

Peter and Forgiveness
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This study began with looking at the details of forgiveness in Peter's denial of Jesus. Slowly it began to dawn on me that I should trace the theme of forgiveness with Peter as the connecting *person*, as the one learning from Jesus. The connecting *theme* behind forgiveness came from John 3:16. In crafting the forgiveness of sinners, "God so loved the world that He *gave* His only begotten Son." After all, the core of the English word "forgiveness" is this very dynamic that first flowed from the heart of God. God *gave for* the needs of all sinners. In Jesus Christ He *for-gives*.

In this series we will examine ten stories from the Gospels involving Peter and some dimension of this theme. Matthew will be our main source. Some stories are chapters of the same event. In conclusion we will explore to some degree the extent to which Peter wrote in his epistles of his lessons learned from Jesus.

Story #1: Matthew 16 (1): Peter's Revelation--Beginning to Measure the Enormity of Forgiveness

Story #2: Matthew 16 (2): Peter's Rebuke--Encountering the Offense of Forgiveness

Story #3: Matthew 17 (1): Peter's Drowsiness--Missing the Encouragement of Forgiveness

Story #4: Matthew 17 (2): Peter's Boast--Retreating on the Enormity of Forgiveness

Story #5: Matthew 18: Peter's Question--Learning More the Measure of Forgiveness

Story #6: Matthew 19: Peter's Claim--Revealing the Motive Opposite of Forgiveness

Story #7: Matthew 26 (1): Peter's Blindness--Needing the Persistence of Forgiveness

Story #8: Matthew 26 (2): Peter's Defense--Blocking the Path of Forgiveness

Story #9: Matthew 26 (3): Peter's Denial--Experiencing the Look of Forgiveness

Story #10: John 21: Peter's Humility--Embracing the Selflessness of Forgiveness

Conclusion: 1 Peter 1 & 2: Peter's Reciprocity--Giving What He Had Been Given

The various methods I will use to review the stories will be to recount them each in the very words of Scripture, and then to develop further the implications for the theme of forgiveness of the elements of the conversations and events, by means of paraphrases, questions, reflections, commentary, notes, and/or comparisons. (All emphases in bolded words are supplied. As a general rule I will italicize the dynamic of *giving*.)

Story #1: Matthew 16 (1): Peter's Revelation--Beginning to Measure the Enormity of Forgiveness

The Story

When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

He saith unto them, But **whom say ye that I am?**

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art **the Christ, the Son of the living God.**

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

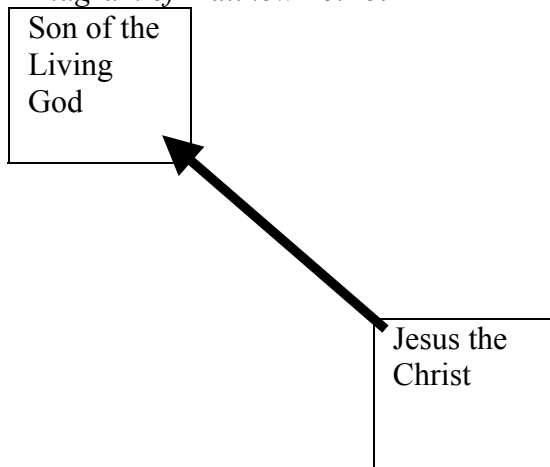
Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that **he was Jesus the Christ.** (verses 13-21).

Peter: I know who You are. I love who You are. It is amazing who You are.

Consider:

Peter's confession of Jesus' identity was correct. It was an astounding step of faith to connect "Jesus," this humble man from Nazareth, with "the Christ," that is the Messiah, who was "the Son of the living God." There were in the human mind pictures of these names that naturally would prevent them from being one and the same person. Peter's perception of this integrated identity was not from any human source, himself included. The Father who sent Jesus revealed this to Peter. At another time, when many of Jesus' disciples abandoned Him, Peter used the same words of faith, but in the plural on behalf of the twelve. "We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." (John 6:67-69).

Diagram of Matthew 16:16:



This diagram will be built further as we encounter other elements in our stories of the picture Paul painted of the mind of Christ Jesus, in Philippians 2:5-11. These are the very issues Peter struggled to learn. Our study on forgiveness in Peter's stories will highlight, as the diagram will outline, the steps this Son of God took, and the consequent accomplishments. We will find more portions of the diagram in the next story.

Consider:

As certain as this revelation was, it was only part of Jesus' witness. Peter did not yet understand the dynamic--the motive--of how the Son of God became Jesus of Nazareth, and where it was leading. And failing to see this, Peter was to reveal the generic blindness we all have in the flesh. The divine revelation was active, but the human "eye of faith" was, in many ways, blinded by self. Like Peter, we do not see and embrace the *giving* that is in the heart of *forgiving*.

What *giving* had taken place for the "Son of the living God" to become "Jesus the Christ [Messiah]"? What did the Father have to *give*? What did the Son have to *give*? What motivated Them to *give*? What was the purpose of the incarnation? How far would this *giving* go? And how was this additional and vital knowledge to be revealed to Peter?

Jesus, in His response to Peter, stated four future actions, two that Jesus Himself would do, and two dependent on what Peter would do.

- Jesus in His universal faithfulness "will" build His church on the Rock of His identity, His meekness and lowliness. The stories we will explore of Peter will make this abundantly clear, and Peter will confess it unmistakably in the second chapter of his first epistle. (We will examine this passage in our concluding section).
- Jesus in His personal faithfulness to Peter "will" impart to him "the keys of the kingdom of heaven." In story after painful story, Peter will learn what it means to *give*. Jesus later called these keys "the key of knowledge," a personal experience in knowing the character of the King of this kingdom, that allows "entering" there forever. (Luke 11:52; compare Revelation 1:18, tied to victory over the consequences of sin; 3:7, tied to David, whose throne Messiah sits on in the kingdom; see Luke 1:32). Failure to know, which Peter and we all have to be delivered from, excludes one from that kingdom. (Matthew 7:23; 25:12). Peter's three denials would show how intense the battle was with "I know Him not." (See more on this "knowledge" and "entrance" in our concluding section dealing with the first chapter of Peter's second epistle.)
- Peter in his responsive faithfulness would have the privilege of so exalting Jesus in His humility that those things which he would bind or loose, "will" be, based on their prior state in the realm Jesus came to reveal. This passage is better seen in a literal rendition, showing the possibility and potentiality of Peter's actions, contingent on what has been already determined in that kingdom, as compatible or incompatible with its principles. "I will give to thee the keys of the reign of the heavens, and whatever thou mayest bind upon the earth shall be having been bound in the heavens, and whatever thou mayest loose upon the earth shall be having been loosed in the heavens." (Young's Literal Translation). That this responsibility was not just Peter's is made clear in Jesus' comments in the transition between Story #4 and #5, when He states the very same words to all the disciples. (Matthew 18:18). The binding pertains in particular to the binding of Satan (Matthew 12:29; same verb of "bind") by the power of Jesus' word, the word of faith. Jesus will give Peter the key to this understanding, as seen in Story #7 where Jesus' prayer of faith opposing Satan will effectively bind him from his purposes to deceive Peter into fully abandoning Jesus and His principle of *giving*, if Peter would receive it. Likewise, loosing addresses in a special way releasing individuals from the deceptions and consequences of Satan's lie (John 8:44, compare 8:32, 36), a work Jesus came to accomplish in His spectrum of *giving* (Luke 13:16; Ephesians 2:14; 1 John 3:8; same verb of "loose"). Peter's use of the sword in Story #8 will give Jesus occasion to give him yet again the key to loosing people, himself included, in contrast to counterfeit methods that only destroy, if Peter would receive it.

The next chapter in Peter's story with Jesus follows the above immediately.

Story #2: Matthew 16 (2): Peter's Rebuke--Encountering the Offense of Forgiveness

The Story

From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and **suffer many things** of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be **killed**, and be **raised again** the third day.

Then Peter **took him**, and **began to rebuke him**, saying, **Be it far from thee, Lord**: this shall **not be unto thee**.

But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an **offence** unto me: for thou **savourest not the things that be of God**, but **those that be of men**.

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will **come after me**, let him **deny himself**, and **take up his cross**, and **follow me**.

For whosoever will **save his life shall lose it**: and whosoever will **lose his life for my sake shall find it**.

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. (verses 21-27)

Peter: I hate the trajectory of Your path. I hate where You are headed. I hate what this will cost You.

Evidence: The verb "took" of verse 22, what Peter did with Jesus, has one of its definition as, "to take by the hand in order to lead aside." By his words, "This shall not be unto thee," Peter said, I won't let this happen to You. We will see this again in Story #8, with connections to this story.

Jesus: Peter, this is what you hate--you hate "the things that be of God." You love "those that be of men."

Contrast

Alternate translations of Peter's words, "Be it far from thee, Lord" render them thus:

"Favour thyself, Lord" (Wesley New Testament)

"Be kind to thyself, sir" (Young's Literal Translation)

With these statements we see better the contrast that Jesus' path and words were to Peter's direction, which Peter insisted Jesus take. Was Jesus' mission about favoring Himself or denying Himself? Jesus plainly expanded His response to all the disciples in stating that one direction has a living future ("find it"), and the other doesn't ("lose it"); the "it" one finds or loses is life itself! But what connection do these options have with forgiveness? We will see.

Compare

We find another occurrence of Jesus' speaking of coming, taking, and finding, in Matthew 11:28-30. (The "take" and "find" are identical verbs.)

If any <i>man</i> will come after me,	Come unto me, all <i>ye</i> that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.	Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart:
For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.	and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke <i>is</i> easy, and my burden is light.

Peter and the other eleven were in a school learning of Jesus. The above parallel suggests that the yoke is the cross of self-denial that flows from being meek and lowly in heart, and that the rest we find is none other than life itself--resting in learning of Him in whose image we were made, and the lack of which drains the life forces and has no future. This self-*giving* must be describing the core of forgiveness. We must see that the theme of forgiveness is central to life itself, for the finding and *giving* of life is what Jesus is teaching.

Commentary

In these words Christ is speaking to every human being. Whether they know it or not, all are weary and heavy-laden. All are weighed down with burdens that only Christ can remove. The heaviest burden that we bear is **the burden of sin**. If we were left to bear this burden, it would **crush us**. But **the Sinless One has taken our place**. "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Isaiah 53:6. He has **borne the burden of our guilt**. He will **take the load** from our weary shoulders. He will **give us rest**. The burden of care and sorrow also He will bear. He invites us to cast all our care upon Him; for He carries us upon His heart. (*The Desire of Ages*, page 328.5)

As **through Jesus we enter into rest**, heaven begins here. We respond to His invitation, **Come, learn of Me**, and in thus coming we **begin the life eternal**. Heaven is a ceaseless approaching to God through Christ. The longer we are in the heaven of bliss, the more and still more **of glory** will be opened to us; and the more we know **of God**, the more **intense** will be our **happiness**. As we walk with Jesus in this life, we may be **filled with His love, satisfied with His presence**. All that human nature can bear, we may receive here. But what is this compared with the hereafter? There "are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Revelation 7:15-17. (*The Desire of Ages*, page 331.3)

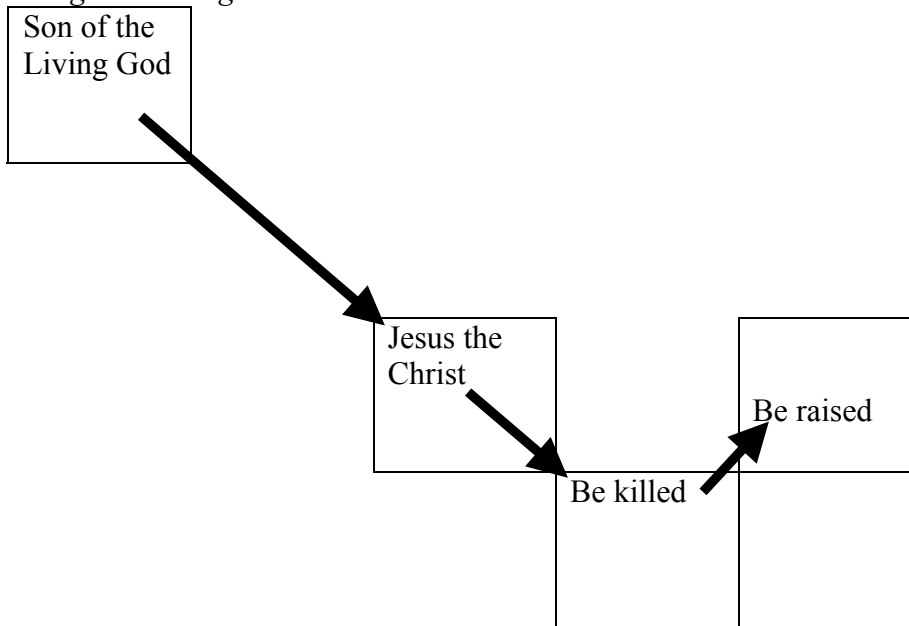
Connections

The verb translated "savourest" occurs only in the Gospels in this Matthew 16 story. It means to have the thoughts and feelings focused on something. Paul used this same verb repeatedly, including this observation. "They that are after the flesh **do mind** the things of the flesh, but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit." (Romans 8:5). The contrasting options that Jesus described, "of God" or "of men" are "of the Spirit" or "of the flesh." Jesus would later use this way of describing the struggle that Peter and the others were immersed in over these options. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak." (Matthew 26:41; compare John 3:6; 6:63). There are no other options.

A second time Paul used this verb he connected it to the universal gift of faith. "**Think** soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." It was this perspective of faith that Peter needed, that all need. This is wisdom. The word "soberly" translates a prepositional phrase using another form of the same verb. This literal translation captures that--"think so as to think wisely" (YLT). We know Peter eventually caught the principle, as he would write using this other form of the verb, "Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." (1 Peter 4:7). "Sober" in the biblical sense means the proper functioning of the mind. Peter would learn this soberness comes only by watching unto prayer. But how did he learn this lesson? The stories we are reviewing will reveal that.

A third time Paul used the verb from our passage, he gives the key to how we see things this way. "**Let this mind be** in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 2:5). He then summarized in the experience of Jesus how this mind functions, in the path of forgiveness, which we are diagramming. This mission of His was exactly what Jesus told Peter and the others, that caused Peter to reveal his mind in opposition.

Diagram adding Matthew 16:21:



We find in this second phase of the Matthew 16 story two more elements of the diagram mentioned above. Jesus had not only, in *giving* Himself for our *forgiveness* and salvation, humbled Himself to become a man, Jesus of Nazareth, He would further humble Himself--He would *give* His life. And that humbling would be followed by an exaltation. He would be raised. We will find another portion of the diagram in Story #5.

