



## Context

Author: Peter

Date: early to mid-60s AD

Recipient: Scattered Christians in Asia Minor

The apostle Peter wrote this letter. He was once a fisherman but now was a disciple, a “witness of the sufferings of Christ.” He probably wrote the letter from Rome (‘Babylon’ almost certainly refers to Rome) around A.D. 62–63 during Nero’s reign. The letter is addressed to Christians scattered in “Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.” This is an area north of the Taurus Mountains in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). These territories had been impacted by Greco-Roman culture and had been under Roman control from the mid-first century B.C.

## Theme and Purpose

Those who persevere in faith while suffering persecution should be full of hope. They will certainly enjoy end-time salvation, since they already enjoy God’s saving promises through Christ’s death and resurrection. Peter is writing to encourage his readers to endure suffering and persecution by giving themselves entirely to God. They are to remain faithful in times of distress, knowing that God will vindicate them and that they will certainly enjoy the salvation that the Lord has promised. Christ’s death and resurrection are the model for believers. Just as Christ suffered and then entered into glory, so too his followers will suffer before being exalted.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Introduction to 1 Peter,” ESV Bible, <https://www.esv.org/resources/esv-global-study-bible/introduction-to-1-peter/>

## Outline of 1 Peter

**\*\*Note: Sermons on each passage will be preached on the Sunday following the reading\*\***

Week of Monday, December 28, 2020	1 Peter 1:1-2; 5:12
Week of Monday, January 4, 2021	1 Peter 1:3-12
Week of Monday, January 11, 2021	1 Peter 1:13-25
Week of Monday, January 18, 2021	1 Peter 2:1-10
Week of Monday, January 25, 2021	1 Peter 2:11-17
Week of Monday, February 1, 2021	1 Peter 2:18-20
Week of Monday, February 8, 2021	1 Peter 2:21-25
Week of Monday, February 15, 2021	1 Peter 3:1-7
Week of Monday, February 22, 2021	1 Peter 3:8-12
Week of Monday, March 1, 2021	1 Peter 3:13-17
Week of Monday, March 8, 2021	1 Peter 3:18-22
Week of Monday, March 15, 2021	1 Peter 4:1-11
<i>&lt;break 2 weeks for Easter series&gt;</i>	
Week of Monday, April 5, 2021	1 Peter 4:12-19
Week of Monday, April 12, 2021	1 Peter 5:1-5
Week of Monday, April 19, 2021	1 Peter 5:6-11
Week of Monday, April 26, 2021	1 Peter 5:12-14

Week of Monday, December 28, 2020

1 Peter 1:1-2; 5:12

*1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ: To those chosen, living as exiles dispersed abroad in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient and to be sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ. May grace and peace be multiplied to you. -- 1 Peter 1:1-2 (CSB)*

*12 Through Silvanus, a faithful brother (as I consider him), I have written to you briefly in order to encourage you and to testify that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it! -- 1 Peter 5:12 (CSB)*

HOPE Journaling

H – Highlight what stands out to you

O – Observe what it teaches

P – Practice this in your life

E – Express this in your prayers

## Weekly Devotional

“Solitude, isolation are painful things and beyond human endurance.”

– Jules Verne

2020 was a year that many will be glad to see gone. It was a year of political and racial division. It was a year of confusion and uncertainty. It was a year where the things we have always taken for granted were stripped away from us. However, the greatest tragedy of the entire year, in my humble opinion, was the way it fractured community and relationships. People were thrown into isolation by personal choice or by mandates. Families, loved ones, communities, workplaces, all experienced circumstances that led to solitude and isolation. Isolation is considered one of the greatest health risks in our nation. According to research, isolation has become a comorbidity in death that rivals smoking, obesity, and physical inactivity. Isolation increases the risk of dementia by 50%, heart disease by 29%, and stroke by 32% in those over 50. The mental health impacts are still being studied, but early evidence makes it clear that suicide, addiction, and depression are all drastically increased. Surveys completed in 2020 have shown reported rates of depression and anxiety have increased by more than 400%. Isolation can be destructive.

