

# *“The Divine Life” Part 1*

## **Holiness**

2 Peter 1:1-15

Dr. Bruce Bickel

October 9, 2015

**Transcriber’s Note:** In his introductory remarks, Dr. Bickel alluded to drinking Ugandan coffee. The Brave Men have been buying and drinking it for a long time, and the sale of this coffee is part of a project which ensures clean water for the population of Uganda. One of the men involved in the project, a native of Uganda, Herbert Asiimwe was our guest.

**Bruce:** Good morning, men.

**Men:** Good morning, Bruce.

**Bruce:** Don, before we get started, Herbert, it’s great to have you with us, sir.

**Herbert:** Thank you.

**Bruce:** Glad you could come. I want to tell you why I don’t drink coffee.

*(Laughter.)* You may have just changed my mind. When you said this—that for one cup of coffee, it’s three hundred people—

**Herbert:** Three hundred cups of clean water.

**Bruce:** I’m going to start drinking coffee. *(Laughter and applause.)* I’ll start drinking your coffee.

Now here’s why I do not drink coffee, up till today. When I was a midshipman at the Naval Academy, I was on a summer cruise after my plebe year. And I was assigned to a heavy cruiser, and the man I was assigned to was a chief petty officer who ran all the deck hands. In the first assignment he gave me, he said, “I want you to chip the paint off of this five-inch gun now. Here’s a chipper and here’s the liquid you use.”

**Participant:** Coffee. *(Laughter.)*

**Bruce:** He said, “You just spray it on there and chip it,” and the paint came right off. *(Laughter.)* He came over to check on me later and he said, “You got some stuff left over?”

I said, “I’m not finished.”

He said, “Yes, you are.” He took it and he drank it. *(Laughter.)* He said, “Now that’s good coffee.” *(Laughter.)*

From that day on, I’ve never touched coffee. *(Laughter.)* I said, “If it’s going to chip paint off of a five-inch gun, what will it do to my stomach?” *(Laughter.)* But you have changed my mind, sir. *(Laughter.)*

It’s great to have you with us, and thank you for your ministry. It’s great to be a part of it with you. Don, please, let’s quietly go before the Lord. *(Music.)*

“Eternal Father, strong to save,

Whose arms have bound the restless waves.”

Father, we pray that You would descend upon us this day. Speak to us through Your Holy Spirit and bind the restless waves of our improper thinking, that You might guide us to truth for Jesus’ sake. And all the Brave Men said,

**Men:** Amen!

## *“The Divine Life” Part 1*

**Bruce:** Thank you. Let’s turn in your Bibles, please, to 2 Peter chapter 1. We have finished the first epistle of Peter. We will continue our examination of 2 Peter, continuing on the theme of holiness.

We will begin by looking at verses 1-4 today, but I want to read the context of it in its entirety because we’ll spend several weeks on this particular section, because it’s such a wonderful passage about the combination of the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. It’s a wonderful blend of doctrine in this particular passage. So, reading from the English Standard Version, 1 Peter chapter 1, verses 1-15.

*“Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence, by which He has granted to us His precious and very great promises, so that through them we may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so near-sighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure. For if you practice these things, you will never fail. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an inheritance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”* May God be pleased to open our eyes, that we might behold His glory for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**Men:** Amen.

**Bruce:** Well, brothers, we have finished 1 Peter. We now want to look at 2 Peter.

Just as a quick review of our study of 1 Peter and the whole theme of holiness, there are three major things that Peter taught us. And first of all, those were salvation, then submission, then suffering. He gave us a definition of salvation, which you’ll see in 1 Peter chapter 1, the first twelve verses—our gracious and glorious salvation in description.

Second, when you understand those verses, when you understand that truth of the gracious and glorious salvation that God has provided, you’ll understand what it means to be submissive and why you need to be submissive, and how you are submissive and to whom you are submissive.

And he says that as a result of that, when you understand that, then you’ll know how to suffer correctly. You see the whole issue of Peter’s spiritual warfare. In fact, Peter uses more military terms in his epistle than any of the other prophets or apostles because he’s dealing with spiritual warfare. So you might assume that he would use military terminology.

## *“The Divine Life” Part 1*

Another way of looking at 1 Peter in summary would be this. Peter talks about the living hope and what we do with it and what goes with it. That would be our faith, the pilgrim life and how to live it, and the fiery trial and how to bear it. In summary, those are the things that Peter taught us about our salvation, our submission and our suffering.

Now we come to the second epistle of Peter. And this is based upon the true knowledge and sure hope.

Just a quick outline, and we'll go through some of these things over the next year, I'm sure. It will take us a while to go through this particular epistle.