Reflections

Peter missed that the "raised" is contingent on the "killed"--that the "raised," the exaltation is the evidence of winning the great controversy and can only follow the humiliation, the "deny himself," "take up his cross," and "lose his life for my sake" which is itself the victory. The exaltation is not the victory, but the affirmation of the victory. **The *giving* manifested at the cross is the victory. Christ' resurrection and ascension only confirmed that.**

The "sake" of such *giving* is described elsewhere to show us the purpose or goal --

--It is described by Jesus as for--

- "righteousness' sake" (Matthew 5:10; for the sake of faith working by love);
- "my name's sake" (Matthew 19:29; for the sake of what My name stands for, My character of faith and love);
- "my sake and the gospel's" (Mark 8:35; the good news flows out of the principle of *giving*);
- "kingdom of God's sake" (Luke 18:29; God's universal kingdom is based on *giving*);

--It is described by Paul as for or by--

- "the hope of Israel" (Acts 28:20; God chose Abraham to bless the world through him by *giving* the Messiah with all He includes);
- "reason of the glory that excelleth" (2 Corinthians 3:10; the glory of New Covenant--the depth of its *giving*--far exceeds that of the Old Covenant)

The eternal principle of *giving* is the winning--the victory, faith working by love. (**Caution:** one can lose his life through a counterfeit giving; see 1 Corinthians 13:3.) The *giving* of self-denying love is the full path Jesus was on. The principle must never be abandoned. Who will "follow me"? Peter still wanted to "save his life," to "gain the whole world." And that's also what he wanted Jesus to do! But such taking is to "lose it." It is being on the wrong side, because it is the temporary principle--it had a beginning (John 8:44), and will come to an end. In the end that principle, and all identified with it, will be abased to oblivion.

Jesus came not "to save his life." When He was born a man, he was doomed to die. He came to "lose his life." Had He attempted to save it, He would have died, but He would have saved no one. He would have failed at His mission--to save His people from their sins to which they are attached by the:

1. shame of sin
2. guilt of sin
3. consequences of sin
4. love of sin

Forgiveness in its fullness is the releasing of each of these ties. Consider what Jesus had to do to release His people from each of these. He must embrace the first three in *giving* "His life," and repudiate the last one, also in *giving*, for the love of *giving* is hatred of sin. As we enter into His *giving* (His *forgiving*), our *giving* will be in His footsteps in each of these.

Not too many days later, Jesus' transfiguration and meeting with Moses and Elijah reaffirmed His divine identity. The sight and sound were special gifts to Peter, John, and James. But they missed part of the revelation. That is our next story.

Story #3: Matthew 17 (1): Peter's Drowsiness--Missing the Encouragement of Forgiveness

The Story

And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,

And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. (verses 1-3)

Question: What did Peter and the other two miss, and why? Luke's account explained:

Moses and Elias ... appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. (Luke 9:28-32)

Reflections

It was the topic of conversation between Jesus and His visitors from heaven--"his decease [death] which he should accomplish at Jerusalem"--that Peter and the other two missed. Their failure to watch and pray, and giving into sleep, kept them from hearing the vital encouragement these two glorified humans gave Jesus to go through with the ultimate act of *giving*. The three did awaken, but they had missed the key point of the encounter. When the brilliant cloud of the Father's presence came, with His voice repeating the words given at the Jordan River, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," the Father added the commanding plea, "Hear ye Him." On the core issues of Messiah's mission, the disciples were failing to hear Him. Their response to these words was to become "sore afraid." (Matthew 17:5, 6). The adverb "sore" describes an exceedingly large amount of fear. Their self-focus led them to be thus fearful.

Commentary

"Moses and Elijah had been colaborers with Christ. They had shared His longing for the salvation of men. Moses had pleaded for Israel: 'Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written.' Exodus 32:32. Elijah had known loneliness of spirit, as for three years and a half of famine he had borne the burden of the nation's hatred and its woe. Alone he had stood for God upon Mount Carmel. Alone he had fled to the desert in anguish and despair. These men, chosen above every angel around the throne, had come to commune with Jesus concerning the scenes of His suffering, and to comfort Him with the assurance of the sympathy of heaven. The hope of the world, the salvation of every human being, was the burden of their interview.

"Through being overcome with sleep, the disciples heard little of what passed between Christ and the heavenly messengers. Failing to watch and pray, they had not received that which God desired to give them,--a knowledge of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. They lost the blessing that might have been theirs through sharing His self-sacrifice. Slow of heart to believe were these disciples, little appreciative of the treasure with which Heaven sought to enrich them." (*The Desire of Ages*, pages 422.2-425.1)

Reflections

Their failure and sleepiness would be repeated not too many days in the future, keeping the same three still out of touch with Jesus' struggle to go through with the "decease"--the final gift of Himself--this time not on a mountain but in a garden--Gethsemane.

Right after the mountain experience Matthew records Jesus again telling them of His soon-coming betrayal, death, and resurrection. Their response was similar. "They were exceeding sorry." (Matthew

17: 22, 23). The adverb "exceeding" is the same as the "sore." Again the clash of visions must be highlighted. Jesus was moving further down the path of *giving* motivated by the "joy that was set before Him." (Hebrews 12:2). Failing to see the glory of *giving*, the disciples saw nothing but great sorrow in such a future. And this not only unfitted them for the great test toward which the events were moving. It also confused them on other lesser forms of *giving*, as Peter's next story shows.

Story #4: Matthew 17 (2): Peter's Boast--Retreating on the Enormity of Forgiveness

The Story

And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?

He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?

Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.

Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee. (verses 24-27)

Reflections

The tribute was for the support of the temple. The question put to Peter was designed to place Jesus on the horns of a dilemma. If Jesus were not to pay it, it would be used as evidence that He was disloyal to the temple. However, if He were to pay it, He would deny His divinity and prophetic role, as prophets were exempt, and for sure also was "the Son of the living God" whose house the temple was.

Peter's hasty response to the question was not a simple "yes" but an emphatic affirmation better translated "assuredly" or "indeed." Did he see the inconsistency with his earlier declaration that Jesus was "the Son of the living God"? Perhaps Peter was beginning to see the importance of *giving*, and of Jesus' embodiment of this principle, and the devil crafted the circumstance of *giving* the tribute to catch Peter into affirming a superficial act of giving that would actually testify against the enormous act of *giving* that Jesus' true identity indicated--that the incarnation of the Son of God witnessed to the amazing path of *giving* He had already embarked on, and was steadily treading to the ultimate act of *giving*.

Jesus purposely avoided conflict and controversy. He had no desire to "offend them." His mission of *giving* was to remove offenses. The word "offend" echoed what Peter had done in attempting to block Jesus' path to the cross. (The verb "offend" corresponds to the noun "offence"--both sources of our words "scandalize" and "scandal.") Jesus' simple but miraculous solution destroyed the dilemma, by *giving* what Peter's boast had foolishly promised, but in a way that affirmed that He was not just another human being. For the gift is measured not simply by its being given or by its size, but by the One *giving* it, and the manner in which it is given. The forces of taking can hijack the heavenly principle of *giving*, so it takes divine wisdom to *give* in a way consistent with the principle. Jesus would promise such divine aid--we would be guided "into all the truth." (John 16:13). Though we don't know what the truth of *giving* looks like, "the Spirit of the truth" for sure does. Was Peter learning to listen to that still small voice, as Jesus Himself did (John 3:34; see Isaiah 50:4, 5)?

Transition

A short while later, the issue of forgiveness came up again. It was revived by the question of "Who is the greatest?" (Matthew 18:1). Jesus addressed the disciples' converted status (18:3)--and tied it to humility. He began to talk about offenses (18:7), using the same word as in Matthew 16:23, whose verb form we just noted in this story. In heaven's view, the principle of *taking* is a scandal. It is a deadly serious matter. Jesus spoke of its consequences--about not entering the kingdom, about being drowned, about a woe being placed, about people living by that contrary principle being cast into everlasting hell fire. (Matthew 18:3-9). He pointedly warned, "Take heed." (18:10). He declared again His mission--"to save that which was lost." (18:11). In a brief parable (18:12, 13) He touched again on how far He has gone--how much He has *given*--to save those who would otherwise perish. He left, He went, He sought the one sheep that was lost, to *give* it back its place in the fold.

Jesus then addressed how to respond to the taking of sin, laying down clear guidelines to follow. (18:15-20). The divine order that *giving* produces does not excuse sin. One humbles self to address those who sin. Did not Jesus do this? And people are saved from sin, if they will. Again, this process produces a divine authority, based on the *giving* that heaven endorses, and Jesus affirms by His own presence. The disciples' need (their love of taking), and Jesus' solemn and far-reaching response (the godly order of *giving*) stirs something deep within Peter--something called conviction. So rather than the usual bold assertions, he is led to ask a question--and what a question! That is our next story.

Story #5: Matthew 18: Peter's Question--Learning More the Measure of Forgiveness

The Story

Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:

Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?

And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. (verses 21-35)

Commentary and Notes on Peter and the Preamble

Peter had come to Christ with the question, "How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" The rabbis limited the exercise of forgiveness to three offenses. Peter, carrying out, as he supposed, the teaching of Christ, thought to extend it to seven, the number signifying perfection. (*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 243.1)

Note: Jesus the King of heaven has come down and is engaged in "teaching" things Peter (and we) must learn and unlearn. Peter is a student of this Teacher, and he is going in the right direction. Under the influence of "the teaching of Christ" he realizes God's goal is for him to learn about the true extent of forgiveness.

But Christ taught that we are never to become weary of forgiving. Not "Until seven times," He said, "but, Until seventy times seven." (*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 243.1)

Note: The general question that flows through the entire controversy between good and evil is this--does the King require some level of behavior of His servants that He does not reach Himself? Would He direct us to forgive more than He does? Christ's brief answer to Peter before the parable is even begun shows the dimensions of forgiving the servants are to have. The "seventy times seven" indicates that "we are never to become weary of forgiving."¹

¹ This is expanded with the next use of "weary" in the commentary in *Christ's Object Lessons*, on page 249.

Then He showed the true ground upon which forgiveness is to be granted and the danger of cherishing an unforgiving spirit. (*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 243.2)

Notes

Lesson 1: "The True Ground": This foundation will be seen to be the King's forgiveness and all that such forgiveness includes. This is the nature of His character, perfectly blending justice and mercy.²

Lesson 2: "The Danger": This danger is that the King's servants allow justice to override mercy, resulting in refusing to give up the self-focus sin has brought to justice, which is manifest in "an unforgiving spirit" that could be expressed, "They owe **me** for what they have done, and **I** have plans to get what **I** am owed-- they will have to *give* what they owe."

How well did Peter, and do we, learn these lessons?

Parable: Read *Christ's Object Lessons*, Chapter 19, "The Measure of Forgiveness"

Reflections

The picture Jesus paints is of a king and his kingdom, comprised of servants and their families, and tormentors. The presence of tormentors shows clearly a setting of conflict, of the incurring of debts, and all that can flow from such injustices. It is a judgment parable, from the "take account" of verse 23 and "reckon" of verse 24 (same verb, used only in this parable and in that of the judgment parable in Matthew 25:19), to the "tormentors" of verse 34 (the only occurrence of this noun; the verb form occurs in Revelation 14:10 and 20:10, clearly end-time judgment pictures). The process Jesus outlines in the story is best seen in three parts. (After speaking of "the king" at the outset, Jesus refers to him as "lord" of the servant(s) the other seven times. Follow the table by rows.)

1: The Background: Everything rests on this, like a foundation. It is implied, mostly unseen, but fundamental. Can we discern the root of giving?	
<i>The king / lord</i>	<i>The servants</i>
The king operates on faith. He has <i>entrusted</i> his servants with his goods, and hopes and expects them to be <i>faithful</i> . When a debt occurs he carries it. He does not demand immediate payment. The king has a system of tracking what is owed. He is just. There is no haphazard accounting, or letting things slide. <i>But watch where things are headed to see his true character, what his motive and desire is in all this business.</i>	The servants have the ability to incur debts. There is no evidence they are even making payments on the debt.
2: The Accountability: The fundamental truth is that all will face all that they owe. The books will be opened. Can we see the brilliant light of giving in the clamor for payment?	
<i>The king / lord</i>	<i>The servants</i>
The time comes to "take account." There will be a day of reckoning, to balance the books <i>in real life</i> . But observe the full process.	The focus is on one servant that owed a debt that was enormous--10,000 talents were equal to 60,000,000 denarii, and one denarius was wage for one working day. Selling him along his entire family and assets would be the best that could be obtained. The servant does one thing right--he falls down and worships the king! <i>But in his stupidity it is only to ask for time to pay!</i>
Three verbs describe the response of the king to	The absence of any immediate response to the

² See page 245 in *Christ's Objects Lessons'* commentary for more on "the ground."

the situation containing the debt, and the proposal for time to pay. One describes being moved with deep-seated compassion (elsewhere in Matthew, used for Jesus' emotion--9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 20:34). The second describes releasing one from something he is bound to (used for "release" of Barabbas instead of Jesus later in Matthew 27:15-26; used in Luke 6:37 for "forgive, and ye shall be forgiven"). The third describes a similar letting one go from something he owes (used in Matthew 6:14 for "forgive"). Three verbs to cover the initiative of the king in *giving* the servant what he did not have enough sense to ask for, but just what he needed, three verbs that in essence mean the king said, *Not only have I carried your debt to this point--I'm willing to carry it forever. I will give to meet your need, to release you. That is what I am like.*

king by the servant to such a generous and compassionate move is indeed an ominous silence. He has been granted a free future. Could he not at least say "thank you"? Now is the time again to fall down and worship! He's been forgiven! *Does he value it?*

Many would stop the story of forgiveness here, saying that the king's forgiveness is literally "end of story." Such is a fatal delusion that fails to paint the full picture. Even if the servant had asked for forgiveness and shown appreciation upon receiving it, the story could not end there. While the king's *giving* forever settled the question of his unselfishness in face of any charges of selfishness, it didn't solve the problem in the hearts of those who harbor such charges, such world-views that incur debts. Again, the king is shown not to have the problem, but what of those who have the problem--who started the problem, partake of the problem, and refuse to repudiate it?³

³ The settled question about the king was addressed by Paul in Romans 3:1-4. But he also does not leave the story unfinished, for in verse 5-8, he carries the story to its necessary end, always a judgment scene.

3: The Goal: This is that toward which all the plans move. It is the destination that alone has a future. All other options are dead-ends. You pick your destination. Can we agree on the necessity of giving?

