

GRACEWAY COMMUNITY CHURCH

# PRAXIS



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# PRAXIS of Perseverance

A Study on Peter's Writings

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Graceway Community Church

PRAXIS  
of  
Perseverance

Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptures are taken from the English Standard Version Bible.

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**Welcome to the November edition of Praxis!** Throughout this month we will read through the letters of First and Second Peter.

*The readings are brief*, in order to cover the Scripture, present the thought, and allow time to take it in through *meditation, contemplation,* and *prayer*. We encourage you to record your responses and the things that the Holy Spirit shows you. The readings are set up according to the ancient practice of the *daily office*, with a reading for morning hours, and a reading for evening hours. Of course, when and how you do this is completely up to you, but we do encourage you to do it at the same time and place each day, in order to simplify and develop the habit.

**Take your time to soak in the Word. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you each day. Even the simplest of things can bring revelation when we dedicate attention to the Spirit and the details.**

This compilation has been designed to lead us into the Scripture each day, to help empower us in the Holy Spirit and Truth, and to culminate in the Home Church experience.

*Make special note* of the pages given to each Sunday, take time to review your readings and responses from the week. This will help prepare you for a richer experience in Home Church, through both sharing and receiving.

*If you are not yet part of a Home Church*, we would love to have you experience it for yourself! Find out more from the person who gave you this book, or reach us at [www.GracewayRI.org](http://www.GracewayRI.org)

The commentary that accompanies each reading is written by Ed Pichette Sr., who serves as an elder and a Home Church Leader at Graceway Community.



*Context of Peter's letters:*

*Conservative scholars date the writing of 1 Peter to the early sixties (62 or 63 AD). The letter is written to believers who are enduring some sort of persecution. There is some question as to the degree of persecution that these believers were threatened with. Some think that these believers were threatened with martyrdom. Others think that they were shunned by society at large and forced to endure social hardship.*

*Oppression does not have to be life threatening to be persecution. Being ostracized can lead to severe depression which can undermine a person's mental and physical health. Furthermore, social discrimination can, and often does, lead to physical mistreatment. Whatever the exact circumstances were, it is clear that Peter was writing to encourage and uplift his readers. He reminds them of the future rewards that they will obtain if they persevere, and hold fast to their commitment to Jesus.*

Begin by reading Matthew 1:1-17

<sup>1</sup> Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 1 Peter 1:1

*In the first verse of this letter, Peter tells us that he is writing to believers in five different areas all of which are located in the northern part of Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). Due to persecution that broke out against believers in the very early church in Jerusalem and surrounding area, many believers had been forced to leave and they dispersed throughout the region. The very early church consisted of mainly Jews who had converted to Christianity. The church Peter is writing to was probably made up by mostly Gentiles who had been converted through the efforts of the Christian Jews who had been forced to leave the environs of Jerusalem.*

*Imagine how difficult it would have been for people to pick up everything they owned and move to an unknown foreign land because of their faith.*

*Even in today's world, many Christians today are facing persecution for their faith. Do you know any of them? You can learn more about this and how to support them at [www.persecution.com](http://www.persecution.com)*

*How might you respond if you found yourself in such a situation today?*

<sup>2</sup> according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you. 1 Peter 1:2

*Peter will continue throughout this letter to encourage. Here at the very start he reminds his readers of some important things they should remember:*

*1) God knew, before it began, that a difficult trial was coming their way. When difficulties come, we can be tempted to think that God has somehow lost control. We must remind ourselves that, in fact, God knew long ago what was coming our way. We must not allow the enemy to cause us to fear. If God has allowed this to happen, then He will also provide all we need to endure through it.*

*2) The trial is “in the sanctification of the Spirit.” Somehow, through this tough circumstance, God is at work to sanctify us – to transform us into the people He wants us to be. It may seem as though these events are against us, but be reassured! In the long run we will come to know how God was using the circumstances for our good.*

*3) The end purpose of all of this is “for obedience to Jesus Christ.” As believers, we are being sanctified with a purpose in mind. God has not saved us to put us on the mantle and have us sit idly by. On the contrary, we’ve been saved to do His will. He has empowered us with His Spirit to enable us to achieve His goals. We obey in order that others may see and make Jesus their Lord as well – so that they too might obey.*

*4) Peter prays for his readers that they would, even in a frightening situation, find grace and peace from the Father.*

*Prayerfully meditate on these things.*

<sup>3</sup> 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, <sup>4</sup> to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 1 Peter 1:3-5

*Peter reminds his readers of the big picture. When we are stressed we can tend to focus our attention on the details of the circumstances that are oppressing us. We need to be reminded to keep our heads up. Even as we go through the trial, remember that it is only for a time. Allow your faith to grow as you work through the struggle. Never forget the ending of the story. Let yourself be "guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."*

*What practices help you through the difficult times?*

*What habits or routines have you nurtured in your life to help you to keep your eyes on the prize when it is difficult to do so?*

<sup>6</sup> In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, <sup>7</sup> so that the tested genuineness of your faith-- more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire-- may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1:6-7

*God allows us to go through some trials in order that we might see the "tested genuineness of your faith." God knows all; so He knows how we will endure through this struggle. He allows it to come for our good. When we finally do have victory in our trial, we can be all the more assured of the truth of our faith. As we overcome with Jesus, we can know that He is being praised, glorified and honored in our lives!*

When Testing Comes

Sometimes you allow us, Lord, to go through times of testing  
And often, Lord, it may come to us after a time of blessing

You let those times we go through be times of deeper work  
To teach us, Lord, to trust in you even though we may hurt

We try so hard to understand just what is going on  
And why we go through such a low when before we felt so strong

And when our bodies are in such pain and our minds are in the dark,  
Why do doubts of your word, Lord, creep into our hearts?