So first of all, you want to understand *the true knowledge*. Whereas the emphasis of the first epistle of Peter is the hope and trial of life, the emphasis running through the second one is on growth and true knowledge. So 1 Peter deals with hope. 2 Peter deals with true knowledge and growth in Christ. He talks about growing in our faith in Christ Jesus, and we'll talk about that today.

Peter, as I mentioned before, is distinctly the apostle of hope, just as Paul is the apostle of faith, James the apostle of works and John the apostle of love. Peter is the apostle of hope.

Now 2 Peter is going to deal with several different things. First of all, the true knowledge in which we grow. You'll see that in chapter 1—the true knowledge in which we will grow. And we'll begin that today.

And then in chapter 2 he's going to talk about the false teachers who are to come. You see, in the first epistle of Peter, he dealt with forces outside the church. You're involved in spiritual warfare because of the system of this world. The world is going to be opposed to us, in opposition of us, taking us on in battle because of the things we stand for in the Person and work of Christ which are contrary to the system of this world.

So 1 Peter dealt with the warfare that comes from outside the church. 2 Peter deals with warfare inside the church, and that means false teachers.

So we're going to understand true knowledge which builds our faith in which we grow. We'll take a look at false teachers—who they are, why they come and what they do—what represents them and what we need to look out for. And then thirdly, the sure promise of the Lord's return at the end of the age. And so that's a quick overview of the book of 2 Peter.

But as we have finished studying 1 Peter, and going on, I want us to realize this—that amidst the sufferings of people outside the church, Peter is now going to say that you're going to suffer from people inside the church. Now that's a tragedy that we have to study something like this, but God in His wisdom knows this—that there will be false teachers. And we'll spend a lot of time as we go through this particular epistle understanding who these false teachers are, what they teach, why they teach what they teach, and what their characteristics are.

So we saw in 1 Peter the fact that true doctrine and holy living are always linked together. True doctrine and holy living are linked together. In other words, if you think right, you'll act right. If you act right, you're going to feel right.

## *“The Divine Life” Part 1*

Now very similarly, in 2 Peter he says the same thing. You’ll notice chapter 1, verses 5-10. And in chapter 3, verses 14, 17 and 18 he’ll teach us the very same thing—that holy living and doctrine are linked together.

**Transcriber’s Note:** 2 Peter 1:5-10, NKJV. *“But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, . And to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble.”*

**Transcriber’s Note:** 2 Peter 3:14, 17 and 18. *“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless.”*

Doctrine always precedes practice, Peter taught us. Doctrine, which is the standard of Biblical truth, precedes practice.

Now in the second epistle, we’re also going to see that false doctrine and all unholy living go together. Just as true doctrine and holy living go together, Peter will teach us that unclear or false doctrine had unholy living will go together. You can take a look at such verses as 2 Peter 2 verse 1, and verse 10, verse 14, and verse 19.

**Transcriber’s Note:** 2 Peter 2:1, 10, 14 and 19. *“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.” “And especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak of dignitaries.” “Having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children.” “While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him he is also brought into bondage.”*

**Bruce:** Now a lot of people say, “It’s not important what you believe. It’s just that you love people and live well.” Well, many people will say that, but Peter is going to teach us that mindset is fatally wrong, because how one lives is determined most of all by how one thinks. And that’s why we have that little card from Romans 12. *“Do not be conformed to the system of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,”* so that you can prove what is the good and perfect will of God and understand that. You see, how we think does determine how we act. And the world is going to teach us basically from inside the church that doctrine isn’t that important. It’s just how you love and how you live. That’s the real issue. Yes, Brian?

**Brian:** You can put this off. But sometimes we act intentionally before we know our thinking is wrong. And so we act intentionally. Can you speak to that at all?

## *“The Divine Life” Part 1*

**Bruce:** I’ll put that off. (*Laughter.*) I think we will get to that, because Peter is going to say this as we get into the whole issue of false teachers, Brian. That’s why we’ve got to understand what it is that we believe and how we act. Sometimes, it’s subtle.

Let me just show you a quick summary verse here. Go to 2 Peter chapter 3. I think that’s where it is. He makes a wonderful statement that’s both a summary of both 1 and 2 Peter.

Chapter 3 of 2 Peter. *“This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere minds by way of reminder, that you should remember the prophets and the Holy Scriptures and the commandments of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”*

Now basically, he’s going to stimulate us to what other translations call *“wholesome thinking.”* The reason he wrote 1 and 2 Peter is to stimulate within us proper thinking—wholesome thinking, he says. Now when you and I intend to think unwholesome thoughts, we’re going to have unwholesome acts. That’s what we’re going to talk about as we get into 2 Peter. So I’ll put that off as we get into that. But we’ll get into it in depth. Now understand this. Yes, Don?