When Peter wrote this letter, he was writing to the community of exiled believers who had been part of the group of Jews that had been dispersed and scattered under Roman oppression. While the group as a whole was experiencing hardship and trials, those among the group who were under the “blood of Jesus Christ” were experiencing this at a different level. They were isolated from the homeland, their jobs, and the familiarity of their surroundings, but they were furthermore isolated by their faith. Their faith in Jesus Christ isolated them again from their families, their friends, and the community of scattered Jews with whom they should have been able to best rely on and turn to in their need. This was compounded by the growing persecution and discrimination that Christians were experiencing in both social and legal settings. Peter is writing a letter to remind the believers of their hope and to encourage them to remain steadfast in the midst of the mounting persecution.

Today, we are facing similar circumstances. All of us have been thrust into isolation, whether by mandate or choice. This isolation is dangerous to our mental and physical health. However, for Christians this isolation can also be dangerous for our spiritual health. There is a mounting persecution against the church and its people today. Our stance on biblical truth is considered hate and the attacks in culture and in government are growing. In many cases our neighbors and our families will hold contempt towards our faith, creating further isolation and solitude. In the face of this, it is easy to forget that we have a hope that stands apart from and outside the world. We have a peace and a true grace, a sanctifying work of the Spirit of God that enables us to stand firm and hold strong to the truth. We are never truly isolated because of the indwelling of God in our hearts. When we gather as a church family, even in the face of covid, we stand together as one family, united by our faith in the One True God.

## Read Also:

1 Peter 1	[helps understand context of the book]
1 Peter 2	[helps understand context of the book]
James 1	[James writes to the same group with a similar theme]
2 Thessalonians 2:13-17	[stand firm and be encouraged]
Acts 11:19-26	[the scattered faithful]

## Group Discussion Questions – Theological Considerations

- What is persecution?
- What is perseverance?
- How does the Holy Spirit encourage us? How does He help us stand firm?
- What does the Trinity and imago dei teach us about our need for community?
- What does mental illness teach us about our hope in Christ?

## Group Discussion Questions – Digging Deeper

- What does it mean that there is a mounting persecution against the church and Christians?
- How has the last 12 months created isolation? What has this done to community?
- How has that isolation hurt or helped the local church?
- If you are not currently attending the local gathering of believers, how have you seen this impact your sense of belonging and community with the local church?
- If you are still attending the local gathering of believers, how else have you seen the isolation impact yourself and those you love?
- Who do you know that has been isolated that you can reach out to and connect with this week?
- What are ways to balance safety and community? What is something you can do this week to seek that balance?
- When looking at the persecution of the church around the world, how do American Christians so often get the concept of persecution wrong?
- How has persecution affected the church around the world and throughout history?

## Week of Monday, January 4, 2021

### 1 Peter 1:3-12

*3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead 4 and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you. 5 You are being guarded by God's power through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 You rejoice in this, even though now for a short time, if necessary, you suffer grief in various trials 7 so that the proven character of your faith — more valuable than gold which, though perishable, is refined by fire — may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; though not seeing him now, you believe in him, and you rejoice with inexpressible and glorious joy, 9 because you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. 10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who prophesied about the grace that would come to you, searched and carefully investigated. 11 They inquired into what time or what circumstances the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating when he testified in advance to the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you. These things have now been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — angels long to catch a glimpse of these things. -- 1 Peter 1:3-12 (CSB)*

### HOPE Journaling

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## Weekly Devotional

“See, you know how to take the reservation, you just don’t know how to hold the reservation and that’s really the most important part of the reservation, the holding.

Anybody can just take them.”

– Jerry Seinfeld

Have you ever made a reservation at a hotel, car rental place, restaurant, or some other place only to show up and find out that they had no record of your reservation? Or maybe you called a store and asked them to hold an item for you and they forgot or sold it to someone else? I have recently been trying to obtain medical records from the early 2000s. I have found that, in nearly every case, this is impossible. The records of my visits, tests, and so on have been either lost or destroyed. I waited too long to make the request, so the records no longer exist.