We wonder where you are, O God, in the midst of all our doubt  
And why you even allow such trials that seems to cloud you out

It often seems so hard for us to trust you in these times,  
We want you to remove the pain in our bodies and our minds

And yes, O God, I know you heal and give us hope to believe in  
Then other times, you allow us to go through difficult seasons

But you know what's best for us and you see the bigger picture,  
You're always there to walk with us into a brighter, hope filled future.

~ M.S.Lowndes

<sup>9</sup> Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, <sup>9</sup> obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

1 Peter 1:8-9

*Love that is only talked about is not love at all.*

*Love must be lived out.*

*Love must always take action.*

*Love is proved to be genuine by what we do.*

<sup>16</sup> "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16

*God's love for us led Him to give His own Son's life as a ransom for you and me. Love acts. So, the next time you find yourself suffering in some way because of the faith, remember that you believe in Him. Because you believe, you endure and "rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls."*

*Do you see that what you do and how you respond when tested will help to build your faith?*

*What things has God taught you in the past when He allowed you to undergo some persecution, large or small, for your faith?*

<sup>10</sup> Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, <sup>11</sup> inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. <sup>12</sup> It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look. <sup>13</sup> Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1:10-13

*Peter continues his encouragement. Again, we can be tempted to think that God has lost control when we are being tested. Here Peter tell his readers that when the OT prophets wrote, "they were serving not themselves but you." Not only has God NOT lost control – even in the ancient past He used believers to serve and encourage us!*

*The evidence that we see in our lives of God's care and guidance is truly amazing. Yet, when trials come, we can lose sight of all of that and think that God has forgotten us. When you are going through some spiritual battle, remind yourself of all that God has done for you in the past. He is able and willing to do all that is necessary to keep you and lead you forward in your walk with Him.*

<sup>14</sup> As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, <sup>15</sup> but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, <sup>16</sup> since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." 1 Peter 1:14-16

*Because God is Holy, we too are to be a holy people. In fact, the writer of the book of Hebrews tells us that we, as believers, must be holy.*

<sup>14</sup> Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. Hebrews 12:14

*Hold fast to the faith that God has given to you. Seek to honor Him in all you say and do – especially when circumstance are tempting you to feel as though you've been forgotten! Be holy and wait for the deliverance that God has prepared for you.*

An Open Heart, by Deborah Ann

An open heart,  
 Jesus can remake  
 for in His riches  
 it will partake.

It accepts His love,  
 His mercy and grace  
 for an open heart  
 His life can embrace.

An open mind,  
 wholeness will receive  
 for it no longer  
 His Spirit grieves.

It desires godly wisdom,  
 it seeks holy living  
 its thoughts are now full  
 of hope and thanksgiving.

An open heart,  
 takes a willing spirit too  
 so Jesus its mind . . .  
 can restore and renew!

<sup>17</sup> And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, <sup>18</sup> knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

1 Peter 1:17-19

*When we are tempted to believe that God has lost control we must remind ourselves of all that God has done for us. He has gone to incredible extremes on our behalf by surrendering His Son for our sake. If He has done all that, how could He then forget about us and allow us to be blindsided by the devil?*

*Be assured that He has not forgotten about you. Remember who you are in Christ. Have faith that what God is allowing in your life, He is allowing with a purpose. His goal is to sanctify us - the same people whom He has perfected through His Son's blood.*

<sup>14</sup> For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

Hebrews 10:14

<sup>20</sup>He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you <sup>21</sup> who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. 1 Peter 1:20-21

*Jesus, like the Father, has always existed. While we see some truths about God in the world around us, it was only when Jesus was born into our world that people could come to understand the Father much more fully. He came to explain the Father to us and to help us to understand that, through faith, we all have the opportunity to know the Father and to be filled with His Spirit. Because of Jesus, whom God raised from the dead, we have faith and hope in God.*

*Take a few moments to glorify God and to thank Him for all He's done for you. Worship Him today in Spirit and in Truth.*

<sup>22</sup> Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, <sup>23</sup> since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; <sup>24</sup> for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, <sup>25</sup> but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you. 1 Peter 1:22-25

*This first chapter closes with a reminder that we are to love one another. When we are being tried it is very easy to focus all our attention on ourselves and our problems. If we allow that to happen we can tend to forget something that should not ever be forgotten. There are two great commandments:*

<sup>27</sup> And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." Luke 10:27

*Never allow any trial to cause you to neglect the most important things of all. At all times and in all ways we are to love God with all our being and to love our neighbors as ourselves.*

<sup>1</sup> So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. <sup>2</sup> Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation-- <sup>3</sup> if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. <sup>4</sup> As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious,

1 Peter 2:1-4

*At all times and especially when we are under stress, we must remember to shun all sinful behavior. We must desire to learn God's word and His will for our lives. We must "grow up into salvation!" When others reject and persecute us, then we must remind ourselves that we are "in the sight of God chosen and precious."*

*What behaviors do you have to remind yourself about who you are in Christ? Do you daily remind yourself of the value that God places on you?*