**Don:** Yes. A favorite expression of a lot of people these days, even in the church, is *“deeds, not creeds.”* That’s a very problematic expression.

**Bruce:** Deeds, not creeds. That would be the same thing as saying that the only thing you need to do is to love other people and live correctly. Don’t worry about doctrine.

**Don:** Yeah.

**Bruce:** Don’t worry about doctrine. Good point. Thank you.

Let’s continue looking at this, because what we believe is important. What we believe determines what we do.

Just let me give you an illustration. Some years ago I was doing some research about this whole concept of just living and loving and not having right doctrine. And really, it’s a belief issue.

The nation of India, I discovered, does not have a food problem.

**Participant:** That’s right.

**Bruce:** They have a belief problem.

**Participant:** Mm-hmm.

**Bruce:** Now here were the facts that stimulated that sentence. This was several years ago, maybe twenty years ago. They have 200 million cows that eat enough grain for seven people per cow. Now in the nation of India, the cow is a sacred animal. And they treat it with a great deal of respect and they don’t eat it. There are all sorts of things that they don’t do with a cow that we would do.

**Participant:** Holy cow! (*Laughter.*)

**Bruce:** They would basically say that it’s a holy cow. (*Laughter.*) But notice this. Two hundred million cows eat enough grain for seven people per cow. And that would feed one fourth of the world’s population. Do you realize that?

That’s a belief problem because they believe certain things incorrectly, because they don’t have the doctrine of the Scripture that we’re talking about. And so it’s very, very important that we understand that doctrine is important in what we do. There are creeds

## *“The Divine Life” Part 1*

that we need to understand to help us to live our lives properly, according to the Scripture.

So it's that type of dangerous false doctrine that Peter is going to introduce to us in 2 Peter.

Now let me give you some insights into how this principle of false doctrine really stimulates unholy living. You can just follow along. Let your eyes run through 2 Peter because I'm going to give you a quick overview of this.

In chapter 2 verse 1, these false teachers deny that the Lord bought them through His grace. They deny the Lord who bought them. In chapter 2, verses 10 and 12, these false teachers were daring and irreverent. They scoffed at the promise of the Lord's return in chapter 3. They lived immoral lives in chapter 2. They seduced unstable souls in chapter 2. They caused the truth to be evil spoken of in chapter 2. They made great promises of liberty, but they were not able to provide any liberty at all. They just made slaves of people. You'll see that in chapter 2 also. And they were insubordinate to authority.

Now those are some of the things that we have to deal with inside the church. And Peter is very, very clear that our battle now, spiritually, is in the church by false people with false doctrines, who will teach things erroneously to get people to have unwholesome thoughts. And the whole purpose of 1 and 2 Peter is to teach you and me how to have wholesome thoughts so we will have holy conduct. Wholesome thoughts based upon Biblical truth produce holy conduct.

The two main themes we will look at in 2 Peter will be these. Peter will talk about *intellectualism*. that is knowledge with no practice, knowledge with no application. Doctrine precedes practice. They will basically say, “Practice is all that counts, because you don't have to have anything other than just knowledge.” There's no practice.

The second thing would be *antinomianism*. Antinomianism is no law of holiness. You practice, but have no law. You just do what you want—antinomianism. And we'll talk about those things as we move through this.

The Puritan William Morehead says this about the introduction to 2 Peter. “Christians should know the truth and the whole truth. And they should be able to detect error and recognize the times in which they live. They should know how dangerous the world is that surrounds them, and that ever seeks to poison their minds, to abase their affections, neutralize their testimony and paralyze their faith.” That's what Peter is going to deal with in 2 Peter, this epistle.

He shows us that the true knowledge springs out of a living faith in the Person and work of Christ and the promises of God. He's also going to tell us that true knowledge is characterized by continual growth and development. We'll see that in these early verses.

Two things Peter will do. He will remind us of the saving faith that we have in Christ. And secondly, he will re-emphasize the need to consistently be in a state of Christlike growth so that we can recognize the counterfeits.

And the first two things of which he is going to remind us of the divine life are these—the description of the divine life in verses 1 and 2, and the consequences of the divine life, which will be verses 3 and 4. And that's where we begin our study.

## *“The Divine Life” Part 1*

I want to remind you of this. He is going to re-emphasize that we must be in a growth position in our knowledge of Christ. Now Peter will tell us that there is a difference between church growth and church expansion. We get confused with that terminology in our culture today. We think church growth means numbers. Peter is going to say that church growth means the knowledge of your relationship on a personal level with Christ. Church growth, Biblically, always goes into the depth of the person’s growth and understanding of grace. Church expansion is the increase in numbers.