<i>The king / lord</i>	<i>The servants</i>	
<p>Can we probe the heart of the king at this point a bit? Could his yearning desire be that the servant truly receive the gift <i>given</i>, and be transformed by the <i>giving</i> itself? From knowing the end of the story, we can right here begin a lament, Oh that the servant had valued not just the gift but the giver, and the motive that drove the <i>giving</i>. The story could have ended so differently. How the needy servant has pampered his need, and despised the giver and his gift!</p>	<p>The focus zooms back out to include other servants, for no man is an island. The king's kingdom is a network, destined to operate as originally designed, on <i>giving</i>. But we encounter in this ungrateful servant a negative mirror of the shepherd in verses 12 & 13, and of the king in this parable (one and same Being).</p>	
	<i>The Need</i>	<i>The Negative</i>
	<p>Another servant owes the first servant a debt-- a hundred days' labor, but a pittance of what the first one owed the king--1/600,000th.</p>	<p>Like the shepherd the first servant goes out to find, <i>but unlike the shepherd, not to give!</i></p>
	<p>The compassion of the king should find a welcome place in his heart. The gentle hands of the shepherd should be his hands.</p>	<p>But his hands are laid on the debtor, even around his neck--the verb is that of strangling, <i>the taking of life!</i></p>
	<p>The small debtor echoes the very words of the first servant's entreaty for patience, that stirred the king's heart to <i>give</i> what was not even requested.</p>	<p>The fatal four words are recorded, "and he would not"--his choice is made, <i>not to give, but to take</i>. He insists on payment.</p>
	<p>There are other servants in this kingdom, witnesses to all that transpired. And their response to this ungrateful servant's unwillingness to <i>give</i> is described in the identical words of the disciples' response to Jesus' plan to <i>give</i> in the previous chapter--"they were very sorry"--exceedingly so. May our joy and sorrow be over that which similarly moves the heart of God and His kingdom, and not the opposite!</p>	

So the king gets a report of how the servant to whom he had given the enormous gift of forgiveness had used his freedom--to *incarcerate his fellow debtor*. Though the story started with "take account" and "reckon," now the time comes for final accounting and reckoning. The king calls the servant, and carries out the 3 phases of judgment that we can first see in Genesis 3:

1. *Review of history*: He plainly says, "I forgave thee all that debt." His action was undisputable. He even says his forgiveness was "because" the servant desired it. While the servant is on record as simply asking for patience to pay, the king imputes to him a better and more reasonable desire. The king said he "had pity" on the servant.
2. *Verdict and sentence*: In summary, what had the servant done with the gift given? What the king had desired, which is how his kingdom operates, was for the servant to pass on the gift, to "have compassion" on his fellow servant "even as" the king "had pity" on him (same verb). *We are simply to give what we have been given*. But the "would not" is accepted as his final choice. Such lifestyles, self-destroying as well as others-destroying, stirs the king's other-centered wrath.
3. *Execution*: The king "delivered" the servant to the system he had chosen and had refused to relinquish. The rejection of the king's system of grace leaves one with the debt/payment system.⁴ There are no other options. One leads to joy and life, the other to torment and death.

There is no hint of repentance on the servant's part, which shows he continues to the end on the same ungrateful, self-centered path--shown at the first in incurring the enormous debt, continued by no sign of thankfulness upon being forgiven, and sealed by his unrelenting, unforgiving treatment of his fellow debtor.

The "he would not" will be echoed in another judgment setting. In one sense Jesus' first coming was to make a final appeal to Israel.⁵ "How often" He wanted to *give* her protection from the coming storm, as, in His own words, "a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings." But His lament will be, "*ye would not!*"⁶

The end is clearly what Jesus elsewhere explained, "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." (Matthew 7:2). Based on explicit evidence elsewhere, the king's measure is faith (Romans 12:3), which he has *given* to all in treating them in faith. Faith working by love (Galatians 5:6) is the grace system. The servant insisted on another measure, and the king "delivered" him (gave him up) to that choice. (Jesus used the verb "delivered" repeatedly to describe how He would go to His death; see Matthew 17:22; 20:18, 19; 26:2, 21, 45. Paul used it also to describe the final judgment on Jesus; see Romans 4:25; 8:32; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 5:2. Paul also used it for the final judgment on unrepentant sinners; see Romans 1:24, 26, 28.)

Jesus wraps up the picture with an explicit application of the "king" or "lord" to "my heavenly Father," and of the "debt" to the "trespasses" others owed His disciples. His answer to Peter is in the plural, reinforced by the "every one." In this application He uses the same verb "forgive" that Peter had

⁴ Grace does not eliminate the payment. It just makes the payment itself. It *gives* for that--*forgives*. (See Romans 4:4.)

⁵ See Daniel 9:24-27. Note especially the spectrum of forgiveness language in verse 24: "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity."

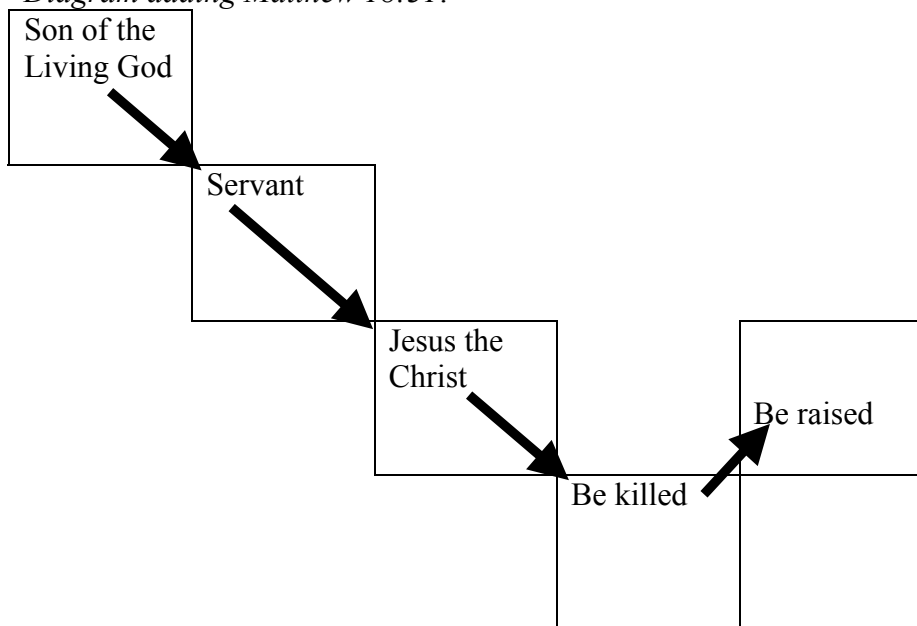
⁶ Matthew 23:37. "How often" is the same adverb Peter used in his question about forgiveness, and the only other use of it in the New Testament! For "70 weeks" ("seventy times seven"; Daniel 9:24; Matthew 18:22) Jesus "would" have "gathered" the "holy city" of Jerusalem and her "people" or "children" into the reality of forgiveness--finish, end, cover the *taking* that necessitates *forgiving*. Like the lord in the parable, Jesus "would" *give* but the recipients of His giving "would not" reciprocate. This verb denoting purpose and even delight that Jesus used twice in His judgment on Jerusalem is the same He used to describe the servant's refusal to enter the atonement by joining his lord in *giving*.

used in his question, and that in the story the lord used twice to describe his action to the ungrateful servant. And the quality of forgiveness is clear--"from your hearts." We must not miss the "from" and "to" of this story. What is expected of us, *from* us, is *only* what our heavenly Father Himself has given *to* us. *From His heart through the gift of His Son He has forgiven every one their trespasses.* For we must see behind this story the gift *given* on Calvary, condemning sin in the flesh while *forgiving* the sinner. That is indeed the good news, expressed through the ultimate act of *giving*, but unfortunately not the end of the story. Can we see better the imperative the gift lays on every recipient?

And this interaction was not the end of Peter's story either. Shortly after this Jesus and His disciples left Galilee to head toward Jerusalem, toward what He had from Matthew 16 been telling them He must *give*, forgiveness in its full measure. On the way, Peter's next lesson unfolded.

But before we go there, and leave the lesson of the king and his servants, let's take the use of the term "fellow servant" (used 4 times in this story) and fill in one other position of the diagram we introduced first in Story #1 (from Philippians 2), and developed more in Story #2, a diagram outlining the dynamic of forgiveness. The plural "fellow servants" in 18:31 here, who were "very sorry" at the refusal of the one servant to *give* as he was given, indicates, as noted, that there are others in this kingdom as witnesses to the core principle. The last uses of this noun occur in Revelation 19:10 and 22:9, where the angel first mentioned in Revelation 1:1 as Jesus' agent to bring the visions of Revelation to John, twice told John not to worship him, but God. As we saw, the one thing the ungrateful servant in this story did right was to fall down and worship the king, clearly a symbol of God (18:26). Jesus repeatedly in the gospel is recorded as receiving worship (see for example, Matthew 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 20:20; 28:9,17). However, in His humility, Jesus did not first take upon Himself the form of a man (seen in the diagram from Story #1). A careful study of "angel of the Lord," "archangel," and "Michael" will reveal that before *giving* Himself to become a human, the "Son of the living God" had taken "the form of a servant" (Philippians 2:7), an allusion to becoming an angel to the angels, as Michael the archangel, one who did, even in His humility, receive worship that no created being should receive. (See Exodus 3:2-6; Numbers 22:22-38; Joshua 5:13-15; Jude 9; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; John 5:28, 29.) It is Michael and His "fellow servant" angels who in their humble service are victorious against "the dragon ... and his angels" (Revelation 12:7, 8), those rebellious, heavenly beings, bent on self-exaltation and taking (Revelation 12:9; John 8:44; Isaiah 14:12-17).

Diagram adding Matthew 18:31:



The final elements of this diagram we will address in the Conclusion, from Peter's first epistle where he wrote that Jesus was "raised" and given "glory."

Story #6: Matthew 19: Peter's Claim--Revealing the Motive Opposite of Forgiveness

The Story

And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said,
Thou shalt do no murder,
Thou shalt not commit adultery,
Thou shalt not steal,
Thou shalt not bear false witness,
Honour thy father and thy mother: and,
Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.

But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?

But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?

And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first. (verses 16-30)

Reflections

This story illustrates the vital nature of *giving* in many respects. Let's consider the following:

1. Do to Have

The rich young man (Luke also called him a "ruler"; Luke 18:18) did not realize he was asking a question regarding *giving*. His query was a generic "do" motivated by the desire to "have." His goal was getting something--"eternal life."

2. Love Thy Neighbor

Jesus made it clear that the quality and dimensions of what he must "do" had been described in the law, quoting five of the ten commandments, and then the statement that summarized the other-centered principle of self-*giving* love, "love thy neighbor as thyself."

Consider the thread of this command in the gospels. It occurs only three times, this story, once before at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, and once more to come in His last week in Jerusalem. In His sermon on the mount He had dwelt at length on this saying, showing both the common

misconception that this love was limited only to non-enemies, and the true extent of how much it really encompassed--give as "your Father which is in heaven" gives. His answer to a lawyer later addressed what the greatest commandment was, to love God with all the heart, soul, and mind, and added this second similar commandment, to love one's neighbor as self. These two commands summarize and prioritize the targets of self-giving love, the core principle of God's character and of all He has made, in its original design.

3. Something Lacking

The young man felt he had measured up with these standards, not realizing their core of unselfishness. So he sensed something was still lacking, and asked Jesus what it was.

4. The Perfection of Unselfish Giving

Jesus unfolded to him dimensions of *giving* that revealed his selfishness. Jesus' counsel appeared to focus on material goods, but that was only because those were the young man's idols. Perhaps it is significant that Jesus did not quote any of the first four commandments, or their summary in the greatest commandment, as this young man clearly had been holding possessions above God. He did not love God with all his heart, soul, and mind. The heavenly treasure that comes only with *giving* was what he lacked. Only with that dynamic could he follow Jesus. Only by embracing that which is the root of forgiveness could he be "perfect."

This is the only other time in the gospels this adjective is used outside of the sermon on the mount.

The lesson is clear--the image of God is seen in other-centered love that *gives*. That is the motivation. The result is being as the Father, being perfect, having eternal treasure, entering the kingdom of heaven. But we must not warp this result into sanctioning a self-focused motivation that would legitimize our inborn selfishness. For the goal is a disinterested, a selfless *giving*. The motivation is also the result. That is the essential spirit of heaven, the dynamic of eternal life--the place (heaven) and time (eternity) of *giving* as the Father gives. Without that, heaven and eternal life are simply selfish goals.

5. Sorrowing of Selfishness

The young man made a decision similar to the first servant in the parable in the last story. *He would not*. So he left sorrowing at the requirement. Every use of the verb "to be sorry" in the gospels demonstrates our theme. While this sorrowing is always connected with selfishness, at times it flows through an unselfish heart due to the selfishness of others. Observe carefully these other occurrences--

(1) Herod "was sorry" he had trapped himself into *taking* the life of John the Baptist to *give* unwisely in an absurd oath. (Matthew 14:9)

(2) The disciples, as noted in Story #3, "were exceeding sorry" that Jesus said His *giving* would include His life. (Matthew 17:23)

(3) The fellow-servants in the parable we examined in Story #4 "were very sorry" the first servant refused to *give* as his lord had *given* him. (Matthew 18:31; also same adverb as Matthew 17:23)

(4) The disciples "were exceeding sorrowful" that one of them would *give* Jesus to His enemies, so they could *take* His life. (Matthew 26:22; also same adverb as Matthew 17:23)

(5) Jesus predicted the disciples would "be sorrowful" when they encountered Jesus' ultimate act of *giving* His life, but their sorrow would "be turned into joy" with His resurrection enabling Him to reorient them to understand the joy in *giving*. (John 16:20)

(6) Jesus Himself "began to be sorrowful" when in Gethsemane He started to enter into the ultimate reality of *giving* Himself as man's substitute, and the Father began *giving* up His Son to the consequences of the *taking* of sin. (Matthew 26:37)

(7) There was one more occurrence of this verb, but this was specific to Peter, and we will reserve it for our final chapter in his ongoing story with Jesus.

6. A Rich Man's Difficulty

The path Jesus was on was an opposite path to someone who was rich through the spirit of *getting* and *keeping*. He felt constrained to comment to His disciples about how difficult it was for a rich person to change paths.

7. Amazed Selfishness

Did the disciples realize how much they needed this change? No, for they were "exceedingly amazed"--still out of touch with the core issue of *giving*, leading to the superlative adverb we have already seen three times in our tracing the heart of forgiveness--all three occurrences showing negative states indicating a self-focus of fear or sorrow (Matthew 17:6, 23; 18:31).

