three

Becoming a Reproduction of Christ

Scripture Reading: 1 Pet. 1:15; 2:12, 21; Rom. 8:29; Gal. 2:20; 4:19; Eph. 3:16-17a

I. As believers in Christ, we may become a reproduction of Christ as our model—1 Pet. 2:21.

II. The living of the Lord Jesus under the government of God is a model so that we may follow in His steps by becoming His reproduction—1 Pet. 2:21-23; Eph. 4:20-21.

III. The Greek word for *model* in 1 Peter 2:21 denotes a master copy used in the teaching of writing—a writing copy, an underwriting, for students to use in tracing letters as they learn to draw them:

A. The Lord Jesus has set His life before us as an underwriting for us to copy by tracing and following His steps—Matt. 11:28-30.

B. It is not God's intention that we try to imitate Christ by our own effort; what we need is not imitation but reproduction—Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18.

IV. We need to become Christ's reproduction, copies of Christ, by a process that involves the riches of the divine life; when this process is completed, we will become a reproduction of Christ—John 3:15; Eph. 3:8.

V. In order to become a reproduction of Christ as our model, we need to experience Christ as the One living in us, being formed in us, and making His home in our hearts—Gal. 2:20; 4:19; Eph. 3:16-17a:

A. The New Testament reveals that Christ is deeply related to our inner being—Gal. 1:16; Col. 3:10-11.

B. The pneumatic Christ—Christ as the life-giving Spirit—is living in us—1 Cor. 15:45b; Gal. 2:20:

1. God's economy is that the "I" be crucified in Christ's death and that Christ live in us in His resurrection—John 14:19.
2. We are one spirit with the Lord, we have one life with Him, and we should now be one person with Him—1 Cor. 6:17; Col. 3:4; Phil. 1:21a.
3. Since Christ dwells in us as the Spirit, we need to let Him live in us—John 14:16-19; Gal. 2:20.

C. To have Christ formed in us is to have Christ fully grown in us—Gal. 4:19:

1. Christ was born into us at the time we repented and believed in Him, then He lives in us in our Christian life, and finally, He will be formed in us at our maturity—John 1:12-13; 3:15; Gal. 2:20.
2. To have Christ formed in us is to allow the all-inclusive Spirit to occupy every part of our inner being, to have Christ fully grown in us—Col. 2:19; Eph. 4:15-16.
3. To have Christ formed in us implies that we are being constituted with Christ organically—Col. 3:10-11.
4. *Formed* in Galatians 4:19 corresponds to *image* in 2 Corinthians 3:18; Christ will be formed in us so that we may express Him in His image.

D. The Christ who lives in us and who is being formed in us is making His home in our hearts—Eph. 3:16-17a:

1. Christ wants to make His home deep down in our being; He desires to spread from our spirit to all the parts of our heart.
2. The more Christ spreads within us, the more He settles down in us and makes His

home in our hearts; in this way He occupies every part of our inner being, possessing these parts and saturating them with Himself so that we may be filled unto all the fullness of God—Eph. 3:19b.

E. As Christ lives in us, is formed in us, and makes His home in our hearts, we become a reproduction of Christ for the corporate expression of God—Rom. 8:29; 12:4-5; Rev. 21:2.

Message Four

Growing in the Divine Life for a Rich Entrance into the Eternal Kingdom

Scripture Reading: 2 Pet. 1:5-11

I. We need to experience the growth of the divine life so that we may have a rich entrance into the eternal kingdom—2 Pet. 1:5-11.

II. To supply virtue in faith is to develop virtue—the energy of the divine life issuing in vigorous action—in the exercise of the equally precious faith; this faith needs to be exercised so that the virtue of the divine life may be developed in the succeeding steps and reach maturity—2 Pet. 1:5a:

A. Virtue needs the bountiful supply of the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; the knowledge which we should develop in our virtue includes the knowledge of God and of our Savior, the knowledge of God's economy, the knowledge of what faith is, and the knowledge of the divine power, glory, virtue, nature, and life—2 Pet. 1:5b.

B. Self-control is the exercise of control and restraint over one's self in its passions, desires, and habits; such self-control needs to be exercised in knowledge for the proper growth in life—2 Pet. 1:6a.

C. To exercise endurance is to bear with others and with circumstances—2 Pet. 1:6b.

D. Godliness is a living that is like God and that expresses God—2 Pet. 1:6c.

E. Brotherly love (*philadelphia*) is brotherly affection, a love characterized by delight and pleasure; in godliness, which is the expression of God, this love needs to be supplied for the brotherhood, for our testimony to the world, and for the bearing of fruit—2 Pet. 1:7a; 1 Pet. 2:17; 3:8; Gal. 6:10; John 13:34-35; 15:16-17.

F. The ultimate development of the divine nature within us is love—*agape,* the Greek word used in the New Testament for the divine love, which God is in His nature—2 Pet. 1:7b; 1 John 4:8, 16:

1. Our brotherly love needs to be developed further into a nobler and higher love—2 Pet. 1:7b.
2. In our enjoyment of the divine nature, we need to let the divine seed of the allotted faith develop to its consummation in the divine and nobler love—2 Pet. 1:5-7.
3. When we partake of the divine nature to the uttermost, we are filled with God as love, and we become persons of love, even love itself—Eph. 3:19.

G. To develop the spiritual virtues in the divine life and thus to advance in the growth of the divine life makes God's calling and selection of us firm—2 Pet. 1:10.

III. We should be diligent to pursue the growth and development of the divine life and divine nature for a rich entrance into the eternal kingdom—2 Pet. 1:10-11:

A. The bountiful supply that we enjoy in the development of the divine life and divine nature (2 Pet. 1:3-7) will bountifully supply us a rich entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord.

B. This supply will enable and qualify us to enter into the coming kingdom by all the riches of the divine life and divine nature as our excellent virtues (energy) unto the splendid glory of God—2 Pet. 1:3; 1 Pet. 5:10.

C. Apparently, it is we who enter into the eternal kingdom; actually, the entrance into the eternal kingdom is supplied to us richly through our growth in life and through the development of the divine life within us.