*How are you helping others to see the love that God has for them?*

***What struck you most in this week's readings?***

**What questions or comments did you come away with?**

**How does what you learned relate to your life?**

**How does it relate to the Church family?**

**What can you share with your church family from what you've received?**

***Notes from Home Church.***

<sup>5</sup> you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup> For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." <sup>7</sup> So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," <sup>8</sup> and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. 1 Peter 2:5-8

*Peter encourages us further with this illustration. We are living stones being built up into a spiritual house.*

*When you build anything, the first steps you take set the tone for the whole project. When building a house, the first stone laid – the cornerstone must be perfectly positioned. If not, the whole house, built on the cornerstone, will be defective and may not last. Here in Peter's metaphor, Jesus is the cornerstone. His work is perfect in every way. He is the perfect cornerstone upon which we all are being built up into a spiritual house. We are a holy priesthood.*

*In the OT a priest was seen as a mediator between God and man. Ordinary men had no access to God. A man who wanted to offer something to God would go to a priest who could take the offering and bring it before God.*

*We do not offer sacrifices as the OT priests did, rather we bring the message of salvation to the lost. We point them to Jesus – to the cornerstone – so that they too might become living stones.*

*In all of this Peter is helping his persecuted readers. He is showing us that, as believers, we have all we need and we have a glorious future. It is the unbelievers that are performing the persecution who are to be pitied. "They stumble because they disobey the word." Unless they repent, they will suffer eternal loss.*

*What are your thoughts?*

<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. <sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. 1 Peter 2:9-10

*Peter continues describing what believers are in Christ. In verse 10 he is probably referring to an OT passage where Hosea describes God's punishment and later restoration of His people who had rejected His word.*

<sup>6</sup> She conceived again and bore a daughter. And the LORD said to him, "Call her name No Mercy, for I will no more have mercy on the house of Israel, to forgive them at all. <sup>7</sup> But I will have mercy on the house of Judah, and I will save them by the LORD their God. I will not save them by bow or by sword or by war or by horses or by horsemen." <sup>8</sup> When she had weaned No Mercy, she conceived and bore a son. <sup>9</sup> And the LORD said, "Call his name Not My People, for you are not my people, and I am not your God." <sup>10</sup> Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, "You are not my people," it shall be said to them, "Children of the living God." Hosea 1:6-10

*Once we were "not His people." But now we are "Children of the living God!"*

*Worship Him now for what He has done!*

<sup>11</sup> Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. <sup>12</sup> Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. <sup>13</sup> Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, <sup>14</sup> or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. <sup>15</sup> For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. 1 Peter 2:11-15

*Peter encourages us to abstain from the passions of the flesh. We must, he says, keep our conduct honorable. It is God's will "that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people."*

*Note that Peter has not told us to say anything. As always, our actions will speak louder than any words.*

*What do the actions in your life speak to the unbelievers that you come into contact with?*

<sup>16</sup> Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. <sup>17</sup> Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.  
1 Peter 2:16-17

*We are free in Christ – but that does not mean we are free to do just as we may please. Our freedom is to be used to glorify God.*

<sup>13</sup> For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Galatians 5:13

*When we are enduring persecution, one way to deal with it is to do nothing. We allow the circumstances to immobilize us. That is never a good thing to do. The story of David and Bathsheba begins by noting that it was springtime – a time for kings to go out to war. But David did not go. By not doing what he should have been doing David opened a door by which Satan could tempt him.*

<sup>1</sup> In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, Joab led out the army and ravaged the country of the Ammonites and came and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. And Joab struck down Rabbah and overthrew it.  
1 Chronicles 20:1

*We should use our freedom to act for Christ. Keep doing the things that the Spirit is leading you to do. Keep loving the brotherhood.*

*What do you think about this?*

<sup>22</sup> He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. <sup>23</sup> When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. <sup>24</sup> He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. <sup>25</sup> For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. <sup>18</sup> Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. <sup>19</sup> For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. <sup>20</sup> For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. <sup>21</sup> For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. 1 Peter 2:17-25

*Peter reminds his readers of what Jesus has done. We should take courage and endure as He endured. We know that God is with us when we are being persecuted. God, because Jesus' sacrifice had to be complete and total, turned His back on His Son and left Him alone. Because of what Jesus has done, the Father will never turn His back on you. Though you may have to endure some difficult situations, the Spirit is always with you to strengthen and encourage you.*

*Peter encourages us to: honor everyone, love the family of God, fear God honor the emperor, and remain subject to our masters (supervisors/bosses). We imitate Christ when we suffer even though we are innocent. This is a "gracious thing in the sight of God."*

*Remember you are never alone! Praise and thank God now for His faithfulness to you.*

<sup>1</sup>Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, <sup>2</sup>when they see your respectful and pure conduct. <sup>3</sup>Do not let your adorning be external-- the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear-- <sup>4</sup>but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. <sup>5</sup>For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, <sup>6</sup>as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.