People say to me, “Are you involved in church growth?”

“Yes, I am. I teach a group on Friday mornings. That’s my commitment to church growth.” It’s to take us deeper into the Scriptures so that we develop our saving knowledge of Christ and we’re constantly in a growth position. Expansion is the result of growth. We have all sorts of programs that introduce activities that we do to produce growth, but it’s really defined by numbers. And so we need to be very, very careful to understand the difference between church growth which Peter will talk about, and church expansion, which is what our culture talks about.

Now I’m not opposed to church expansion. Understand that. But you don’t do that as a program. It’s a consequence of God’s sovereign grace in the building of the church and how they develop numerically.

I have one friend who is the pastor of a church of about six thousand people in California. When you ask him, “What is your church growth movement?”, he’ll say, “the sovereignty of God.” That’s it. He said, “All we do is preach the whole counsel of God. And God has been pleased in His sovereign mercy to expand us numerically.”

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** But he said, “We’ve never had a church growth program per se to bring people in. We’re involved in evangelism, certainly.” But he said, “Our church expansion program is the sovereignty of God.”

Now let’s explore how Peter is going to describe for us the divine life. Now you’ve got to understand the bridge between 1 Peter and 2 Peter. 1 Peter dealt with salvation, submission and suffering.

Now he starts again talking about the divine life. He says, “Now let me explain to you the divine life so we can understand how we can live a life of submission and suffer correctly.” So he describes for us this divine life. And you’ll see this in verses 1 and 2. Let me read that again.

*“Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained an equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.”*

Now notice. May grace and peace be multiplied to you in your knowledge. The more you and I know about the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ, the more we’re going to grow in our grace and peace. Do you see that? The more we will grow in grace and the more we will grow in peace.

**Participant:** Amen.

## *“The Divine Life” Part 1*

**Bruce:** It’s based on how we deepen our knowledge, growing in our grace in the knowledge of God. So let’s explore how Peter describes for us this divine life. First of all, I would-- Yes, Don?

**Don:** I don’t know if you’re going to go into this. But I think verse 1, the end of verse 1, is one of the great passages where Jesus is identified as God.

**Bruce:** Excellent. I was going to go there, but you—

**Don:** Oh, no! (*Laughter.*) Sorry. Go ahead.

**Bruce:** We will get to that. But it’s a good point.

:*To those who have obtained.*” Now I’m going to explain that. Let’s start right there. We’ll get to that in just a moment, Don.

**Don:** Sure.

**Bruce:** First of all, I would say it is this. It is an *allotted life*. The first thing we need to know is that we did not obtain faith through our own efforts, or from our own strength--we need to understand that!—but through God’s favor alone. That’s how we developed the faith. You have an *allotted* life. It is not something that you achieved. It is something that you received. That’s why I use the word *allotted*.

We have not earned it. And we do not deserve it. Notice verse 1. It came to us not through any merit of our own, or effort of our own, but all of grace.

*“Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Christ Jesus, to those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.”* In that verse he teaches us that Jesus is God. And that’s the point of false belief that the teachers of the false doctrines in chapter 2 will begin to say, that Jesus is not God. He might be just some other means of communicating standards of moral excellence, but He is not God Himself. That’s a key verse that we need to understand. Proper doctrine begins with the Person and work of Christ—that Christ is God Himself.

Now what do we mean by “an allotted life?” The word that I like to translate—and some translations say, “*to those who have received.*” It’s a Greek word that means this: to obtain by lot; to receive by divine allotment. That’s why I call this an allotted life.

Notice verse 2. “*To those who have obtained,*” or have received “*a faith of equal standing.*” This is something that we receive by divine allotment. It is not something that you and I choose to get. It is not something that we achieve. It’s not something that we obtain. It is something that we receive because of the Person and work of Christ.

The same idea is in verse 3. Notice this. “*His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence.*”

You see, verse 1 and verse 2 and verse 3 talk about our allotted life. The first thing we need to understand is this—that He has called us by His own glory and goodness.

Notice. That means this, men—that faith is given to us. It’s not something that you work at. It’s something that you receive. Now we work at it after we receive it. That’s our human responsibility. We’re talking about the one side of the coin right now, which is the sovereignty of God in salvation.

## *“The Divine Life” Part 1*

Faith is given in sovereign grace by God to the sinner, which means that we’re elected, which means that we’re chosen out of the human race for salvation. And that is part of the salvation that God gives us.

Essentially, Peter is saying this—that our faith is linked to the divine allotment of God. Why is it that you believe? Because God was pleased in His mercy to choose you.

Now people who deny the doctrine of election deny that God has any mercy. And I’ll explain that in a moment.