Again we must emphasize, what is the motivation, and what is the result? Can we see how these are integrally the same? Luke's account of the sermon on the mount shows Jesus stating it succinctly, "Give, and it shall be given unto you." (Luke 6:38). To a selfish heart this command and promise appears to be saying, "The way to get is to give a little." The legalist sees the doing as something possible for him, to enter the nirvana of getting. But if we have perceived correctly this principle that Jesus was both speaking and living, the *giving* is a way of life, that moves with God's circuit of beneficence. When one truly *gives* unselfishly, what is given to him in response *only enables him to give more*. Is that not what eternal life is all about--the ceaseless joy of infinite resources and ways of *giving* as God Himself does? And how important is this realization? Could it be as fundamental as understanding the difference between the two principles contending for supremacy in the conflict between good and evil, between finding your life and losing it?

8. Impossibility of Unselfishness

The disciples' self-focused amazement was revealed immediately in the hopelessness that comes with all such contaminated motivation. "Who then can be saved?" Jesus' response was not a simple though profound retort. He apparently turned and looked intently at these struggling men in the throes of the great controversy, and spoke the key faith statement for sinners. Salvation seen in the light of *giving* is indeed an impossibility for sinful men. That is why God had to *give* for sin. That is the very reason Jesus was there with them, headed to Jerusalem and the cross. With Him alone is it possible to be saved from selfishness and its consequences.

9. Peter's Claim and Motive

Apparently missing the human impossibility of what Jesus had just stated as the motivation and result, Peter then made a bold claim, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee." In the quickness of self to compare itself with others, Peter seemed to feel confident they had done what the young ruler failed to do. But he added a question about outcome, literally, "what therefore shall be to us?" If one does not truly grasp the motivation of unselfish *giving*, and also mistakenly sees the motivation as something different from the result, such a simple question will inevitably be selfish. Peter's question was but an echo of Satan's question about Job, "Does Job fear God for nought?" (Job 1:9). Peter's focus on the past was not an acknowledgement, "You have given us so much, which we are learning to give to others." No, he highlighted what they had done. Nor was Peter's future focus a forward-looking request, "Please give us more so we can give more." The lesson on *forgiving* must continue.

10. Following and Forsaking

Jesus' response focused on following Him. He did not address whether the disciples had indeed forsaken all. Their failure to *give* all would be seen shortly in their inability to continue to follow Him. Where He was steadfastly headed, they would refuse to follow. The words in Peter's claim would be rearranged into the sad order of self-interest. They would all forsake Him, and flee. It all turns on the object of forsaking, an action word that is translated "forgive" about one third of its occurrences. If one indeed forsakes all, and follows Jesus, he forgives all, because he leaves behind, and lets go of all those things that others owe him. But if he holds onto what he must receive, he inevitably lets Jesus go. He cannot follow both. Either Jesus has *given* all I need, or I must try to get it myself, working to get others to pay me what they owe, or like Eve, grasping

for what I am deceived into thinking Jesus Himself is withholding from me. With such self interest I must at least protect myself from further loss, withdrawing my faith in others in the fear of what they can take.

11. Rewards of Unselfishness

So Jesus' future-looking statements, what we think of as promises, are all contingent on truly following Him. We cannot follow without denying self. And that denial is not simply a door to the journey. It is the journey itself. Somewhere down that road we can sit on thrones judging with no self-interest. We can receive an hundredfold and not use the assets for self, for we have learned to receive only to *give*. We can inherit everlasting life and not perpetuate the heart of sin--a failure to continue *giving* throughout eternity. The first in taking will be last then, and the last, first in that land of *giving*.

Illustration

The self-interest of the disciples in following Jesus is also illustrated in the experience of the nobleman seeking Jesus in John 4:46-48. In the battle between faith and unbelief, making faith (either beginning or continuing) conditional on getting, especially on that which comes from supernatural phenomena, strengthens unbelief and makes it very likely that what faith we do have will fail when we do not receive what we are expecting. The disciples had believed in Jesus as the Messiah, while the nobleman was withholding that faith until he received a desired miracle. But the self-focus of the disciples was leading them down a path also riddled with unbelief. Both the disciples and the nobleman were, in their own ways, conditioning their faith on self *receiving* instead of on Christ *giving*. The simplicity of faith actually rests upon the evidences of God's *giving* revealed in His word. In contrast to the major struggle of these Jews was the response of the Samaritans earlier in John 4, when "many more believed because of His own word." (John 4:41). There was no need for "signs and wonders" (John 4:48), for asking what they would get out of their relationship with Jesus.

Commentary

The Saviour contrasted this questioning unbelief [of the nobleman] with the simple faith of the Samaritans, who asked for no miracle or sign. His word, the ever-present evidence of His divinity, had a convincing power that reached their hearts. Christ was pained that His own people, to whom the Sacred Oracles had been committed, should fail to hear the voice of God speaking to them in His Son. (*The Desire of Ages*, page 198.2)

He who blessed the nobleman at Capernaum is just as desirous of blessing us. But like the afflicted father, we are often led to seek Jesus by the desire for some earthly good; and upon the granting of our request we rest our confidence in His love. The Saviour longs to give us a greater blessing than we ask; and He delays the answer to our request that He may show us the evil of our own hearts, and our deep need of His grace. He desires us to renounce the selfishness that leads us to seek Him. Confessing our helplessness and bitter need, we are to trust ourselves wholly to His love. (*The Desire of Ages*, page 200.3)

Transition

Peter's self-interest would peak in a series of rapid-fire events within days of their arrival in Jerusalem. Peter would defend self in a path that parted sharply from the road Jesus took. Our next three stories, all in Matthew 26, will detail the crisis. And Jesus' consistent unselfishness, even in confronting Peter's selfishness, will illustrate on the one-to-one level in a brilliantly clear way that Jesus had forsaken all to follow His Father. This alone enabled Him to *forgive* sinners--to let their sins go in forsaking the need for any to pay that price, as He Himself paid it in full. Again, Jesus would illustrate this most clearly with Peter.

Story #7: Matthew 26 (1): Peter's Blindness--Needing the Persistence of Forgiveness

The Story

Then saith Jesus unto them, **All ye shall be offended** because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.

But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.

Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.

Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

Peter said unto him [per Mark 14:31 "the more vehemently,"], Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples. (verses 31-35)

Commentary with Notes

After the hymn [following the Lord's Supper], they went out. Through the crowded streets they made their way, passing out of the city gate toward the Mount of Olives. Slowly they proceeded, each busy with his own thoughts. As they began to descend toward the mount, Jesus said, in a tone of deepest sadness, "**All ye shall be offended** because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad." Matthew 26:31. The disciples listened in sorrow and amazement. They remembered how in the synagogue at Capernaum, when Christ spoke of Himself as the bread of life, many had been offended, and had turned away from Him. But the twelve had not shown themselves unfaithful. Peter, speaking for his brethren, had then declared his loyalty to Christ. Then the Saviour had said, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" John 6:70. In the upper chamber Jesus said that one of the twelve would betray Him, and that Peter would deny Him. But now His words include them all.

Now Peter's voice is heard vehemently protesting, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." In the upper chamber he had declared, "I will lay down my life for Thy sake." Jesus had warned him that he would that very night deny his Saviour. Now Christ repeats the warning: "Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice." But Peter only "spake the more vehemently, If I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee in anywise. Likewise also said they all." Mark 14:29, 30, 31. In their **self-confidence** they **denied** the repeated statement of Him **who knew**. They were unprepared for the test; when temptation should overtake them, they would understand their **own weakness**. (*The Desire of Ages*, page 673.1&2)

Note: In Story #2 we encountered the offence Peter's selfishness was to Jesus. Here Jesus stated, using the verb form of the same word, that His unselfishness would offend them all. Peter's rejection of Jesus' warning showed he had not entered into the repentance that should have flowed from that earlier rebuke. Defending self prevents the denial of self that includes an ever-deepening repentance. But Jesus embraced that denial and that repentance, on behalf, as the principle always does, of others. Observe the contrast, and the length to which Jesus' *giving* will go, as He walks the path ever closer to the ultimate act of *giving*.

When Peter said he would follow his Lord to prison and to death, he meant it, every word of it; but he did **not know himself**. Hidden in his heart were elements of evil that circumstances would fan into life. Unless he was made conscious of his danger, these would prove his eternal ruin. The Saviour saw in him a **self-love and assurance** that would **overbear even his love for Christ**. Much of infirmity, of **unmortified sin**, carelessness of spirit, unsanctified temper, heedlessness in entering into temptation, had been revealed in his experience. Christ's solemn warning was a call to heart searching. Peter needed to **distrust himself**, and to have a **deeper faith in Christ**. Had he in humility received the warning, he would have appealed to the Shepherd of the flock to keep His sheep. When on the Sea of Galilee he was about to sink, he cried, "Lord, save me." Matthew 14:30. Then the hand of Christ was outstretched to

grasp his hand. So now if he had cried to Jesus, Save me from **myself**, he would have been kept. But Peter **felt that he was distrusted**, and he **thought it cruel**. He was **already offended**, and he became **more persistent in his self-confidence**. (*The Desire of Ages*, page 673.3)

Note: Sincerity and deception can co-exist in selfish sinners who have begun a walk with Jesus! Self-love battles with love for Jesus. But observe what the self focus of this "self-love" and "self-confidence" does--the tender warning is rejected, the diagnosis denied, the faith of Jesus which motivated the confrontation is accounted "distrust," while distrust of self and "deeper faith in Christ" are both lost, for there is no need perceived for such. The prediction is immediately fulfilled--the caution of a pending offence proves itself correct in the faithless response of offended self! But Jesus' faith does not fail. We should here note that while the faith of Jesus sees the best potential of another, it does not ignore or fail to warn about what will be in lost potential, based on that one's unbelief. Having done that, Jesus' faith perseveres in still projecting a way out of the consequences of that unbelief. Let's observe where that faith goes in *giving*.

Jesus looks with **compassion** on His disciples. He cannot save them from the trial, but He does **not leave them comfortless**. He **assures** them that He is to break the fetters of the tomb, and that **His love for them will not fail**. "After I am risen again," He says, "**I will go before you** into Galilee." Matthew 26:32. **Before the denial, they have the assurance of forgiveness. After His death and resurrection, they knew that they were forgiven**, and were dear to the heart of Christ. (*The Desire of Ages*, page 674.1)

Note: From this story we must see how the faith of Jesus, humbled in the midst of the painful reality of our unbelief, comes across as "distrust" because our self-focused unbelief sees not the "I will go before you," but rather only the "thou shalt deny me." But the out-workings of our unbelief are not expressions of His faith. His warnings regarding our faithlessness are an essential dimension of His faith, and thus are not cruel expressions of distrust, because the faith of Jesus must be set in the midst of unbelief for it to be seen for what it is in its fullness. Jesus in essence is saying, "I will not give up on you even though you will give up on me. I will keep *giving* for you when you pull back on *giving* for Me." Our unbelief denies the possibility of our failure, when our trembling faith should instead exclaim in amazement, "You won't give up on us? You would give that much? Is your forgiveness without measure?" We must not warp this *forgiveness* into a spiritualistic "God does not condemn." For what is the cost of God's condemning our denial while justifying us--of condemning our sin while justifying us sinners? He bears the full weight, the full cost, of that denial. He does not ask that we pay for it; He does. Only the cross measures such unbelief and such faith fully.

But note carefully that this commentary takes verses 31 (673.1) and 32 (674.1) and wraps verses 33-35 (673.2&3) within them! Note further the great significance of the time prepositions and the verb tenses used, as highlighted in this table:

BEFORE	the denial,	they have	the assurance of forgiveness .
AFTER	His death and resurrection,	they knew	that they were forgiven , and were dear to the heart of Christ.

Jesus' look of compassion, assurance, love and forgiveness would be used again a few hours later, focused fully on Peter.

Reflections: Their later faith experience did not create the reality of Jesus' forgiveness. The reality, through the faith of Jesus, existed in the midst of their unbelief. The verb is clear, and the present tense is used to emphasize the present reality. Buried in their faithlessness, they "have" it, though the blindness of unbelief saw no need for it, and denied any future need. Nevertheless, the "have" preceded the "knew." They "have" the reality before they "knew" it. They had the gift by virtue of His *giving*, His *forgiving*. They would know it--that is, they would enter more fully into the experience of it--only when the scales fell from their unbelieving eyes by:

- (1) their own selfish *taking* being revealed, each taking self away from Jesus and running when they "forsook Him, and fled" (Matthew 26:56),
- (2) their selfish plans of earthly greatness being destroyed by His cross, and
- (3) their unselfish plans finally beginning to be constructed on a firm foundation by His resurrection and what followed. But we are not yet at those points in the story. We are still "before the denial." And another story of Peter comes before that.

Luke's Addition to the Story: Luke recorded an amazing gift Jesus gave Peter just before Jesus' prediction of the triple denial and Peter's pledge of loyalty till death.

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. (22:31, 32)

This warning wrapped in a declaration of personal intercession and future duties gives a wonderful window into the faith of Jesus that lies behind our faltering faith. Can we see better how justification (forgiveness in all its dimensions) is *by faith*, the "faith of Jesus"? (See Galatians 2:16, a declaration of Paul in another story involving Peter.)

Story #8: Matthew 26 (2): Peter's Defense--Blocking the Path of Forgiveness

The Story: Compare our Matthew passage with John 18:

Matthew 26	John 18
And Jesus said unto him [Judas], Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.	
And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear.	Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.
Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.	Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?
Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?	
But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?	
In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me.	
But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.	Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him.
(verses 50-56)	(verses 10-12)

Reflections

The verb "took" in John 18:12 is from same root as the verb of "took" in Matthew 16:22 in Story #2. Both Peter earlier and these Jews now "took" Jesus, one to prevent the cross, the others to hasten it. Neither saw "the cup" as something desirable--to drink what the Father "hath given." Peter had failed to see how such *giving* was compatible with "the Son of the living God." The Jews actually wanted Jesus to drink it, thinking in a similar vein that such would prove He was not that Son.

But Jesus desired the cup, because it was the outworking of His divine identity and character, of the plan from eternity to meet the need of the *taking* of sin. Here we should see better the root of forgiveness. It involves *giving*. The "hath given" of the Father here is the same verb "gave" in John 3:16. Ponder what the Father gave! On earth Jesus continually faced the choice to embrace that identity--an only-begotten Son *given*. Such was His walk of faith, *given* by the Father, *given* to men, nothing for self. "The cup" was a metaphor of something that was His destiny, but something that was not inevitable. He had to take it willingly into His being. Love is always voluntary. And His rhetorical question here to Peter indicated that He was willing. But Jesus' drinking what was given would involve Him in a depth of *giving* hitherto unseen by the universe. His experience over the next few hours would demonstrate the massive struggle over the cup. His faith and love would triumph in the conflict with self, and His Father's will and the needs of sinners would win. Self would be sacrificed. But how would Peter come to see such a cup as something desirable, something to embrace? If Peter could but see that, he would actually encourage Jesus in His choice, and would also accept his own unselfish identity and destiny. Without seeing that, Peter would only inevitably draw back from the demand on him to *give*.