1 Peter 3:1-6

*Having addressed servants, Peter now speaks to women. In the next verse he will address men. The first thing he wants women to know is that they should be subject to their husbands. But read on; why should they submit? It is not, according to Peter, because they are of lesser value. Rather women should submit in order to win their husbands over to the Lord.*

*This principle can and should be extended to encompass all people. We should all submit to one another for the purpose of winning all to Christ! Surely it is the Father's will that all people should come to Him. As we submit to one another we are practicing the Father's will and bringing His kingdom into this world. Peter further warns against vanity, which can be a snare to take our attention off the Lord.*

*What do you think about this?*

<sup>7</sup> Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered. 1 Peter 3:7

*Next Peter addresses men specifically. He commands men to honor their wives as “weaker vessels.” In what sense are women weaker than men? Clearly Paul does not have physical strength in view here. Most likely Paul is speaking to the fact that women were not allowed to learn much more than home-making skills in New Testament times. So issues of how to provide for themselves and others as well as matters of scripture were not available to them. Peter encourages men to be aware of these things and to remember that they should honor their wives.*

*Truly in all our relationships we should never see ourselves as being of more value than anyone else. Scripture advises us to value others above ourselves.*

<sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Philippians 2:3

<sup>8</sup> Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. <sup>9</sup> Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. <sup>10</sup> For "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; <sup>11</sup> let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. 1 Peter 3:8-11

*Peter summarizes this part of his letter by reminding us that we must be humble and we should all be seeking unity. He reminds us that true forgiveness means that we cannot be vengeful. Instead we should always seek to bless one another.*

*Do you "seek peace and pursue it" in all your relationships?  
What practices can you add to your life to help you to reach this goal?*

<sup>12</sup> For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." <sup>13</sup> Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? 1 Peter 3:12-13

*Peter continues his encouragement by reminding us that we can know for certain that God is with us when we behave righteously. On the other hand, we are reminded that God is against those who do evil.*

*It is of utmost importance to learn and know what our righteous God is asking of us. We must pursue His goals in all we do - in good times and in bad.*

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Matthew 6:33

<sup>14</sup> But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, <sup>15</sup> but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, <sup>16</sup> having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. 1 Peter 3:14-16

*Whatever we may go through in life, we can and must act righteously. If we suffer as a consequence of righteousness then so be it. It is never pleasant to suffer, but never lose sight of the fact that God will always, in the long run, honor and bless those who behave righteously.*

*You demonstrate who you are and what you truly believe by your behavior.*

You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Matthew 7:16

*What kind of fruit is being produced in your life?*

*What does it reveal about your belief?*

<sup>17</sup> For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. <sup>18</sup> For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, 1 Peter 3:17-18

*If we do suffer for doing good then we will not be the first to do so. The Father asked the very same thing of His Son. If the Son could be asked to submit Himself to suffering in the Father's will, how can we think that we should always escape suffering? God's word explicitly tells us that as we walk with the Lord we can expect to be rewarded for what we do AND we should expect to be persecuted as well.*

<sup>29</sup> Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, <sup>30</sup> who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. Mark 10:29-30

*Do not think that suffering persecution is always a consequence of having done wrong. Those who hate the Lord will hate those who are like Him. God may use that fact to allow you to endure suffering so as to achieve for Him in various ways. First, God may use the sufferings we go through to make us perfect as He did with His son.*

For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. Hebrews 2:10

*Secondly, God can use our suffering as a testimony to unbelievers that may lead them to repent and turn their lives over to God.*

*Are you willing to be used in this way?*

<sup>19</sup> in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, <sup>20</sup> because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. 1 Peter 3:19-20

*These and the next few verses are very difficult to understand. In order to try to make sense of them, let's look at the context. Peter has been talking about how it is better to behave righteously and endure suffering than to behave sinfully and suffer as a consequence of that sin.*

*Remember that the story of the flood comes in the book of Genesis - long before the giving of the law and even longer before the coming of the Christ. The story in Gen. 6 & 7 talks about how God had determined to destroy the world population due to the wickedness of people. Noah is presented as the only one who found favor in God's eyes. All would suffer hardship. Noah would endure ridicule as he built a ship in the midst of dry ground. He would have to do all this work of preparation for the flood virtually alone. Suffering would come on all the rest of mankind when the flood came and overtook the earth.*

*Very similar to the NT people, some of whom would suffer righteously and some for their unrighteousness. Those who died in sin would suffer eternal death. But remember they had never heard the word. They had no law - except for the law that is written on people's hearts. And, as Paul tells us in Rom. 2:14-15, even Gentiles who do not have the Law, show that "the work of the law is written on their hearts." So, Peter tells us here that they were held in prison.*

*When Jesus died He went to them to explain so that they might understand their own sinfulness and His perfect righteousness. Jesus went to them to explain so that they would clearly understand their guilt before God and why they would be punished for their sin. Only the eight would survive and seven of them simply because they were related to Noah. So Peter explains that the principle of the righteous having to endure suffering is not new in the NT. From the beginning, those who are faithful to God may have to endure suffering at the hands of the unrighteous. But in the OT and today, the righteous will be rewarded for their faithfulness through suffering, and the unrighteous will suffer eternal loss.*

<sup>21</sup> Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, <sup>22</sup> who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him. 1 Peter 3:21-22

*Just as Noah's family was saved through the water (the flood), we today are saved through baptism. It is not so much the water that saves but what the water represents.*

*For Noah and his family, they were saved because Noah had believed and responded to God in faith by building the ark that would preserve his family protecting them from the danger of the flood. Today, we accept baptism as an outward and public demonstration of the faith that we have placed in Jesus that He is our deliverer! So Noah believed God and acted on that belief. That faith led to the deliverance from the death that was to come on the world in the flood.*

*We too, like Noah, believe God and live out that faith daily in our lives. We have the full assurance that we too will be delivered from the death that is yet to come on the world.*

<sup>1</sup>Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, <sup>2</sup>so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. 1 Peter 4:1-2

*Peter continues his exhortation. We need to be of the same mind and conviction of Jesus. He endured suffering as the will of the Father and so overcame sin and won salvation for all who believe in Him. While our suffering will never be the means of anyone's salvation, still our suffering in the will of God may be a sufficient testimony to some others to encourage them to repent and to turn to God. So we endure for Christ's sake.*