God chooses us not because we believe. He chooses us so that we will believe.

**Participant:** That’s right.

**Bruce:** That’s why He chooses us, so that we will believe. And faith is part of that salvation.

Peter already discussed God’s calling, bringing us to Himself, in 1 Peter chapter 1, verses 1 and 2. Let’s go there for a moment. I want to review this for you.

Now you’ve heard me say it this way. What God the Father ordains the Son accomplishes, and the Holy Spirit applies—three stages of our salvation. What the Father ordains—election,—the Son accomplishes at the cross. And the Holy Spirit applies it when the gospel is preached.

**Participant:** Yes, sir.

**Bruce:** What the Father ordains the Son accomplishes. The Holy Spirit applies.

Now let me take you back to 1 Peter chapter 1, and let you see that he does the same thing. A little different description, but the same three stages. Go back and take a look at 1 Peter chapter 1, beginning at verse 3.

*:Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to His great mercy He has caused us to be born again to a living hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”*

Now notice this, as you go back to the verse right before that. *“To those who are elect, exiles out of the Dispersion, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Christ Jesus, and for sprinkling with His blood.”* You see the same three things.

Notice! *“According to the foreknowledge of God”*—what the Father ordained. *“Through the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with His blood.”*

Now let me show you how that works out. Notice, first of all, the three steps of God’s calling a person to salvation. Peter describes it for us there.

Step one is this. That is the act of God bringing the sinner into the place of salvation by choosing him out from the rest. It starts right there—God choosing us in the divine allotment.

Now the word that he uses there is the word *foreknowledge*. He does that by His own foreknowledge. Now that foreknowledge does not mean that He knew in advance that you and I would choose Him. It does not mean that. The word *foreknowledge* means to know with a peculiar regard and affection in a very personal way. In other words, it was God’s foreknowledge, in a very personal and affectionate way, especially the love He had for those people who He calls to Himself. It does not mean that He understands that you

## *“The Divine Life” Part 1*

and I one day, when we hear the gospel, will repent and believe. He calls us so that we will repent and believe. He doesn't call us because He knows that we will. The word *foreknowledge* does not mean, “I understand that when you come to hear the gospel, you will come to faith. I know that you're going to do that in advance.” That's not foreknowledge. He says that it's a very personal and intimate way in which He does this. Yes, Bishop?

**Bishop Rodgers:** Wouldn't you say that He knows us *before* we respond?

**Bruce:** Absolutely. It's what we talked about last week. He creates within us a willingness to be willing. He knows us beforehand, because it's a very special affection in a personal way.

The word *foreknowledge* means this—peculiar regard and special affection in a personal way. He knows us for reasons known only to Himself. We can't probe the depths of that. That's one of the secret things of God that we must just accept by faith.

The idea carries with it deliberate counsel. This is not a haphazard selection. It is the deliberate counsel in the counsel of His own will, according to the pleasure of His own will.

Why does God do that? Ephesians says, “*according to the counsel of His own will.*” It pleased God to do so.

Now why doesn't He save everybody? Why doesn't He elect everybody? Why some and not others? We don't know the answer to that. That is a secret thing that belongs to God, and you need to let it stay there.

Now let me tell you how other people, other theologians, review this. B. B. Warfield says this about this first statement in 2 Peter about the divine allotment. “The marvel of marvels is not that God in His infinite love has not elected all of the guilty race to be saved, but that He has elected any.”

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** Let the secret things be secret. The things that are revealed for us are for our own knowledge and for our children to be obedient. Let the secret things be secret.

**Participant:** Bruce, excuse me.

**Bruce:** Yes?

**Participant:** In what you just discussed, you were defining God's foreknowledge.

**Bruce:** Yes.

**Participant:** And you said that it did not include His knowing in advance that we would accept the gospel.

**Bruce:** Right.

**Participant:** Correct me if I'm wrong, but you're simply defining the word *foreknowledge*. You're not saying that God did not know in advance, is that right?

**Bruce:** That's correct.

**Participant:** Okay, thank you.

**Bruce:** Yes, I'm just trying to define the word *foreknowledge*. He does know us in advance, absolutely. But that does not mean that He knows that you are going to choose Him in advance. He's going to do something to us to make us choose Him in advance. That's what He's going to do. Good question. Thank you for clarifying that.

## *“The Divine Life” Part 1*

The key word here in B. B. Warfield’s statement is the word *guilty*. “The marvel of marvels is not that God in His infinite love has not elected all of the guilty race to be saved, but that He has elected any.” Now in my mind, the key word there is the word *guilty*.