Peter's drawing the sword was clearly not just to cut off an ear or any other small appendage. He was willing and ready to *take* life. But that path has no future. Those who do it "shall perish with the sword," for no such implement of war has a future in the eternity of *giving*. In Story #7 Peter had boldly affirmed he was willing to "die with" Jesus--to *give* his life. But here we see that Peter's *giving* was really a form of *taking*. At that point he was willing to *give* only in the act of *taking*. And so his plan to go "with" Jesus would also prove an impossibility. He with the other 10 "forsook Him, and fled" in yet another demonstration of self-preservation, of their inability to continue to *give* as Jesus was *giving*.

Story #9: Matthew 26 (3): Peter's Denial--Experiencing the Look of Forgiveness

The Story: Compare our Matthew passage with Luke 22.

Matthew 26	Luke 22
Now Peter sat without in the palace:	And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them.
and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee.	But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him.
But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.	And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not.
And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth.	And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them.
And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man.	And Peter said, Man, I am not.
And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee.	And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaean.
Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew.	And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.
And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.	And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.
And he went out, and wept bitterly.	And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.
(verses 69-75)	(verses 55-62)

Ponder: What was in the look of the Lord?

Commentary

While the **degrading oaths were fresh upon Peter's lips**, and the shrill crowing of the cock was still ringing in his ears, the Saviour turned from the frowning judges, and **looked full upon His poor disciple**. At the same time Peter's eyes were drawn to his Master. In that **gentle countenance** he read **deep pity** and **sorrow**, but there was **no anger** there.

The sight of that pale, suffering face, those quivering lips, that look of **compassion** and **forgiveness**, pierced his heart like an arrow. **Conscience was aroused**. **Memory** was active. Peter **called to mind** his promise of a few short hours before that he would go with his Lord to prison and to death. He **remembered** his grief when the Saviour told him in the upper chamber that he would deny his Lord thrice that same night. Peter had just declared that he knew not Jesus, but he now **realized with bitter grief** how well his Lord knew him, and how accurately He had read his heart, the falseness of which was unknown even to himself.

A tide of **memories** rushed over him. The Saviour's **tender mercy**, His **kindness** and **long-suffering**, His **gentleness** and **patience** toward His erring disciples,--all was remembered. He recalled the caution, "Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Luke 22:31, 32. He **reflected** with horror upon **his own**

ingratitude, his falsehood, his perjury. Once more he looked at his Master, and saw a sacrilegious hand raised to smite Him in the face. Unable longer to endure the scene, he rushed, **heartbroken**, from the hall.

He pressed on in solitude and darkness, he knew not and cared not whither. At last he found himself in Gethsemane. The scene of a few hours before came **vividly to his mind**. The suffering face of his Lord, stained with bloody sweat and convulsed with anguish, rose before him. He **remembered** with bitter remorse that Jesus had wept and agonized in prayer alone, while those who should have united with Him in that trying hour were sleeping. He **remembered** His solemn charge, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Matthew 26:41. He **witnessed again** the scene in the judgment hall. It was **torture to his bleeding heart** to know that he had added the **heaviest burden** to the Saviour's humiliation and grief. On the very spot where Jesus had poured out His soul in agony to His Father, Peter **fell upon his face**, and wished that he might die.

It was in sleeping when Jesus bade him **watch and pray** that Peter had prepared the way for his great sin. All the disciples, by sleeping in that critical hour, sustained a great loss. Christ knew the fiery ordeal through which they were to pass. He knew how Satan would work to **paralyze their senses** that they might be unready for the trial. Therefore it was that He gave them warning. Had those hours in the garden been spent in watching and prayer, Peter would not have been left to **depend upon his own feeble strength**. He would not have denied his Lord. Had the disciples watched with Christ in His agony, they would have been **prepared to behold** His suffering upon the cross. They would have **understood in some degree** the nature of His overpowering anguish. They would have been **able to recall His words** that foretold His sufferings, His death, and His resurrection. Amid the gloom of the most trying hour, some rays of **hope** would have **lighted up the darkness** and **sustained their faith**. (*The Desire of Ages*, pages 712.4 to 713.4)

Ponder: How vital to life is such a look that Jesus gave Peter?

Commentary

When in the judgment hall the words of denial had been spoken; when Peter's love and loyalty, **awakened** under the Saviour's **glance of pity and love and sorrow**, had sent him forth to the garden where Christ had wept and prayed; when his tears of remorse dropped upon the sod that had been moistened with the blood drops of His agony--then the **Saviour's words**, "I have prayed for thee: . . . when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren," were a **stay to his soul**. Christ, though **foreseeing his sin**, had **not abandoned** him to despair.

If the look that Jesus cast upon him had spoken condemnation instead of pity; if in foretelling the sin He had **failed of speaking hope**, how dense would have been the darkness that encompassed Peter! how reckless the despair of that tortured soul! In that hour of anguish and self-abhorrence, **what could have held him back from the path trodden by Judas?**

He who could not spare His disciple the anguish, left him not alone to its bitterness. His is a **love that fails not nor forsakes**.

Human beings, themselves given to evil, are prone to deal untenderly with the tempted and the erring. They cannot read the heart, they know not its struggle and pain. Of the **rebuke** that is **love**, of the **blow** that wounds to **heal**, of the **warning** that speaks **hope**, they have **need to learn**. (*Education*, pages 89.1 to 90.2)

Note: Jesus' look contained forgiveness. As in Story #7 we saw there was forgiveness before the sin of denial, so here we see forgiveness before memory, grief, and heart brokenness came. Story #5 showed forgiveness is not retained unless it is passed on, unless God's *giving* is valued enough to transform us so we *give* for the sins of others against us. So this story adds further evidence that the very ground of our ability to respond in the contrition and confession that marks a heart made tender,

is the initiative He takes in extending to us, before we even ask, those *gifts* that accompany forgiveness--pity, sorrow, compassion--all expressions of His "love which fails not nor forsakes."

Commentary

In his early discipleship Peter thought himself strong. Like the Pharisee, in his own estimation he was "**not as other men are.**" When Christ on the eve of His betrayal forewarned His disciples, "All ye shall be offended because of Me this night," Peter confidently declared, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." Mark 14:27, 29. Peter did not know his own danger. **Self-confidence misled** him. He thought himself able to withstand temptation; but in a few short hours the test came, and with cursing and swearing he **denied his Lord.**

When the crowing of the cock reminded him of the words of Christ, surprised and shocked at what he had just done he turned and looked at his Master. At that moment Christ looked at Peter, and beneath that **grieved look**, in which **compassion** and **love** for him were blended, Peter **understood himself.** He went out and wept bitterly. That look of Christ's **broke his heart.** Peter had come to **the turning point**, and bitterly did he **repent** his sin. He was like the publican in his contrition and repentance, and like the publican he **found mercy.** The **look of Christ assured** him of **pardon.**

Now **his self-confidence** was **gone.** Never again were the old boastful assertions repeated. (*Christ's Object Lessons*, pages 152.2 to 154.1)

Reflections

The clear conclusion is that God must *give* before we can *give*, that the heart change manifested in the spectrum from contrition and repentance, through confession, to forgiving others, comes only as a result of God's heart expression to us of a "love [that] covereth all sins." (Proverbs 10:12). The implications are even more fundamental than a needed change. The impact begins on our very existence. Before we as sinners can live, and in order to continue living, God must *forgive*. To have any hope of avoiding the condemnation that is to death, we must be recipients of the "justification of life." And we have received. In fact "all men" have. (Romans 5:18). Perhaps we need to face the reality that people are dying for lack of knowing this, for encountering from us the looks that speak condemnation instead of *forgiveness*. Do we see the implications of falsely believing God imparts no dimension of *forgiveness* until we change? This leads us so easily to feel justified in withholding our *forgiveness* until those who have wronged us have gone through their necessary change, to whatever degree our wounded selves would demand. So how can we *give* what we ourselves refuse to believe we have received? Would we not want rather to be used by God to nurture life by the *giving* of self, by *forgiving*, even as He has?

How well did Peter learn the lessons we've been tracing? We will consider detailed answers to that question in our concluding section, after our next story. But for now, consider a few key observations. In his epistles he repeatedly highlighted God's *giving*:

If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God **giveth**: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 4:11)

Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and **giveth** grace to the humble. (1 Peter 5:5)

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: whereby are **given** unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. (2 Peter 1:3, 4)

Peter's Gethsemane experience was a major step in maturity. But one more story in the Gospels will highlight the power of Christ's *forgiving* love in transforming the self-confident Peter into a sensitive nurturer of babes (see 1 Peter 2:2). We move for this last story to one found only in John's gospel. This interaction occurred after the denial, and after Jesus' death and resurrection, sometime during those final

days of *giving* to His disciples what they would need to face the future. During that time He was "seen of them forty days, ... speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." (Acts 1:3). Peter still needed another lesson in how God's kingdom functions. And so do we.

Story #10: John 21: Peter's Humility--Embracing the Selflessness of Forgiveness

The Story

This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.

So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.

This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?

Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?

Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.

(verses 14-22)

Reflections

This story starts in a setting that echoes the beginning where Matthew, Mark, and Luke described Peter's first encounter with Jesus, net fishing from a boat on the Sea of Galilee. (Matthew 4:18; Mark 1:16; Luke 5:3-10; John 21:3-6). We have here another miracle of a group from the twelve catching fish after a night with empty nets, but this time the net does not break, and on the shore a meal has been prepared by the master Fisherman, who had been training them for three and a half years in catching men. Christ's method of *giving* to win a response would alone bring true success in the art of soul winning. Perhaps it is significant that it is in Jesus' serving this last recorded meal they had together we find the last recorded use of a key word in the theme we have been tracing. "Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and *giveth* them." (John 21:13). Their daily bread, which He had taught them to pray of the Father, a symbol of His continual presence and nurturing of their very life, they were to learn to *give* to others. Were they seeing the simple but profound meaning in this third meeting with Him after the resurrection?

When the meal was finished, Jesus engaged Peter in some unfinished lessons on *giving* and *forgiving*. It appears they walked away from the group for this personal encounter, with John walking a short distance behind them. The core of this last recorded dialog between Jesus and Peter is in verses 15-17, a series of three repeating questions from Jesus, responses from Peter, and resulting commands from Jesus. It is easy to conclude that Jesus asked three probing questions of Peter as a follow-up to his three-fold denial of Jesus during the night of His arrest in the garden, though that connection cannot be made in John's gospel as he records only two statements of denial. (18:25-27). Let us place the words in a table so we can better reflect on the elements of each question and statement.

<i>Jesus' Initiation</i>	<i>Jesus' Question</i>	<i>Peter's Reaction</i>	<i>Peter's Response</i>	<i>Jesus' Conclusion</i>
So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter,	Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?	He saith unto him,	Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.	He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.
He saith to him again the second time,	Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?	He saith unto him,	Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.	He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.
He saith unto him the third time,	Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?	Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him,	Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.	Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

Name Used for Peter

The Gospels do not record Jesus using Peter's names frequently to address him. The three ways Jesus did it are:

(1) "Peter": Mark said this name was a surname Jesus gave Simon. (Mark 3:16). Jesus is first recorded using it in Story #1, when He addressed him, "thou art Peter." (Matthew 16:18). In Luke's account of Jesus' warning him of his impending triple denial, Jesus again used this name, "I tell thee, Peter...." (Luke 22:34).

(2) "Simon": This original name for Peter Jesus used first in Story #4 in a question, "What thinkest thou, Simon?" (Matthew 17:25) Another question in Gethsemane contained it, "Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour?" (Mark 14:37). And finally just before Jesus' warning mentioned above after the last supper, He used it in a double appellation, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." (Luke 22:31). This faith of Jesus reaching out to strengthen the faith of Peter, and to *give* him a future hope and mission, provides an important connection to this last of our stories, for something had happened to Peter between the Lord's Passover meal with them, and this meal by the sea of Galilee, something that would enable him to *give* strength to others.

(3) "Simon, son of Jonas": Jesus used this more complete name when Andrew, Peter's brother, brought him to Jesus back at the beginning. (John 1:42). It is recorded only one other time, that in Story #1, "Simon Barjona." (Matthew 16:17). In our current story in the three questions Jesus posed, the actual Greek is very close, "Simon of Jonas" ("son" being supplied in the KJV). In reverting to Peter's birth identity, Jesus appears to be probing Peter's new identity. Was Peter still simply a "flesh and blood" son of his earthly father, or had he more fully embraced his new identity from "My Father which is in heaven"? In a culture where names often reflected character and could be changed when a person was transformed, Jesus from the beginning had worked on changing Peter's character, while preserving, as He does with us all, his individuality. This interchange in John 20 is clearly the climax, though not the end, of confronting that change. (Paul would later challenge Peter on a double identity issue; Galatians 2:11-13.)

Five Variations

The skeleton of repeated dialog in general terms is this:

Jesus: "Do you love me?"

Peter: "Yes."

Jesus: "Feed My flock."

The three verbal exchanges are identical except for five variations that flesh out this skeleton.

(1) *The Comparisons*

(2) *The Two Loves*

(3) *The Sorrow*

(4) *The Two Knows*

(5) *The Three Commissions*

The above differences in the dialog do not appear to be present simply to avoid redundancy of words, of which there are plenty, but to make some significant points, half of which are not captured in the KJV and many other translations.