*Are you willing to be used by God in this sort of way?*

*It will require courage and perseverance. But remember you will not go through the circumstances alone. The Spirit of God is with you every step of the way!*

***What struck you most in this week's readings?***

**What questions or comments did you come away with?**

**How does what you learned relate to your life?**

**How does it relate to the Church family?**

**What can you share with your church family from what you've received?**

***Notes from Home Church.***

<sup>3</sup>For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. <sup>4</sup>With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; <sup>5</sup>but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 1 Peter 4:3-5

*Peter continues explaining how unbelievers live and are surprised to learn that believers are unwilling to join in with them. Peter reminds us that those who reject Jesus will pay a terrible price as the consequence of their sinfulness.*

*Is your heart moved like the heart of God is moved for sinners?  
Does it cause you pain to know that many are on the path to eternal loss?*

*Which bothers you more: the suffering you endure when sinners “malign you?” or knowing that a sinner who refuses to repent will suffer eternally? Your answer will go a long way in explaining your relationship with God.*

<sup>6</sup> For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.  
1 Peter 4:6

*Peter reminds his readers that physical death comes to all. Even though we may come to believe in Jesus, still we all have been tainted by sin and, in consequence thereof, we will all die physically. But the gospel must be preached to all so that those who come to believe may live in the spirit even after they have died physically. Peter is not saying that the dead are given another opportunity to repent. Scripture is clear that once a person has died there remains only judgment.*

And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,  
Hebrews 9:27

<sup>22</sup> The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. <sup>8</sup> Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. 1 Peter 4:7-8

*We must remember that the end of time is near. The kingdom of God will soon come in all its fullness when Jesus returns. So we must be all the more diligent about our business of loving one another.*

*How does love cover a multitude of sins? Those who truly love are believers who, by faith, have become followers of the living God. Those who truly believe have had all their sins forgiven. For all believers then, all their sins, truly a multitude of sins, have been covered by the blood of Jesus!*

*Thank the Lord Jesus Christ that your sins, a multitude of sins, have been covered by His blood. Praise Him for choosing to save us rather than choosing to save Himself.*

<sup>9</sup> Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. <sup>10</sup> As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: <sup>11</sup> whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies-- in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 4:9-11

*Here Peter echoes Paul's preaching. We are all to use the spiritual gifts that God has given to us to assist each other and to glorify God. In everything we do we are to glorify God through Jesus Christ! We no longer live for ourselves. We have been bought at a terrible price.*

<sup>15</sup> and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. 2 Corinthians 5:15

<sup>12</sup> Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. <sup>13</sup> But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. <sup>14</sup> If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. 1 Peter 4:12-14

*Don't be surprised that when difficult times come your way. Rather rejoice. Rejoice because God is allowing you to have just a small taste of what His Son endured. If you share in His suffering you will also share in His resurrection.*

<sup>10</sup> that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Philippians 3:10-11

*Praise God today for the glorious future that awaits us. Thank Him that He has allowed you to see the truth about who you are in yourself and who you will become in Him.*

*Take a few minutes to consider how God has brought about changes in you since you became a believer and His Spirit came to live in you.*

*Thank Him for His mercies and graciousness to save you!*

<sup>15</sup> But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. 1 Peter 4:15

*There is a difference between suffering for righteousness and suffering for evil. While you may be asked by God to suffer as a righteous believer, make sure that you do not suffer as a result of wrongdoing.*

*We must always continue to avoid every opportunity for sin. Satan, the enemy of your soul, is looking for any way that he may deceive you and lead you into sin. Stay alert! Be aware of what he is trying to do. Learn to lean upon God's Holy Spirit to guide you through your day. The closer you stay to God, the further you stay away from the evil one.*

Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. James 4:7-8

<sup>16</sup>Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. <sup>17</sup>For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? <sup>18</sup>And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" <sup>19</sup>Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good. 1 Peter 4:16-19

*We may feel as though our suffering is a cause for shame. Others, who do not know all the facts, may think that we are suffering as a consequence of sin. But if you know that you are suffering righteously then there is no reason to be ashamed. You must glorify God in your circumstances. As Peter says, entrust your soul to a faithful Creator and keep doing good.*

*What do you think?*

<sup>1</sup> So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: <sup>2</sup> shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; <sup>3</sup> not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. 1 Peter 5:1-3

*As he begins to draw this letter to a close, Peter encourages the church elders to lead well. The leaders must always be looking out for the good of the church body. Leaders are not to be domineering but rather they must be good examples to the church members.*

*What positions of leadership do you hold? Are you a leader at church? At home? At work? Elsewhere?*

*Do you model godly leadership qualities in all those roles? What changes can and should you make to have a greater impact on others for the good?*

<sup>4</sup>And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. <sup>5</sup>Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." <sup>6</sup>Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you,

1 Peter 5:4-6

*Note verse 5, where Peter reminds his readers of the value of humility in the Christian life. If we will humble ourselves then God is the One who will exalt us at the proper time. Let God have His way in you. Then you will see the amazing things that He is able to accomplish in you.*

<sup>7</sup> casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. <sup>8</sup> Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. <sup>9</sup> Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

1 Peter 5:7-9

*You need not be anxious about anything because you know that God cares for you. If you are enduring some sort of persecution, then remember that you are not alone! Remember the one who is for you. And if God is for you who can be against you?*