That is a circumstance that we as Christians have no fear of encountering when we pass from this life to the next. Our “reservation” of a place in heaven with God is “an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven” for us. God is guarding us and our lives as a promise of the salvation we have received and will fully realize in eternity. These are reservations that God Himself holds on our behalf. The Gospel of John reminds us of this truth. “I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.” -- John 10:28-30. Our salvation is secure. The records are never lost or destroyed. There are no retention periods that expire on our salvation. We can stand in confidence and in faith that our salvation is secure, eternal, and held in the hands of the Creator of the entire universe.

That is our living hope. When we were born into this world the first time, we were born into a dead hope. We were born to die, guaranteed nothing other than death. But when we are born into Christ by grace alone through faith alone, we receive a new hope; a living hope. And this living hope comes with new promises, some we will naturally find joy in and others we need a reminder and encouragement to find joy. The promise of eternal security is one we naturally rejoice in. However, we also find the promise in Scripture that we will face trials and tribulations, that struggles and, even, persecution are a normal part of our experience as Christians.

Peter tells us that while we suffer various trials, we can rejoice in them. The reason is that those trials prove our faith. This faith and its proof is more valuable than the purest of gold and that will prove its value when it results in praise, honor, and glory at the return of Jesus Christ. Think of a football team that endures the worst conditions to train their bodies and minds but find their strength of great value when it results in victory on the field. In the same way, as Christians, we will endure great hardships at times. Rejoice in them and look toward the promise of eternity that is being held on your behalf, paid for by Jesus on the cross.

## Read Also:

1 Peter 3	[helps understand context of the book]
1 Peter 4	[helps understand context of the book]
1 John 5:4	[our faith is a victory over the world]
Romans 8:18-39	[eternal security and the value of struggles]
James 1:2-18	[rejoicing in trials]
Psalms 22	[prophecy about the coming Savior, suffering and praise]
Hebrews 11	[living by faith for the greater promises of God]

## Group Discussion Questions – Theological Considerations

- What is hope?
- What is faith?
- What is eternal security?
- What is the “salvation to be revealed in the last time?”
- What is joy?

## Group Discussion Questions – Digging Deeper

- How do trials refine our faith? What does the imagery of gold being refined by fire tell us about the nature of our trials?
- What does it actually look like to rejoice in our struggles?
- What does Peter mean by the “angels long to catch a glimpse of these things?”
- If our salvation is secure, how do we address those who claim Christ but have strayed from their faith? What does it mean for us as a people saved but still have a sin nature?
- What are some of the prophecies of the coming grace that Peter references here?
- What does we “rejoice with an inexpressible and glorious joy” mean?
- How does our posture towards trials act as a witness to the world?
- Who is someone in your life that needs to know this joy?
- What is the difference between joy and happiness?
- Often you will hear parents say, “The thing I want most for my kids is for them to be happy.” What are your thoughts on this?



## Week of Monday, January 11, 2021

### 1 Peter 1:13-25

*13 Therefore, with your minds ready for action, be sober-minded and set your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires of your former ignorance. 15 But as the one who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct; 16 for it is written, be holy, because I am holy. 17 If you appeal to the Father who judges impartially according to each one's work, you are to conduct yourselves in reverence during your time living as strangers. 18 For you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb. 20 He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was revealed in these last times for you. 21 Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. 22 Since you have purified yourselves by your obedience to the truth, so that you show sincere brotherly love for each other, from a pure heart love one another constantly, 23 because you have been born again — not of perishable seed but of imperishable — through the living and enduring word of God. 24 For all flesh is like grass, and all its glory like a flower of the grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, 25 but the word of the Lord endures forever. And this word is the gospel that was proclaimed to you. -- 1 Peter 1:13-25 (CSB)*

### HOPE Journaling

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## Weekly Devotional

“God has made provision for us to live holy, but He has also given us definite responsibilities to pursue holiness.”

– Jerry Bridges

Peter reminds us that we should be holy because God is Holy. We often will recognize traits in others that remind us of their parents or other relatives; there is a family resemblance. The same should be true with God’s children. Since God is holy the believer’s life should reflect this through holy living. One aspect of holy living is a life that is set apart for the purposes of God, those who believe in Christ should not resemble the culture around them but be conformed to Christ.