(1) *The Comparisons*

The first difference we note is that Jesus' first question about Peter's love included the comparative phrase, "more than these." This appears to be a clear test of Peter's claim in Story #7, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." By this statement Peter had made two comparisons. He would be more loyal than all others, and he knew his heart better than Jesus did. (We will consider the second one in variation #4.) But Peter *was* scandalized by Jesus' method of *giving* later that same evening. He and "all" the others were so offended they fled. Peter had returned shortly and "followed afar off" (Luke 22:54), but only to distance himself even further by his triple denial of identity with this Man who was *giving* Himself. By comparison and self-exaltation, Peter had failed to *give* the witness that flows from meekness, lowliness, and wisdom. Jesus wanted to test Peter on this point. Peter's reply now simply avoided all comparison with his fellows. *He had learned a key lesson in giving--that in relating to others self must be so low that it claims no advantage in loyalty.*

(2) *The Two Loves*

Jesus used a different verb in His first question than Peter did in his response. Jesus used the verb form of *agape*, which is how God loved the world so much He *gave* the riches of heaven to it, this very Son (John 3:16) talking in His meekness and lowliness with Peter. It is also the verb for the first and second great commandments, to love God with all, and to love one's neighbor as self, even one's enemies. (Matthew 22:37, 39; 5:44). Peter in response, though beginning with a word of strong affirmation, "Yea," used a verb form of *philia*, which is the love of friends. It is not a bad word, for even the Father loves the Son with that love (John 5:20), and the love that flows from the Father to us, from Jesus to us, and from us to Jesus can be described with it. (John 16:27; Revelation 3:19). But it is clear that the loving of *agape* is more *giving*, more selfless, than that of *philia*. *And Peter in his newfound humility rightfully had learned another lesson in giving--that in himself he had not the highest level of love, the fully selfless giving that remains firm under all testing.* When Jesus asked Peter the second time, without the comparative phrase, using the same love of *agape*, Peter repeated exactly what he said before. His heart was leaning fully and humbly on Jesus. But in His third question Jesus switched to the love of *philia*, the verb that Peter himself had used in appealing to Jesus' knowledge, asking Peter if he loved Him with that love. And that is when the emotion of sorrow surfaced once again.

(3) *The Sorrow*

"Peter was grieved" that Jesus "said unto him the third time," Do you love Me with the love of *philia*? We noted in Story #7 that this dynamic of sorrow is always associated with selfishness, but, while present, that self focus is not always in the heart of the grieved one. Was Peter here selfishly fearing the loss of something as he had so often in the past, or sorrowing yet again at his own earlier selfishness that had caused him "the third time" to fail his Master? This triple failure had occurred twice in the crisis--once in the garden where three times he slept through Jesus' need for him to watch and pray with Him, and again at the trial where three times he denied even knowing Him. *It appears Peter here*

has learned yet another lesson in giving--he is grieving here unselfishly for Jesus. Peter's thought that his own selfishness in doing what a true friend would never do, could have caused Jesus to question even his love of friendship, means Peter was entering more fully into Jesus' emotions, those heart dynamics that tested His faith and love to their utter depths.

(4) *The Two Knows*

The second comparison that is hinted at in Peter's first response is that which Story #7 highlighted--not the offense that Peter would experience in Jesus' extent of *giving*, but the scandal of Peter's asserting that what Jesus predicted of him would not happen--that Peter knew himself better than Jesus did. The earlier outcome showed the inaccuracy of and damage from such a comparison. So now not only did Peter refuse to compare himself as loyal "more than these," he also simply confessed that it was his Lord that knew his heart. Twice he humbly stated it--"You know." Paul later would address the danger of the faithless measure and comparison of self-exaltation. "We dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." (2 Corinthians 10:12). This "not wise" is yet another form of "not know"--the inability to put things together. So when Jesus probed even more deeply Peter's form of love, Peter became more insistent that it was not *his* knowledge he was relying on. No, it is Jesus that "knows all things." Peter added not only that universal qualifier, but he used yet another verb "know"--that of personal experience, not his own but Jesus'. "You know by experience that I have [at least] the love of friendship for You." *Peter had learned also the vital lesson in giving that it was only Jesus that knew him well enough to give him what he needed in order to be life-giving to others.*

Before we consider the fifth variation, let us summarize what we could call Jesus' focus in each test question, and Peter's victory in each.

<i>Focus of question</i>	<i>Victory</i>
Comparison with others	a. Over comparison with others: no "more than" in reply b. Over self-knowledge greater than Jesus' knowledge: "You know" c. Over claim of highest love: only "love of friendship"
Highest love	Second victory over self-knowledge and claiming highest love
Lesser love (Knowing, by implication)	Third victory over self-knowledge with even deeper knowing: "You know by experience"

(5) *The Three Commissions*

It was out of victory over self, out of learning the lessons of humility, self-distrust, Christ-centered emotions, and the knowing of divine love, that Peter received again what he had squandered. Jesus had recruited him to be a fisher of men. How many witnessing opportunities had he lost in his self-focus, like cutting off ears that Jesus had to heal in order for them to hear the good news in the midst of the *taking* and *giving* of Calvary? Jesus would *give* him that which he was now ready to pass on, at any expense to self. When Peter passed his first test, Jesus' first commission was, "Feed My lambs." The verb is one of *giving* nourishment, what is appropriate to sustain life and growth. It is the picture of what God Himself does. "Thou *givest* them their meat in due season." (Psalms 104:27; 145:15). Jesus had used this metaphor once before in replying to Peter's question about one of His parables. "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to *give* them their portion of meat in due season?" (Luke 12:42). We see here again the verb that traces our theme clearly--knowing what people need, and *giving* what is appropriate to the current situation. Who are the recipients Jesus said Peter was to feed? The word "lambs" is actually a diminutive form of "lamb"--"little lamb." All other uses of this noun form are found in Revelation, 29 times in 27 verses, referring to Jesus in His self-*giving*, self-sacrificing nature as fully revealed on the cross. It is that *giving* that truly nourishes people, as the bread and wine were to symbolize. Peter in his unselfishness could now *give* to

the little ones as Jesus had *given* to him. In doing so to the "least of these My brethren" Peter would be *giving* to Jesus. (Matthew 25:40). We see a beautiful expression of how Peter must have done this in 1 Peter 2:2, 3. "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious."

After Peter passed his second test, Jesus changed both the verb and object in His second commission, saying literally, "Shepherd My sheep." It is the same action of caring oversight that Jesus is repeatedly said to do Himself, that will secure the universe forever against the deceptive food of false shepherds. (Matthew 2:6; Revelation 7:17; 12:5; 19:15; contrast Jude 12). What Jesus had *given* him, Peter entrusted to the elders he mentored. "Feed the flock of God which is among you." (1 Peter 5:2). Paul used the same language in exhorting the elders and bishops of his day. (Acts 20:28). And Jesus stated all overcomers will share in that caring, governing responsibility that self-*giving* love qualifies one for. (Revelation 2:27).

Jesus combined the first two commissions--the verb of "feed" with the inclusive "sheep"--in His third commission to Peter. In passing his third test, Peter could now in his new maturity know what every stage of development needed for nourishment. Jesus had restored him, a wandering sheep, to the flock, and to responsibility over the flock, to lead as Jesus had led him. He was able humbly and powerfully to instruct, and to express statements of confidence. "Ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." (1 Peter 2:25). Peter did not draw people to himself, but to the One that had mentored him. This we can see throughout Peter's epistles, especially in his beginning passage.

Commentary

The Saviour's manner of dealing with Peter had a lesson for him and for his brethren. It taught them to meet the transgressor with patience, sympathy, and forgiving love. Although Peter had denied his Lord, the love which Jesus bore him never faltered. Just such love should the undershepherd feel for the sheep and lambs committed to his care. Remembering his own weakness and failure, Peter was to deal with his flock as tenderly as Christ had dealt with him. (*The Desire of Ages*, page 815.1)

Conclusion: Peter's Reciprocity--Giving What He Had Been Given

Peter learned well the lessons from the Master Teacher. That which Jesus had *given* Peter anchored him through the disasters created by his failure to value the principle of *giving*, and imparted to him a future when his own lack of faith closed doors and darkened the possibilities. What Jesus *gave* transformed Peter, as he stopped resisting the gift, and surrendered to it. The mission became clear to him. Jesus described it simply to the twelve when they were first called, empowered, and sent forth. "Freely ye have received, freely give." (Matthew 10:8). Jesus had commissioned Peter, and in his epistles we find clear evidence of his *giving* what he had been given, which will remind us of our stories.

1 Peter 1:1 to 2:10 (Comments on verses)

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,

2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

The *giving* of Jesus, that Peter had resisted and learned with such difficulty, is the goal "unto" which Peter sees the "strangers scattered" being drawn by the work "of the Spirit." As the Spirit testifies of Jesus (John 15:26), He applies "the blood of Jesus Christ"--His gift of His poured-out life--in such a way that, like Peter, they learn what this *giving* looks like in their lives--"sanctification," "obedience," "grace," and "peace." The strife of taking for self that Peter and the eleven had loved (Luke 22:24) is removed. This is the fruit of "redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins," that Paul twice wrote of. (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14).

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

Peter's and the other eleven's hope had been in earthly glory. This was a dead hope, as it had no future, being centered in self. It died a painful death with Jesus' crucifixion (compare Luke 24:21). But the eternal glory of self-*giving* love was confirmed by Jesus' resurrection, which provided a living hope to replace the dead one. It was this unselfish dynamic that the Father glorified, and that in reality had converted unbelievers, and anchored them in the God whose faith works by love. It was a "begotten again" experience for Peter, showing that each stage of maturing repeats the death to self and birth to a new life that began the walk of faith.

4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

Peter had learned the unselfish core of what the future holds. Jesus' words in Story #6 regarding "ye which have followed Me" (Matthew 19:28) were now clear in all their eternal glory. The disciples had been preaching the good news of the kingdom, but their kingdom was contaminated with self-exaltation, as we saw in the transition from Story #4 to #5 (see also Luke 9:46). The kingdom we inherit is based on unselfish *giving*, not on selfish getting or taking. It is not a self-centered reward, but an eternity of experiencing the joy and glory of receiving only to *give*. The *forgiving* is no longer needed for sin, but the *giving* for others continues eternally.

5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

The gold of Jesus' faith and love were tried in the fire (Revelation 3:18) of our sins. Peter particularly was sensitive now to how much his sin had added to Jesus' suffering in Story #9, especially his lack of faith while in the Garden and during the trial in the high priest's palace, when in the weakness of his flesh he abandoned Jesus. But such fire did not damage Jesus' gold. His faith and love enabled Him to be obedient unto the death of the cross (Philippians 2:8), to continue expressing faith and love to Peter and to all unto the end. Peter had personally experienced how "much more precious" that was than any earthly treasure, for Jesus valued him in his weakness and sinfulness, above Himself. He had assured him He was praying for his faith. He had *given* him at the critical moment a non-verbal message of love and forgiveness. He had singled Peter out in the message of meeting them after the resurrection. (Mark 16:7). And so Peter wants his readers to understand that their keeping that faith and love to the end will similarly be tried in the crucible of others who likewise are in the business of taking. They must value what Jesus has *given* and keep it! It is God's *giving* power that actually keeps us *giving* to the end. When the fire of taking is over, in one respect like Jesus' resurrection, God will confirm that victory by an act of salvation that breaks forever the power of sin and death over the victors, at Jesus' return to earth. His appearing will usher in the fire of *giving* for eternity.

8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

Peter is explicit here with the dynamic of love and faith ("ye love ... believing"), with the accompanying joy and glory. These flow from Jesus, and return to Him, drawing others along with joy's infectiousness, and glory's attractiveness. The "your" is supplied in "your souls," with the reading "the salvation of souls" fitting better the unselfish paradigm that matches what Peter learned from Jesus. Faith is more in the business of saving others souls than our own, for the master Fisherman had taught him how to be a successful fisher of men, to value other souls more than his own. Faith is the business of *giving* to reveal that unselfish value one places in others. And the reward of that faith is simply others who experience the preciousness of that dynamic, embrace it, and begin to *give* as well. The "crown of glory" we "receive" (same verb; 1 Peter 5:4) is inseparable from these "souls."

10 Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:

11 Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

12 Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

This must be in a sense Peter's comments on the Bible study Jesus gave them between Story #9 and #10, on the day of the resurrection, recorded in Luke 24:44, 45. This was an essential component of the "lively hope" that the resurrection brought--the living Jesus showing from the living word the significance of what had just happened. The prophets wrote concerning the Messiah (Christ) and His sufferings--His *giving* of His life to temptation and death (Hebrews 2:9, 18), victorious over both in His unselfish witness, to which the Father in turn witnessed--"the glory that should follow." (Luke

24:46). This comprised "the gospel" Peter and the other witnesses, transformed by receiving the message demonstrated in these events, were enabled to preach in the power of the Spirit (Luke 24:47-49) poured upon them at Pentecost. This "mystery of the gospel" (Ephesians 6:19) has been seen by angels (1 Timothy 3:16), but they still have a continuing intense "desire to look into" the marvelous light revealed by "the sufferings of Christ."

13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

This verse is better translated, "the grace that is being brought to you in the revelation of Jesus Christ." (Young's Literal Translation). The revelation of Jesus, especially "the sufferings of Christ," was recorded by "them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost." But the revelation continues--it still "is being brought"! Peter's appeal is specific and practical. Avoid all intoxication ("be sober") that comes by letting the imagination ("loins of your mind") dwell on anything not identified with the truth being revealed through Jesus Christ by the Spirit of the truth (see Ephesians 6:14; John 16:13). Self makes us drunk, numbs the spiritual powers of the mind, and destroys the ability to have a living hope. Peter had learned that! Only the truth of God's unselfish love revealed in Jesus brings clarity to our minds, and provides an enduring "hope to the end."

14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

Peter had learned what "holy" means--the wholly unselfish *giving* of Jesus. Out of that lesson he had repudiated his own intense desires ("former lusts") that were based on ignorance of God's reality. Now he was feeding the sheep with the same food that had nourished his own soul, fashioning them in the intense desires of unselfish love (see Luke 22:15).

17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:

Peter and the other ten, when Jesus was arrested in Story #8, "forsook Him, and fled." (Matthew 26:56). They then feared men, feared losing their lives. They had "respect of persons." They were looking out for self. They had not yet learned how to see unselfishly a betrayer through the eyes of faith (Matthew 26:50), and how to fear only God, to fear losing Him by their selfish infatuation (Matthew 10:28). Peter had two more lessons long after Pentecost on this principle of the gospel--the ability of unselfish love to see all through the eyes of faith and love (see Acts 10:28, 34; Galatians 2:11-14). Only with this key Jesus gave him could he be loosed, and loose others, from what separates us in an ungodly way. Paul addressed this key in Ephesians 2:14 where "broken down" is the same verb "loose" as Matthew 16:19, describing what Jesus accomplished, and in turn what He gave to "the apostles and prophets" to explain and model, in building "one new man"--"an holy temple." In this building project, Jesus is the "chief corner." (See Ephesians 2:13-22.) Peter in his next chapter led his readers straight to that same reference point.

18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

Peter here used the same uncommon verb "redeemed" that Cleopas and his partner had on the road to Emmaus in telling the unrecognized Jesus of their failed hope in "Jesus of Nazareth." They

were hoping "that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." (Luke 24:19-21). Peter must have heard them tell that story. Before that day was out, those two and the eleven, Peter included, realized that Jesus' "precious blood" had indeed succeeded in its mission. As Jesus applied, in a sense, His blood to them, they all experienced what His death had accomplished. Sin was condemned in the flesh (Romans 8:3), and they were delivered by the last Adam from the empty lifestyle passed down from the first Adam, the first of "your fathers." (1 Corinthians 15:45; Romans 5:14-19). Peter used another uncommon word "lamb" that John the Baptist apparently drew from Isaiah when he used it twice in introducing Jesus (see John 1:29, 36; Acts 8:32; Isaiah 53:7).