<sup>31</sup> What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died-- more than that, who was raised-- who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. <sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." <sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:31-39

<sup>10</sup>And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. <sup>11</sup>To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter 5:10-11

*Peter wants us to remember that any suffering we may endure in this life is only temporary. God Himself will surely “restore, confirm, strengthen and establish” us.*

<sup>37</sup>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

Romans 8:37

<sup>12</sup> By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it. <sup>13</sup> She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son. <sup>14</sup> Greet one another with the kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ. 1 Peter 5:12-14

*These three verses close Peter's first letter. He tells us that Silvanus is the one who has written the letter for Peter. Peter, even in closing, is still about the business of encouraging his readers.*

*We would do well to copy Peter's example and take every opportunity to encourage each other in our walk with the Lord.*

<sup>1</sup> Simeon 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: <sup>2</sup> May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. 2 Peter 1:1-2

*Peter's greeting in this letter is different from the one in 1 Peter. In Peter's first letter, he listed several cities in northern Asia Minor to which he was writing. Here in 2 Peter there is no comparable listing of cities. On the other hand, both greetings contain the same exhortation, "May grace and peace be multiplied to you." It may be the case that Peter intended for this epistle to be sent to various churches in diverse locations. If so, then Peter might not name any cities for fear of leaving out one or more cities where the letter might be delivered.*

*Interestingly, Peter addresses the letter to "those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of God and Savior Jesus Christ. Peter wants his readers to understand that they are just as valuable in God's eyes as any of the church leaders. All believers "have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours."*

*Do you sometimes feel as though there are different "classes" of Christians? While some among us have walked with the Lord for longer amounts of time, the truth is that, in God's eyes, we are all of equal value. We do well by not comparing ourselves with one another. We cannot gain anything by comparing ourselves with others.*

*If we see another as more valuable to God than us, we may come to the conclusion that God loves that person more than He loves us. On the other hand, if we decide that we are of more value to God than someone else then we run the risk of becoming proud and opening a door that Satan might use to attack us. It is best, as Peter says here, to recognize that we are all of equal value and importance to God. True humility consists in understanding ourselves as we actually are. We should never overestimate ourselves and at the same time we must never underestimate ourselves. God wants us to see ourselves as He sees us. In His eyes, we are all valuable.*

*"Biblical humility means believing what God says about you over anyone else's opinion, including your own. It requires embracing who you are in Christ over who you are in the flesh. To be biblically humble is to be so free of concern for your own ego that you unreservedly elevate those around you."*

~ Christina Dronen

<sup>3</sup>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, <sup>4</sup>by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

2 Peter 1:3-4

*Peter reminds his readers here that God, in His grace and mercy, has provided and continues to provide all we need as we continue on our path to His glory and excellence. In fact we are partakers of the divine nature. By faith we have escaped the corruption that is in the world.*

*Is your lifestyle one that demonstrates God's Divine nature in you?*

*If the Spirit of the living God is truly living in you, as the scriptures declare, then what could you possibly lack that would cause you to come up short of the call that God has placed on your life?*

*You are truly able to do all that God asks of you!*

<sup>13</sup>I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Philippians 4:13

***What struck you most in this week's readings?***

**What questions or comments did you come away with?**

**How does what you learned relate to your life?**

**How does it relate to the Church family?**

**What can you share with your church family from what you've received?**

***Notes from Home Church.***

<sup>5</sup> For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, <sup>6</sup> and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, <sup>7</sup> and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. <sup>8</sup> For if these qualities<sup>1</sup> are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or <sup>a</sup>unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 1:5-8

*Note the progression of attributes that Peter encourages his readers to grow through.*

*Faith → Virtue → Knowledge →  
Self-control → Steadfastness →  
Godliness → Brotherly Affection → Love.*

*It begins with faith. Our walk with Jesus always begins with our being saved by grace through faith. God does not want us to live unsure of our relationship with Him. The first thing God does when we come to Him is to forgive all our sin and put us in right relationship with Him; no doubt, no fear, no guilt! Next faith progresses to virtue. If faith is genuine then virtuous works will follow.*

*Empowered by the Holy Spirit we will begin to do the things God leads us to do. Among those things will be growth in the word of God so virtue → knowledge. As we gain knowledge, the Spirit will help us to develop self-control. With this attribute attained, we move on to learn to be steadfast. It will not always be easy to go where God leads us, but if we persevere, we will win through the task to do what God wants done.*

*All of these things combine to lead us to godliness. As we grow in the Lord our character is changed and we grow more and more into the likeness of His Son. Because God cares for all people, as we become more like Him we too grow in love for others and this is the culmination of the process – love. It is a path that leads us from being broken sinners to being saints who do their Father’s will.*

*Where are you in the process? Do you see evidence of real spiritual growth in your life?*

*What is the next step in your walk with the Lord?*

<sup>15</sup> For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. <sup>11</sup> For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 1:9-11

*The spiritual growth and progression that we read about in today's reading is not an optional one for believers. Note Peter's words in verse 10. As we follow this pattern in our lives we "confirm our calling and election." This is what we are all called to in Christ. Through the power of God's Spirit who dwells within us we are able to do all that God leads us to do and more.*

<sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. Romans 8:37

<sup>12</sup> Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. <sup>13</sup> I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, <sup>14</sup> since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. <sup>15</sup> And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things. 2 Peter 1:12-15

*Peter tells his readers that he has nothing more important to tell them than what he's just said. He expects that they know these things already. He wants to stir them on and continue reminding them even as he sees his own end quickly approaching. Clearly, it is extremely important to Peter that believers understand what it really means to be a believer.*

*The Spirit of Truth*, by Deborah Ann

The Spirit of truth,  
God gave to you  
He is your guide  
for all that you do.