Sin renders man guilty. Why is it that we are guilty? Because we are sinful. We are not the accused awaiting trial, but we are the convicted awaiting sentence. Do you understand the difference? We’re not the accused awaiting trial. We’re the convicted awaiting sentence. And God in His mercy does what to those who are awaiting sentence? For reasons known only to Himself, as an act of absolute mercy, He elects them to saving faith, to salvation.

**Participant:** Praise God! Amen!

**Bruce:** Now do you realize this? Here’s a crass example that might be helpful. Let’s just say that you had a building. And there were ten convicting criminals awaiting sentence. They’re not accused; they’re convicted of their crimes—the sin of cosmic treason against a holy God. They’re convicted, awaiting their sentence. God, in His mercy, goes into that building and pulls out four of them.

What are you going to say about that? It’s not fair? It’s not loving? Remember, they are getting their just due, which is their sentence. God in His mercy spares them, pardons them, for reasons known only to Himself. And the last thing you and I should say is, “That is not fair! Why doesn’t He do it for everybody?”

I don’t know the answer to that. You don’t know the answer to that. But the issue is this. We just need to realize this. Why does God save anybody? And least of all, me? Yes, Jim?

**Jim:** Bruce, it seems to me that the first thing we would know is that whatever God does, it’s good.

**Bruce:** Absolutely.

**Jim:** He does the highest good. So in that scenario, why He would choose four and not the others, we wouldn’t necessarily know why. But we would know that whatever He did, it was the highest good. We’d have to trust Him in that regard.

**Bruce:** Absolutely. Well said, Jim. Thank you.

You see, whatever God does is holy. Whatever God does is righteous. Whatever God does is just. And you and I just have to trust the character of God, not knowing all the things that God does because those are secret things that we just don’t know. Whatever God does is going to be good because that’s who He is. It’s going to be holy, because He is holy, because that’s who He is. It’s going to be righteous, because that’s who He is. We need to understand the characteristics of God and just trust His character and the nature of who He is in His Being, while not understanding the things that He does.

The answer to all of these questions of “why this?” and “why that ?” is basically this. “*According to the counsel of His own will.*”

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** That’s our answer—according to the counsel of His own will. Yes?

**Participant:** We like to judge God based on what we think our standards are.

**Bruce:** Yes.

## *“The Divine Life” Part 1*

**Participant:** The Bible gives us perspective from His standards, and that’s where we have to look from.

**Bruce:** Absolutely. You see, some people would say, “Well Bruce, what you’re saying isn’t fair.” Well, you know, fairness is a human quality, not a holy quality. It’s something that is a human standard.

I’ll tell you what’s not fair. It’s not fair that Christ paid for my sin.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** That’s not fair. For somebody else to pay for my cosmic treason against a holy God, that somebody else paid for that, that is not fair. Now it is just because somebody paid the cost. It is righteous because it is the right thing to do. It is holy. But it is certainly not fair.

Don’t ever say that God is not fair. If somebody says that God is not fair, the first thing I say is, “Isn’t that wonderful!” (*Laughter.*) “Thank you. I’m so glad that He’s not, because if it were, I would still be lost.”

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** I would still be lost. Yes, Tom?

**Tom:** I also think that the act of salvation is one thing, and I thank God for that. But He goes so far beyond that. He not only saves us. He reconciles us. He brings us into His family. He treats us as His sons, co-heirs with Jesus Christ.

**Bruce:** Absolutely.

**Tom:** It blows your mind!

**Bruce:** That’s what we’ll discuss as we continue our examination of the divine life—all of the other consequences of God’s wonderful allotted life. The first thing we have to understand, men, is this. What’s your response to having an allotted life?

**Participation:** Adoration.

**Bruce:** “Thank you!” That’s all you can say! All you can say is, “Thank you!” That’s why the Scripture says that we have an attitude of gratitude as a motivation.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** Remember this. Those who deny election deny that God can have any mercy.  
Participant: Hey, Bruce?

**Bruce:** Yes, please?

**Participant:** You touched on Charles Finney before, and how much he changed—

**Bruce:** Correct.

**Participant:** The view of the church. And I’d just suggest to you guys that you can go onto Ligonier Ministries. **Transcriber’s Note:** [www.ligonier.org](http://www.ligonier.org)

**Participant:** This week they had a history on it. There were one or two sections early on Finney that went into it a lot deeper than what you’ve even touched on. It blows your mind, how much of an impact he had, and how much he has changed the modern church. I’m sure a lot of us would even question what you’re teaching because before, that wouldn’t have been questioned until Finney came along. And it’s just unbelievable how radical he was.