20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

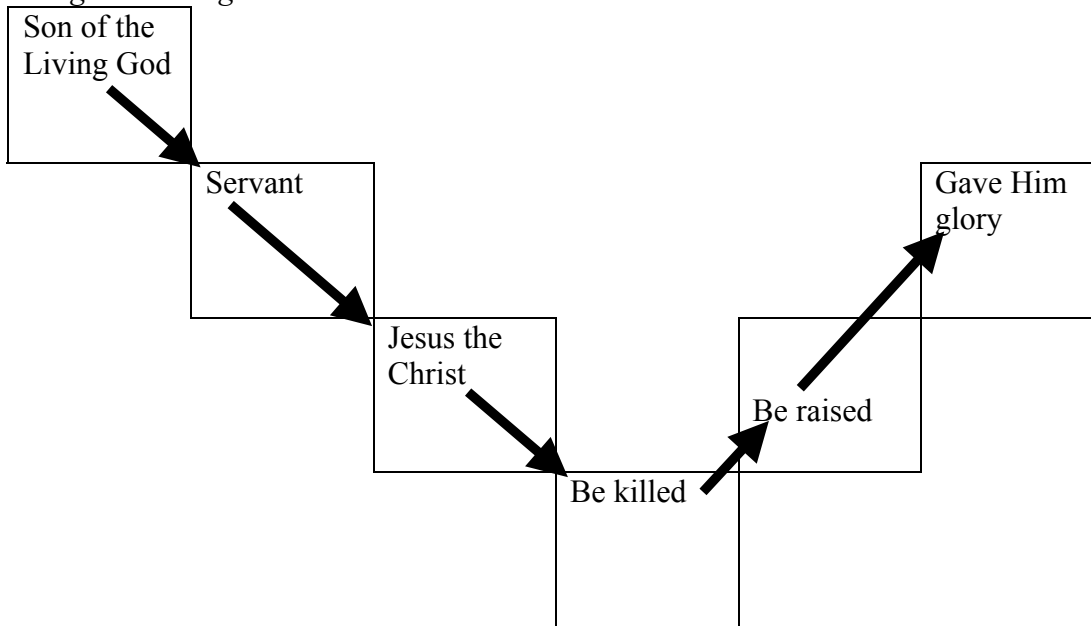
21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

Peter must have recalled Jesus' using the same "before the foundation of the world" statement in His prayer the night before Peter denied Him (Story #9), for the same themes are repeated here. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." (John 17:24). Jesus' desire for them, to "be with Me where I am" is not so much a geographical location as a fellowship location. It is being "with" Jesus in the glory of self-*giving* love. There is no question but that heaven as a location will be the ultimate realization of that, but it does not begin there. It begins here, in the midst of the absence of such love. For it is the glory of the light revealed in His *giving* His life that draws all in the midst of the darkness to Him (see John 12:28-36). Thus John could write of the glory that was revealed in the Word made flesh. (John 1:14; 2:11). It was the eternal love between the Father and the Son in *giving* the Son to "manifest" the power of that love, that results in a "faith and hope" that nothing can quench. Peter heard from Cleopas and his partner that Jesus had affirmed the connection between suffering and glory. "Ought not Christ [the Messiah] to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" (Luke 24:26). Suffering in God's plan is to meet the needs of the "taking" of sin by continuing to *give*, for suffering is what *giving* looks like in the presence of taking. As Paul built the background for the diagram we first began in Story #1, he pointedly said we are called to *give* as Jesus did. "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." (Philippians 1:29). These are the lessons behind forgiveness that Peter learned from Jesus, no longer doing anything "through strife or vainglory," but embracing "the same love," "one accord, one mind," "lowliness of mind"--even "this mind ... which was in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 2:2-5). In Story #2 Jesus predicted that after He humbled Himself "unto death, even the death of the cross," the Father would begin to exalt Him. (Philippians 2:8, 9; Matthew 16:21). So the glory Peter wrote of here is what Paul wrote in our diagram passage, "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." (Philippians 2:9). The resurrection of Jesus, and especially His ascension to the place of glory, was not the end of His *giving*. It was but the affirmation and exaltation of it. Thus John was given a picture of this--"in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain." (Revelation 5:6) The *giving* nature of His suffering has been immortalized and will prove a sufficient foundation for eternal "faith and hope." Peter indeed was feeding and shepherding the lambs and sheep with the same food that had matured him. For his hope in verse 3 is here repeated for his readers--a hope anchored in what was "manifest" in the events of Calvary, the resurrection, and the glory *given* the ascended Christ--the glory that the power of the Spirit on Pentecost gave evidence of. (Acts 2:31-36). Paul connects the cross and the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus (His name, His character) with the forgiveness of sin and the power of the indwelling Spirit.

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence.... that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. (Ephesians 1:7, 8, 18-21; compare Romans 8:9-17).

And so we add here to our diagram the glory Jesus received.

Diagram adding 1 Peter 1:21



We will find the final piece of our diagram in Peter's next chapter, as we address the implications of what has been accomplished through Jesus' *giving* and its exaltation in Him above all.

22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

Peter continued to feed his readers with the spiritual food Jesus had *given* him. He used here both forms of love found in Story #10. Peter's readers must have learned that Jesus was born into this world to "bear witness unto the truth." (John 18:37). It was knowing, or what Peter called here "obeying" this reality of "the truth"--God is unselfish--that set Peter and his readers free from the soul-contaminating motive of the "love of strife" (see Luke 22:24), enabling "unfeigned love of the brethren" (from *philia*). The absence of any hypocrisy that "unfeigned" indicates is an on-going challenge, as Peter's experience in Antioch illustrated, for all of us who have heard "the truth of the gospel." (Galatians 2:11-14). We must not just hear the gospel. We must obey it (see Romans 2:8; Galatians 3:1; 5:7; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; 1Peter 4:17). So Peter's command, applicable to him and all he mentored, was to love with the unselfish love that Jesus questioned of him twice (verb form of *agape*). This is possible only "with a pure heart"--purified of a self-focus by the *forgiving* love of Jesus.

23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

Peter here traced back to the event behind the love he described. His readers were "born again." He used a word that occurs only one other time in the New Testament, his statement in 1:3 of being "begotten again," there referring to "us." It is only God's unselfish, *giving* love, represented by light and glory, that rebirths selfish sinners. (John 1:4-14; 3:5, 6). Peter and his readers had all experienced this transformation. Thus they had an eternal future.

24 For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:

25 But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

Before "being born again" all we can claim is being born "of the will of the flesh" (John 1:13; 3:6)--the "corruptible seed." What flows from such a birth is simply "the glory of man"--a self-centered glory, bent on self-exaltation, and taking, which has no future. Peter here quotes from the Greek translation of Isaiah 40:6-8. Could he again be referencing another place where Jesus had "in the prophets" unfolded to the eleven the things "concerning" Himself (Luke 24:44)? That Bible study had not been lost on the survivors of the crucifixion. They now understood the dead-end path they had been on, vividly demonstrated in Judas' end, but even more profoundly revealed in Jesus' end, as Peter would shortly write, when He "bare our sins in his own body on the tree." (1 Peter 2:24). *The same cross that revealed God giving Himself for our sins showed that there is no future for sin.* "God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16); "the Word was made flesh" (John 1:14); and He had "condemned sin in the flesh." (Romans 8:3). So Peter and the others had embraced "the gospel" revealed in the written word and the living Word, and had "preached" it everywhere. As Paul wrote, quoting Moses (like Jesus in Luke 24:27, 44), "the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, ... The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach." (Romans 10:6, 8).

2:1 Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,

Peter gives an introduction here to his command in the next verse by clearly referencing back to the event he wrote of in 1:3 that Jesus did--"hath begotten us again." The verb form of "laying" here agrees with that previous verb, and is better translated, "having laid aside." The new birth is the point at which, as with Peter, one lays aside the works of the flesh, and identifies with the fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:16-24). The five negative practices Peter listed here he himself had been familiar with in his earlier life before Luke 24. We should note that these actions of the flesh, while "laid aside" at one's rebirth, are not impossible in one so changed, for there remains an unchanged part much identified with the old life, which one must battle against in the power of the Spirit, and continually reckon to be crucified with Christ. (Paul details this struggle and its solutions in Romans 7:9 to 8:23.) Peter would later show the ongoing necessity of reaffirming what one has laid aside, when in the weakness of his residual unchanged nature he apparently led a group of Jews, including Barnabas, in an act of hypocrisy. (Galatians 2:11-13; same word as this current verse). The cleansing that accompanies forgiveness is an ongoing process, dependent on a continual identity with Jesus' death to sin and resurrection, and on a momentary dependence on the presence of the Holy Spirit. *We must continually reaffirm that we have in Jesus "laid aside" the practices based on the principle of selfishness.* "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." (Romans 8:3). The lessons from all of Peter's stories continued to show him the fallacy of trusting at all in self. And so should they teach us. (See "Closing Commentary.")

2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

Peter is here doing what Jesus in Story #10 commissioned him to do, "Feed My lambs." Peter had been one of those "little lambs" during his early years with Jesus, to whom Jesus had *given* the very food he needed to grow. Now Peter, having matured to the point of knowing how to do that for others, was able to treat others the way Jesus had treated him. That *giving* alone is what nurtures growth.

3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

It is the *giving*, unselfish character of the Lord that makes Him "gracious." Peter here used an adjective that is uncommon but runs like a golden thread through the gospels and Paul's writings (italicized in the following verses). It is the same word Jesus used in describing the generous lowliness of "the Highest"--"Love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is *kind* unto the unthankful and to the evil." (Luke 6:35). He later used it in the context of finding rest in learning His meekness and lowliness through partnering with Him. "My yoke is *easy*." (Matthew 11:30). Paul used the same word to describe what leads to repentance and forgiveness. "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the *goodness* of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Romans 2:4). "Be ye *kind* one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." (Ephesians 4:32). Peter had tasted this graciousness of the Lord. It had given him life when he despaired of it, and had nurtured his growth. He had passed it on to those to whom he had preached the gospel, and they had tasted of the same reality. He simply here told his readers, continue eating at the Lord's table. We must do that, or die. "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him." (Psalm 34:8; same verb "taste" in the Greek Old Testament). How gracious is He, and how fundamentally important is that? In the next verses Peter took his readers (and takes us) back to the revelation from Story #1, and anchors the identity and pivotal position of Jesus to a series of verses "in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms," quoted in part by Jesus in the days leading up to Story #7, and likely covered in detail in Luke 24:44 between Story #9 and #10. Jesus' identity gave Peter, and gives all who respond as did Peter, a new identity. Jesus has identified with us through extensive expressions of *giving*, requiring a condescension we cannot fully fathom. This appeals to all to reciprocate--in a like fashion to identify with Him. We should see ourselves, as Peter's current readers, in the plural "you" ("ye") he is addressing. To *give* as Jesus has *given*, to believe in Him in this living sense, is our calling, our privilege. So from here on we will picture Peter as having addressed us. Note the parallelisms Peter used, with Jesus' identity in vs. 4, and ours in vs. 5, then Jesus' again in verses 6-8, and finally ours again in verses 9 and 10.

4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

The verb "coming" here is the same Matthew used for Peter in Story #5, when he came to Jesus to ask him the question on forgiveness. (Matthew 18:21). Its root is the "came" in John 1:11, which described the source of Peter's (or anyone else's) "coming" to Jesus--Jesus Himself "came unto his own." And again in Jesus' own words, "I am come in my Father's name" (John 5:43), "I am come a light into the world." (John 12:46). All are drawn to this light, as Jesus is lifted up. (John 12:32). Peter, after his painful lessons, had indeed found Jesus "living"--fully alive in His *giving* nature, "chosen of God" to reveal this reality, and therefore "precious" beyond any calculation. While Peter was still in his taking mode, he had not recognized the value of what Jesus was *giving*. Indeed, at that point he had been one of those "men" who had in his own way "disallowed" (rejected) Jesus. Since he had been in the inner circle of three (see Mark 5:37; 9:2; 14:33), his rejection had been the closest pain Jesus experienced as He "suffer[ed] many things. (Mark 8:31; 9:12). How Jesus had responded to Peter's failure to *give* what he should have (especially seen in Story #9), taught him how precious *giving* and *forgiving* was--it was life to him. The unchanging nature of Jesus' *giving*

love is what showed Him to be, not only the light come into the darkness (absence of *giving*), but also the "stone"--stable, firm, unchanging. Peter, though confessing briefly (Story #1) the stone of Jesus' identity, had been building on the sand (Story #2 through #9). Had Jesus not saved him, he would have been swept away in the storm. But he had found in Jesus his stone. In the following verses Peter showed where these descriptive words of Jesus originate. But first he connected Jesus' identity to ours.