He is full of power,  
He's mighty and strong  
He's full of light  
He'll not lead you wrong.

The Spirit of truth,  
is all-wise, all-knowing  
He'll intercede for you  
with His groaning.

He is everywhere,  
ever-present, ever-near  
He will give you courage  
to face your every fear.

The Spirit of truth,  
will keep pursuing you  
until you see the light  
of all things true!

<sup>16</sup> For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. <sup>17</sup> For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," <sup>18</sup> we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. <sup>19</sup> And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,

2 Peter 1:16-19

*Here in verses 16-18 Peter recalls his experience of the transfiguration when he was with Jesus on top of a mountain. (See Matt. 17:1-5) Peter wants to make clear the word he is bringing here is a prophetic word. The truths he is speaking are "a lamp shining in a dark place." For Peter, the glory of Jesus as he saw it in the transfiguration is mirrored in the life of a believer who continually seeks and does the Father's will in his/her life. Jesus is the light of the world. When we live out the call that God has placed on us, we too become lamps shining in a dark place.*

*How are you bringing light into the world?*

<sup>20</sup> knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. <sup>21</sup> For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1:20-21

*Peter confirms that the message he is bringing here is not his own idea. It's not a matter of anyone's interpretation. It is a message given to him from God and has the approval and authority of God standing behind it.*

*We do not have the right to try to make the scriptures fit our doctrine. Rather it is imperative that we change our doctrine so that it comes into line with what the scriptures say.*

*Either the scripture judges me or I judge the scripture!*

<sup>1</sup> But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. <sup>2</sup> And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. <sup>3</sup> And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

2 Peter 2:1-3

*Following his confirmation about the truth of scripture, Peter, in similar fashion to John and Paul, warns us about false prophets who will try to bring in heresies and lead us astray. We need to understand the incredible worth and value of scripture. We must value it and we must defend it. We need to do all we can to rightly understand and interpret it. Few things in life are more important.*

<sup>4</sup>For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; <sup>5</sup>if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; <sup>6</sup> if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; <sup>7</sup> and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked <sup>8</sup> (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); <sup>9</sup> then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, 2 Peter 2:4-9

*In these verses Peter provides several examples how God has always punished wickedness and preserved the righteous. Peter's point is that while there will be those who will try to mislead us, God will always protect us. However, that does not relieve us of our responsibility. We need to do all we can to be as sure as we can be that we are being true to scripture. We must do all we can and then trust God to do the rest.*

<sup>10</sup> and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority. Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones, <sup>11</sup> whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord. <sup>12</sup> But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction,

2 Peter 2:10-12

*Peter now turns his attention to describing the behavior of sinners. He tells of their boldness in their unbelief. He calls them irrational animals. Perhaps the most telling thing he says is to call them "creatures of instinct."*

*Sinners who do not have nor understand the Spirit of God must act solely on their own understanding. The problem, of course, is that their understanding is very negatively affected by their fallen nature. When human beings act from human nature you can be sure that evil is at work.*

<sup>14</sup> suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you. <sup>14</sup> They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children!  
2 Peter 2:13-14

*Peter describes how sinners take pleasure in their sin. They are accursed – yet they will continue to be what they are for as long as they can. Their end is assured but they will not repent and they will not relent. Give thanks to God that He is for us and will not allow us to be pushed beyond what we can bear. Still our task is to resist evil.*

<sup>7</sup> Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.  
James 4:7

*Note the thought connection in this verse. Submitting yourself to God is how you resist the devil!*

<sup>17</sup> These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved. <sup>18</sup> For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. <sup>19</sup> They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.

2 Peter 2:17-19

*In these verses Peter paints a picture of the nature of sin. Sin promises to bring a good result but then fails to do so. In verse 17 Peter describes sinners as waterless springs. A spring promises to bring a drink of refreshing water. But if the spring should prove to be waterless, it delivers nothing!*

*A mist that endures can provide water for the ground and crops. But a mist driven by a storm moves too quickly to provide sufficient water. Sin promises freedom but delivers only slavery.*

*What do you think?*

<sup>20</sup> For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. <sup>21</sup> For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. <sup>22</sup> What the true proverb says has happened to them: "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire."  
2 Peter 2:20-22

*Some will say that Peter, in these verses, is describing a person who had become a believer but then turned back to a life of sin and effectively lost their salvation. Others will say that Peter is describing a person who never was a true believer and who, after considering repentance, never repents and so remains an unbeliever.*

*Whichever interpretation you hold to, I think we can all agree that it is never enough to simply learn about God and His word and then walk away from it. True repentance will always involve a changed heart and a Holy Spirit motivated desire to reject one's own will and to pursue God's will for your life.*

*Because we have been redeemed we have a new agenda – God's agenda for our lives. Let's all use the strength that God gives us to daily to become more and more the men and women He wants us to be!*

<sup>1</sup> This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, <sup>2</sup> that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, <sup>3</sup> knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. <sup>4</sup> They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation."