**Bruce:** It’s a good reminder. My doctoral dissertation was on that very subject—the Puritan view of the pulpit. And what I do is that I compare the Puritan view of the

## *“The Divine Life” Part 1*

gospel, which is very God-centered, and Neo-finnerism, modern Finneyism, which is very man-centered. That’s exactly what Brian is talking about.

So if you want to read this sometime—it’s not commode reading; you don’t sit and read one passage at a time-- (*Laughter.*) It’s rather deep. But in the back I have a synopsis of the contrast of the twenty-five features of modern Finneyism versus the twenty-five features of Puritan evangelism. Just let me give you a couple of cross sections here.

Modern Finneyism, which began in about 1850 and which is now the standard of evangelism in America today and pretty much worldwide, says this. The salvation process is determined by the needs of man. That’s where Finney starts.

In Puritan evangelism, which I’m saying is Biblical evangelism, the view of the salvation process is determined by the character of God. Where does salvation start? Does it start with God’s character? Or does it start with my need? There’s a huge difference! The implications of that are profound!

Here’s another illustration. In modern Finneyism, salvation emphasizes what man can receive from God. In Biblical evangelism, salvation emphasizes what God chooses to accomplish for man. Do I do it, or does God do it? The difference is what I receive from Him or what He accomplishes for me, in me, by His work. What the Father ordained the Son accomplished and the Holy Spirit applies. If you want something to read, give it a shot. (*Laughter.*) That will explain what Brian just said.

**Participant:** Hey, Bruce?

**Bruce:** Yes, please?

**Participant:** Speaking of Ligonier Ministries, I once heard R. C. Sproul say that everything that God does is for His own glory. And unto His glory, He shows His perfect justice by allowing some people to bear the consequences for their sins unto eternity in hell. And, for His glory, He shows His perfect mercy in electing some to bear His love unto eternity in heaven.

**Bruce:** Amen.

**Participant:** That’s what Romans 9 is all about.

**Bruce:** That’s right. Romans 9 is an exact summary of that.

Now let’s take a look at modern evangelism. We rent a stadium. (*Laughter.*) We do a prayer group in advance and do all the things that fit in.

When you go to the Billy Graham Library at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois, you’ll see a plaque on the wall that says this. “Revival is not a function of God. It’s a function of man.” Here are the seven things you do. That’s what we’ve been doing since 1850.

Now they would basically say this. How do we evaluate a revival? Modern evangelism would say this. You count the heads of the people who came forward to accept Christ.

Now let’s just say that you have fifty thousand people in the stadium. Biblical evangelism would say this. You evaluate a revival if truth is proclaimed. That’s the only way you can determine a revival. Was truth proclaimed? It’s not the number of people who received Christ.

## *“The Divine Life” Part 1*

In theory, they would say this. Twenty thousand people accepted Christ. That meant that thirty thousand people didn't. So they would say that they were effective because of the twenty thousand.

I would say that we were effective to fifty thousand, because truth was proclaimed. And brother, just as you described, some of those people will bear God's love and mercy, and some of those people will bear God's holiness and justice. Either way, God is what?

**Men:** Glorified.

**Bruce:** And the reason that He is glorified is because truth is proclaimed. How the Lord works that out in the application of the truth is His business, not ours. Our role is to proclaim Biblical truth.

That's one of the dangers that Peter is going to talk about in 2 Peter, about those people from inside the church who tweak the doctrines a little bit to get us to have unwholesome thoughts about who God is, and to change our practice in life. That's why I want us to spend some time making sure that we understand the definition of what the divine life is. And it starts with God choosing us out of His mercy because we were the accused awaiting trial? No, we were the convicted awaiting sentence. And He chooses us to have saving faith for reasons only known to Him. We need to understand the divine life.

Augustus Strong, another theologian, says this. I gave you what B. B. Warfield said. Augustus Strong says this. “We may better praise God that He saves any than charge Him with unfairness or injustice because He saves so few.”

The real issue, men, is this. Why me? There's no answer to that other than this. It pleased God in the counsel of His own will. That's the only answer we have.

Now see, if you have incorrect thoughts about that, you're going to have incorrect conduct about that. Doctrine precedes practice. That's why we need to define and understand the divine life as an allotted life.

The second step is this. The Holy Spirit sets us apart—that's sanctification—sets the sinner apart from his unbelief to the act of faith in the Lord Jesus. Notice 1 Peter again. “*According to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctifying of the Spirit.*” He sets us apart to the act of faith.

A.W. Pink, another theologian, says this about that act of the Holy Spirit. “The Holy Spirit does something more in each of God's elect than He does in the non-elect. He works in them both to will and to do God's pleasure.”