5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

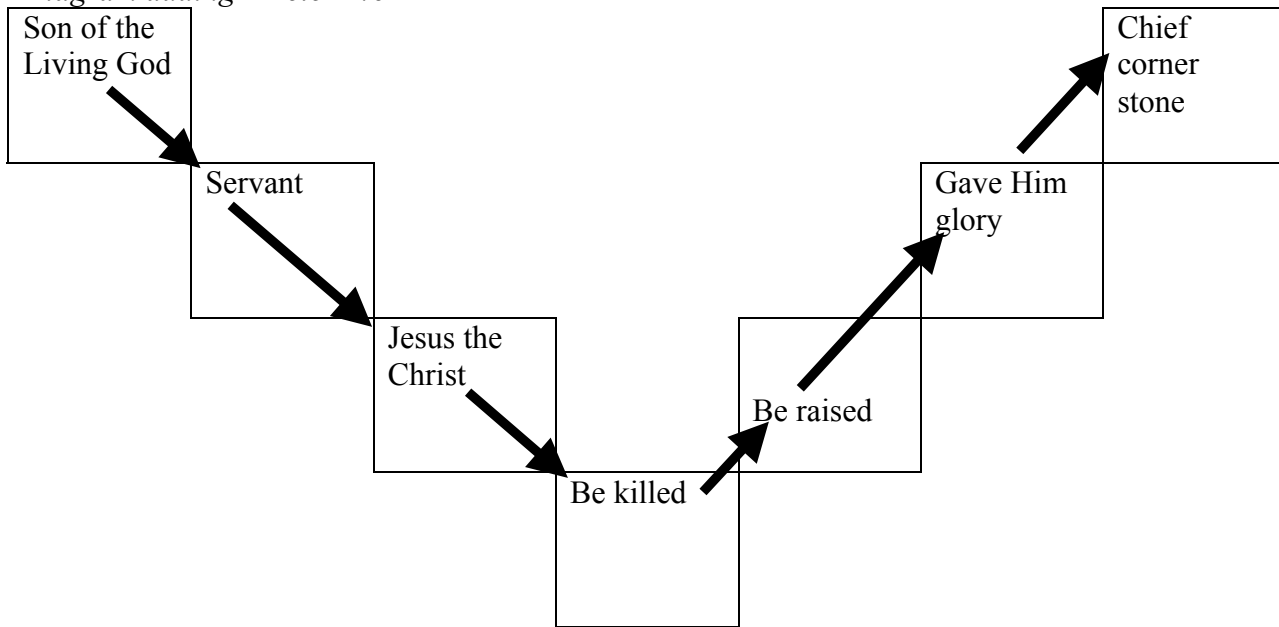
God's realities are not isolated selves. Those who learn by experience the *giving* love of God, not just receiving it (which all do in some fashion) but in turn *giving* it, become also generous and stable, "lively stones" as Jesus is. In fact "lively" here is the exact verb form as used in the previous verse for Jesus, "living stone." This dynamic love draws all together into a corporate whole, a meaningful place in which people dwell--"a spiritual house." But what do people do in this house? Peter had learned that it is no place for the selfish attitude of "who is the greatest." (Luke 9:46; 22:24). Instead we are "an holy priesthood." In verse 9 we will see from where Peter drew this description. And in that calling, we "offer up spiritual sacrifices." This is Peter's only use of this noun that describes graphically how God's love *gives*. Paul used it repeatedly to describe Jesus' *giving*. "Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a *sacrifice* to God." (Ephesians 5:2). "He appeared to put away sin by the *sacrifice* of himself." (Hebrews 9:26). "This man, after he had offered one *sacrifice* for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." (Hebrews 10:12). In no place do we have a picture that Jesus' *giving* frees us from having to *give*. Instead, it remakes us into the same image. In the beauty of this reciprocity, *giving* as God has *given*, the gift returns through Jesus, and God finds it "acceptable," a word that falls far short of describing how He feels when He sees others come into His joy of *giving*. What He has in great joy *given*, is "well received" by Him in its joyful return.

6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

Peter now began to tap into those verses Jesus likely unfolded to him and the others in that resurrection-day Bible study. This first quote is from Isaiah 28:16. "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." This is the source of the three words in verse 4, "stone," "chosen" ("elect" here, same word), and "precious." The people and rulers had insultingly used the "chosen" label as Jesus hung on the cross. "And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God." (Luke 23:35). In their confusion they could not see the incompatibility of saving others and self at the same time. Rather than the cross disqualifying Him, His *giving* Himself in the ultimate gift proved He was "the Christ [Messiah], the chosen of God"! And the resurrection sealed that proof. It is the glorious mystery of *giving* that it cannot be overcome. The greater the intensity of the taking, the more the *giving gives*, until it *gives* all, and *is thereby victorious*. This is why, as Jesus noted in Story #1, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against" those built (here, "he that believeth on him") on this unmovable principle that Jesus demonstrated. However, to those deceived by the principle of taking, it may appear that those "that believeth on him," the *givers*, have been "confounded" (dishonored, put to shame), but eventually all will see that such *giving* was just the opposite, the highest honor, and genuine glory. So we find evidence here that the exalted position of Jesus, the immortalization of His *giving* on Calvary, will seal Him as "the chief corner stone" in such a way, that, in the words of Paul as he wrote of the final element of our diagram, "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth [those agents "of hell"]; and that

every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:10, 11).

Diagram adding 1 Peter 2:6



Praise God for such security! Peter continued building the background and implications of Jesus' identity.

7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,

Peter concludes here a thread of "believe" that he used before in 1:8, 21, and in the last verse (only uses in both his epistles of this verb). Peter's root of "believe" was the faith of Jesus that prayed for his faith, noted in Story #7. He had learned to hang his helpless soul on Jesus' faith. And he was convinced that only those who respond to Jesus' love with love, to His faith with faith, to His *giving* with *giving*, will understand how "precious" He is! The unwillingness to respond in kind is described in "disobedient," a word that means "to refuse belief and obedience." This obstinacy was illustrated in the story alluded to in this second quote from the Old Testament, Psalm 118:22, 23. "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes." Jesus had quoted these verses a few days before His crucifixion (Matthew 21:42) in his dialogue with the "chief priests and the elders of the people" who had challenged Him with the question, "By what authority doest thou these things?" (21:23). Peter some time later had faced a similar confrontation by the "rulers of the people, and elders of Israel." (Acts 4:8). They asked him, "By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?" (4:7), and in his response (4:11) he had quoted verse 22 from the Psalm. Jesus, in the authority He has as the source of unselfish love for the entire created universe, is "the head of the corner." Every attempt to find the correct alignment of this essential measurement must locate its reference point in the "corner" He has laid down in His own life and death. Peter had learned that lesson after much grief, and in deep and ongoing repentance and humility had embraced it. But because Jesus in that position had been "disallowed" ("rejected" as Matthew 21:42 renders the same verb) by the leaders of Israel, Jesus in his very next words predicted the negative close of their time of probation. "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." (Matthew 21:43). Daniel had been shown that same outcome. "Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary." (Daniel 9:26). Peter

was convinced of the words of Jesus, that there was no future without the breaking of human pride by the humility of this corner stone. "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." (Matthew 21:44; allusion to Daniel 2:34, 35).

8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

Peter here gives his third quote, this one from Isaiah 8:14. "He shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel." Peter again shows the reason Jesus is such a negative object. It is the same reason he himself "stumble[d] at the word, being disobedient" when he had heard Jesus in Story #2 plainly predict His greatest act of *giving*, "suffer ... and be killed." (Matthew 16:21). His response to Jesus had been an "offence" to Jesus in His mission (same word as here; Matthew 16:23). The verb form occurred in Story #7, when Jesus predicted His rock of a mission (humbling, *giving* Himself to the cross) would offend them all, and Peter had stoutly denied such could happen to him. The scandal of his had come vividly to his memory, derailed momentarily by an appeal to his self-preservation, in Story #9. *Peter knew by experience how all human pride finds in Jesus the ultimate "rock of offence."* He knew it better to be broken than to be ground to powder. And here he affirms who the Rock was that Jesus referred to in Story #1. This feminine noun *petra*--

that Jesus had use at the end of His sermon on the mount to describe the lasting foundation (Matthew 7:24, 25),

that He had used in a word play (in contrast with the masculine form *Petros* which was Peter's new name) to describe His divinity and His humility on which His church would be built (Matthew 16:18), and

that Paul had used to describe the Messiah that followed and gave drink to ancient Israel in the wilderness (1 Corinthians 10:1-4)--

this word describes none other than the One who alone can humble all human pride, Peter's included, the Stone, the Rock, Jesus Christ.

9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

Peter again moves from the identity of Jesus in His position of humble authority, to describe the identity He provides for all who accept His gift of Himself. They are "chosen" as He is "chosen" (verses 4 and 6), for a mission. In Peter's fourth quote he goes to the words of Exodus 19:5, 6. "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." They are a "royal priesthood"--"a kingdom of priests"--following the order of Jesus Himself, "a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" who was a king and priest (Hebrews 5:6; 7:1), offering up the sacrifice of self, as we saw in verse 5. This destiny is repeated in Revelation 1:6; 5:10. They are a "holy nation"--an entire group of people who are learning Peter's lessons, that glory and greatness is in *giving*. This is the nation we noted Jesus referred to in Matthew 21:43, "bringing forth the fruits" of the kingdom, *giving* and *forgiving* as the king. "Holy" means wholly unselfish, separated from the corruption of living for self. This "light" of unselfishness identifies them as God's special and valued people in the midst of "darkness"--the absence of *giving*. Peter notes that this calling, what he had learned from Jesus, was indeed "marvellous," a word from Psalm 118:23 in reference to Jesus being the "head of the corner."

10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

Peter here in his fifth use of Old Testament pictures, employs the concepts Hosea depicted, especially in Hosea 2:23. "And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God." I believe Peter here is also recalling the words of Jesus in Story #5, where He pictures the *forgiving* king asking the *unforgiving* servant, "Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?" The two verbs here, "have had compassion" and "had pity" are both the same and identical to "obtained mercy" in this verse. In Jesus Christ all (including Peter and also us) have obtained mercy. It was not so manifested before Calvary. But in the reciprocal nature of God's love, as Story #5 illustrated, we lose what He has *given* if we do not in turn *give*. So our obtaining mercy is anchored in Jesus' finished *gift* of Himself, but dynamically, in an ongoing fashion, dependent on our *giving* and *forgiving* as He has. Paul covered the same realities of God's mercy in describing its universal nature, and our calling to pass it on to others. (Romans 11:30-32). It is in this way we are "living stones" as Jesus is. He is the "rock" that uniquely underlies all eternal realities. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 3:11). He alone is safe on which to lean our all. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this." (Isaiah 9:6, 7). And in His humility, His unselfish *giving*, He will, in "his government," derive His "just powers from the consent of the governed." Those who embrace His unselfishness can likewise be trusted to sit with Him on His throne (Revelation 3:21), as we saw in Story #6. All else is sand, like Judas and all others who in their selfishness have abandoned the Rock of true humility, and, with no future, are destined to be swept away (thus the label, "son of perdition"; see John 17:12; 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4).

1 Peter 2:21-25 (Summary)

The self-sacrificing love of Jesus--His "example," "His steps," "His own body on the tree," "by whose stripes ye were healed"--was the food that Peter fed the sheep. His goal was the same as Jesus, to lead all into the same *forgiveness* he himself had experienced. In them this would be evidenced by the goal he described of Jesus' pinnacle of *giving*. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness." (1 Peter 2:21-25).

1 Peter 3 & 4 (Questions)

What form of giving had Peter received, especially in Story #9, that taught him how to feed and shepherd?

"Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing." (1 Peter 3:9)

What had Peter repeatedly received from Jesus, which he affirmed all have so received, and that thus they are called to pass on to others?

"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." (1 Peter 4:10; compare John 1:17)

What had Jesus' words of faith to Peter, expressions of pardoning love, in all the stories we considered, accomplished in this man of quick, boastful words, and rash actions that cut more than healed?

"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (1 Peter 4:11)

2 Peter 1 (Question)

What from Story #3 did Peter see that Jesus Himself had received from the Father?

"He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (2 Peter 1:17). But this story, as we saw, was but an encouragement for Jesus to continue on the path to the ultimate *giving*--His life poured out on the cross. The "honour and glory" empowered that humility! The very word Luke used to describe the topic of Moses' and Elijah' conversation with Jesus ("His decease"--Greek *exodus*), Peter used two verses earlier to encourage his readers. "Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance." (verse 15). "These things" were the vitally important gifts Jesus had *given* at great expense to Peter, which he addressed in this first chapter of his second letter--"precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:1); "the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord" (2 Peter 1:2; also 8); "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: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." (2 Peter 1:3, 4). Peter had learned through his own failures how easy it is to forget the *giving* of Jesus, and thus how important it is to remember. Five times in this chapter (verses 8, 9, 10, 12, and 15) Peter mentioned "these things" that he wanted them always to remember, the "all things" *given* by God in Jesus. These things Jesus in Story #1 had called "the keys" He would give to Peter, "these things" related to "the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord" (verse 2; see also verses 3, 8; called "key of knowledge" in Luke 11:52; compare John 17:3). These "keys of the kingdom" open the "way into" the King's abode, which Story #5 had unfolded to Peter, to know the King's *forgiveness* so intimately you *give* it to others. "So an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (verse 11; "entrance" is the Greek *eisodos*, "way into," the apparent opposite of *exodus*, literally "way out" above). These themes echo what Jesus had unfolded to Peter and the others in Story #2. "Whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." In the words Peter used here, the way out, *giving*, is actually the way in, *receiving*, for eternity.

Some Questions on God's Initiative in Giving

Finally, consider some probing questions:

Can we see now the spectrum of *giving* in *forgiving*?

As vital as repentance and confession are, can we see better--

--the goodness of God that predates both of those,

--His goodness that rightfully can be called forgiveness, pardon, justification,

--His goodness that therefore places an imperative not just on the believer but on every human alive?

Can we see how God's initiative constrains all to respond with a heart that agrees both with God's need to do this before we can do anything good in return, and with our need to *forgive* as we are *forgiven*?

Closing Commentary

When Peter, at a later date, visited Antioch, he won the confidence of many by his prudent conduct toward the Gentile converts. For a time he acted in accordance with the light given from heaven. He so far overcame his natural prejudice as to sit at table with the Gentile converts. But when certain Jews who were zealous for the ceremonial law, came from Jerusalem, Peter injudiciously changed his deportment toward the converts from paganism. A number of the Jews "dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation." This revelation of weakness on the part of those who had been respected and loved as leaders, left a most painful impression on the minds of the Gentile believers. The church was threatened with division. But Paul, who saw the subverting influence of the wrong done to the church through the double part acted by Peter, openly rebuked him for thus disguising his true sentiments. In the presence of the church, Paul inquired of Peter, "If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" Galatians 2:13, 14.

Peter saw the error into which he had fallen, and immediately set about repairing the evil that had been wrought, so far as was in his power. God, who knows the end from the beginning, permitted Peter to reveal this weakness of character in order that the tried apostle might see that there was nothing in himself whereof he might boast. Even the best of men, if left to themselves, will err in judgment. God also saw that in time to come some would be so deluded as to claim for Peter and his pretended successors the exalted prerogatives that belong to God alone. And this record of the apostle's weakness was to remain as a proof of his fallibility and of the fact that he stood in no way above the level of the other apostles.

The history of this departure from right principles stands as a solemn warning to men in positions of trust in the cause of God, that they may not fail in integrity, but firmly adhere to principle. The greater the responsibilities placed upon the human agent, and the larger his opportunities to dictate and control, the more harm he is sure to do if he does not carefully follow the way of the Lord and labor in harmony with the decisions arrived at by the general body of believers in united council.

After all Peter's failures; after his fall and restoration, his long course of service, his intimate acquaintance with Christ, his knowledge of the Saviour's straightforward practice of right principles; after all the instruction he had received, all the gifts and knowledge and influence he had gained by preaching and teaching the word--is it not strange that he should dissemble and evade the principles of the gospel through fear of man, or in order to gain esteem? Is it not strange that he should waver in his adherence to right? May God give every man a realization of his helplessness, his inability to steer his own vessel straight and safe into the harbor. (*Acts of the Apostles*, pages 197.3-199.2)