2 Peter 3:1-4

*Peter warns his readers that there will be those who will say that Jesus is not coming back. They will try to convince you that if He were coming back, then He would have done so by now. Do you see the arrogance of the one who says this? How can anyone claim to know God's timing and say, "if He were going to come back He would have done it long ago?"*

*In making such a statement they show their true colors. They claim to know things that no one but the Father knows. The Lord will return at the proper time. Until then, today is the day of salvation.*

*Once Jesus returns, the door for conversion will be closed. Praise God for the opportunity He gives us to work with Him in spreading the good news of the gospel so that others might come to know Him! Rest assured that He will return at the proper time.*

<sup>20</sup> He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

Revelation 22:20

<sup>5</sup>For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, <sup>6</sup>and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. <sup>7</sup>But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

2 Peter 3:5-7

*People who claim that Jesus would have returned by now if He were going to return at all miss a few important truths. God created. Some time later, thousands of years ago, destroyed all human life except for Noah and his family. No one but Noah believed that God could or would destroy all people on earth. Yet in God's time it came to pass. Just as God created and then destroyed the world with water, at the time that He has predetermined, He will send His Son to return to earth to usher in the day of judgment. The day of judgment is pending.*

<sup>8</sup> But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 2 Peter 3:8

*We tend to have some idea, or so we think, of what is a short amount of time and what is a long amount of time. The problem with that kind of thinking is that we are all limited to the length of a lifetime – some seventy to eighty years.*

*From God's point of view eighty years is nothing more than the blink of an eye. We are not able to truly judge what is a short time or a long time. To try to make such judgments is wrong-headed. For the believer, the only thing to do is to leave the matter in God's hands. If the scripture says that Jesus will return then He will return. If the scripture says that no one except the Father knows when that time will come, then we must carry on until it comes.*

***What struck you most in this week's readings?***

**What questions or comments did you come away with?**

**How does what you learned relate to your life?**

**How does it relate to the Church family?**

**What can you share with your church family from what you've received?**

***Notes from Home Church.***

<sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. 2 Peter 3:9

*If you think that the Lord is taking too much time to return, then consider Peter's comment here in verse 9. God is not being slow, rather He is being patient! His desire is that none should be lost.*

*When see things through the Lord's perspective, things look very different. He is in no hurry to bring the earth to a premature ending. Rather He is waiting until all have had a chance to hear. He's waiting until the full number of those who will believe have become believers. It is not wrong to be expecting and waiting for the day of His return. But don't stop living each day seeking and doing His will.*

<sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.      2 Peter 3:10

*When the day of the Lord does come, they all things will be seen for what they really are. Today we can misjudge things. Some things that are good, we may misjudge as being evil and vice versa. But when Jesus returns everything will be seen for what it actually is.*

*When Jesus returns, deception will be ended. The righteous will shine and there will be no place for the wicked to hide. Praise God that, in His kingdom, everything is seen and known for what it truly is.*

<sup>11</sup> Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, <sup>12</sup> waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!      2 Peter 3:11-12

*This world remains, for the time being, a corrupt and deceitful world. But we are a redeemed people holy and precious to God. So while the world may be corrupt, we must live out our lives in holiness and godliness.*

*The end will come soon enough and things will be seen for what they are. We need to be seen as true and faithful believers today!*

*In what ways is God's holiness displayed in your life as a Christ follower?*

*If it were a crime to be a Christian and you were accused and put on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?*

<sup>13</sup>But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. <sup>14</sup>Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.

2 Peter 3:13-14

*Remember the hope that lies before us. Live your life in a way that is worthy of the Lord who has called you and redeemed you from a life of sin and death. We will all share a glorious and unimaginably wonderful eternal future with God and with one another.*

*Keep that picture before your eyes.*

*Let it encourage and strengthen you to deal with the trials that come your way.*

*Strength Through Trials and Adversaries*, by Sharon Lagueux

I'm overwhelmed with much on my plate  
 Lord, I'm about to snap and in dire straight  
 Help me to keep up, with my daily chores  
 May my victory be in you , my conqueror  
 Equipped with Your strength I persevere

Help me to slow down when I need rest  
 Walking in your grace keeps me at my best  
 Grant this empty cup be filled abundantly  
 My joy is living in Your strength through  
 Troubles, perplexes, trials and adversaries

In God's grace, I stand fully confident  
 Knowing for me there is deliverance  
 So when I feel helplessly overwhelmed  
 And about to snap or in dire straight  
 I surrender to Jesus without hesitance

<sup>15</sup> And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, <sup>16</sup> as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. 2 Peter 3:15-16

*Praise God for His patience with you and with others. Peter takes notice of the fact that some of Paul's thinking can be difficult to grasp in his letters. I could not agree more with Peter. But we should take his advice. There are those who will try to twist Paul's writings and in so doing will bring about their own destruction. Be as true to scriptural teaching as you can.*

*Trust God to bring you to a better understanding of His word. Try to be aware of your own prejudices. Seek out honest and trustworthy teachers and preachers who will help you to get a better grasp on scripture. Do all you can to sincerely follow God's word and then trust that He Himself will keep you from all error.*

<sup>17</sup> You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. <sup>18</sup> But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. 2 Peter 3:17-18

*Peter ends his second epistle by encouraging us to be aware of and to avoid the error of lawless people. Keep your eyes open. Learn to test the spirits to see if they are true or false. Continue seeking God daily – growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!*

*As you pray today, thank God for His mercies to you. Thank Him for the truths that He has shown you from His word. Commit yourself to knowing Him better by gaining a deeper and fresher understanding of His word.*

*May God bless and keep you as you grow  
in your understanding of who He is and  
who you are in Him!*