To will and to do. Last week we said this. He makes us willing to be willing. He gives us the will to be willing. That's the role of the Holy Spirit. Thus the Holy Spirit brings the one chosen to the act of faith and belief in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me show you a cross reference of this. Go to the book of 1 John. James, Peter, 1 John.

Now we've discussed this before, but it's a good point to emphasize this. Look at 1 John chapter 5 verse 1. “*Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God.*”

Now we lose a little bit of the translation of that in English. Literally, it means this. “Having been born of God, one believes.” The Greek is this—*ex tau tao begenetai*. It

## *“The Divine Life” Part 1*

means this. There is a past act in your life as a present result that is indicated and evidenced by your belief. Having been born of God, one believes.

Which comes first, faith or life?

**Participant:** Life.

**Bruce:** Life comes first. How can a dead man believe?

**Participant:** I don't know.

**Bruce:** A dead man cannot believe unless he is given life. Having been born of God, you now believe.

You see, friends, our divine life is an allotted life. It's something that God accomplishes through us through the Holy Spirit.

Notice. There's a third step in 1 Peter chapter 1. God the Son cleanses the sinner in His precious blood.

So there are three steps to our salvation. Peter writes this in 1 Peter and we need to review the description of our divine life. First of all, God the Father chooses the sinner for salvation. Secondly, God the Spirit brings the chosen sinner to the act of faith. And thirdly, God the Son cleanses him in His precious blood and forgives Him. Just a quick overview of what Peter says is the divine life.

Someone not saved may say, “How do I know if I'm one of the elect?” I think that a simple answer would be this. Put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ immediately as your personal Savior and Lord, the One who died on the cross for you as your Substitute for your personal sin, and God will save you. If you do that, then you will know that God chose you. It's really quite simple. You'll know, because what is the Holy Spirit's job?

**Participant:** To reveal all truth.

**Bruce:** To reveal all truth—that He will convict us of our sin, convince us of our sin, convert us from our sin, and comfort us in a new way of life.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** If somebody does that, and they believe, they will know what? I'm one of the elect.

**Participant:** Yes.

**Bruce:** Now it's not our job, friends, to go around ripping tee shirts off to see if you have a big E on your chest. (*Laughter.*) I'm not saying that. Please understand—that's not our job. Our job is to proclaim Biblical truth and let God the Holy Spirit accomplish that which the Father ordained and the Holy Spirit applies.

The first description of our divine life is that it is an allotted life. Next week we'll talk about it being an *equal* life—equal in preciousness to God and equal in position to God. Today, we said that it's an allotted life.

I'm sure this raises a lot of questions. Just go back and read the Scripture and just let the Holy Spirit guide you into all truth.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** Remember, he is defining for us the divine life. This is something that we have to get absolutely correct. We must understand that doctrine precedes practice. If we're going to practice the art of holiness, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we need to have the doctrine of our salvation correct. Peter starts right with that. Yes, Don?

## *“The Divine Life” Part 1*

**Don:** That’s why, Bruce, the Westminster Confession, after it talks about Scripture and the Trinity, dives right into that, just like Peter did. Some people say, “Well, you shouldn’t teach these things. This is meat. Wait till you get to the basics.” But it’s interesting that here Peter does this, and the Westminster divines also started with that because they considered that foundational.

**Bruce:** And so does the first Baptist Confession. (*Laughter.*)

**Don:** Okay.

**Bruce:** It’s the same thing with the Westminster Confession. So it is with the Book of Common Prayer. They all teach the same thing.

If you want a good rendering of all the things we’ve talked about, here’s another book I’d recommend for you. (*Bruce shows the men the book.*) Read this one. This is really, really well done in layman terms, for guys like you and I to understand, about the essential truths of the Christian faith. And it starts with our understanding of what it means to be reconciled to the Father, understanding our salvation. Bishop Rodgers has written this, and we are pleased to have Bishop Rodgers as part of our group.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** So Bishop Rodgers, I salute you and commend you for this. And I would encourage everybody to read this. It’s a wonderful work so that you can understand many of the things that I’ve confused you with today. (*Laughter and applause.*)

Let’s pray, brothers. My summary statement is this. Just ponder this for a moment. To deny the doctrine of election is to deny that God has any mercy.

Heavenly Father, we’re overwhelmed with the magnificence and glory of Your truth. It really emanates and it is based upon Your character and not our need. Father, help us in our unbelief. Unravel these wonderful things that come from the heart of a holy God. Father, help us in our unbelief. May Your Holy Spirit guide us into all truth. Prevent us from saying things that are not consistent with the Biblical revelation, so we might worship more and grow more in grace in the true knowledge of the Jesus of Biblical revelation and not the Jesus of human imagination. And may it be so for Jesus’ sake. And all the Brave Men said, “Amen.” (*Applause.*)