Peter referred to the believers he was writing to in this letter as “strangers” because through their faith in Christ they are now citizens of heaven living as strangers in a world that was no longer their permanent home. While we must live in this world we are not to become like the world. It can be hard at times to discern the difference between living in a sinful culture and being one who participates in the sin of that culture. We need a standard to live by and as Christians that standard would be God’s will for our lives.

We determine the will of God through the word of God, and a part of holy living means spending time in the Bible. No matter what season of life you are in or what culture you find around you the principles God has given us in the scriptures are timeless and the best way to understand how to live a holy life in a sin-sick world. This does not mean we are left on our own to work this out but rather by God’s grace the Holy Spirit guides us in this pursuit. Our part is to walk in obedience to this by investing time in prayer and in the scriptures both through personal study and collectively as the body of Christ meeting regularly to sit under the preaching of this word.

Peter goes on to say that we should be holy because God redeemed us at a great price. We’ve been bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Our desire to pursue personal holiness is motivated by this new life God has given us through Christ. The work of sanctification that the Spirit does in our life produces this personal holiness so that it is the evidence of truly being born again. This transformation not only serves as a means of assurance to the believer but as a sign to the world around us of the power of the gospel. One way this practically plays out in our lives is the way we love and serve each other as fellow believers.

Peter says that one product of our obedience to the word of God is a sincere brotherly love. Sincere meaning not shallow but a sacrificial kind of love that seeks to serve without conditions. This kind of love also means a willingness to have loving but tough conversations with others, holding them accountable, helping each other grow in obedience. Finally, this is a love not based upon emotions and feelings but is a decision to love even when we don’t feel like it.

Are we truly motivated to pursue holiness? As Peter explains we can cultivate holiness by remembering we are strangers in this world and our challenges and struggles are only temporary. Understanding that God our Father is Holy and His will for us is to be holy, conformed into the image of Christ, the one who redeemed us at such a great price. Our lives must be distinct from the world and not living as a covert Christian trying to blend it but instead living according to God’s standard that we understand from the Bible. While some in the world may ridicule us for our differences, others may notice the transforming power the gospel has had on our life and desire the same for theirs.

– Contributed by Eric Foster

## Read Also:

1 Peter 5	[helps understand context of the book]
Leviticus 11:44	[God's command to be holy]
Ephesians 1:4	[holiness is found in Christ]
Ephesians 2:1-10	[God's grace makes holiness possible]
1 John 3:1-3	[personal holiness is conforming to Christ]
Romans 12:1-2	[distinct from the world]
Hebrews 12:4-11	[God's discipline develops holiness]
1 Thessalonians 4:1-12	[called to a holy life]

## Group Discussion Questions – Theological Considerations

- How would you explain God's holiness?
- What does the understanding of God's holiness and our status as image bearers tell us about how we are intended to live?
- What is God's ultimate purpose for all believers?
- What is imputed righteousness? Does this free us from the need to pursue personal holiness?
- What is the Holy Spirit's role in our personal holiness?

## Group Discussion Questions – Digging Deeper

- Do you separate parts of your life into secular and sacred? How can you do better job of removing those divisions and seek to do all things for the glory of God?
- Are there activities or relationships in your life that are hindering your pursuit of holiness?
- What are some practical ways to develop a holy life?
- Does your life reflect obedience to Christ through the way you love and serve other believers?

Week of Monday, January 18, 2021

## 1 Peter 2:1-10

*1 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all slander. 2 Like newborn infants, desire the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow up into your salvation, 3 if you have tasted that the Lord is good. 4 As you come to him, a living stone — rejected by people but chosen and honored by God — 5 you yourselves, as living stones, a spiritual house, are being built to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For it stands in Scripture: See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and honored cornerstone, and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame. 7 So honor will come to you who believe; but for the unbelieving, the stone that the builders rejected — this one has become the cornerstone, 8 and a stone to stumble over, and a rock to trip over. They stumble because they disobey the word; they were destined for this. 9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. -- 1 Peter 2:1-10 (CSB)*

## HOPE Journaling

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## Weekly Devotional

“Truth without love is brutality. Love without truth is hypocrisy.”

– Warren Wiersbe

As 1 Peter 2 says, “rid yourselves of all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all slander.” Salvation leads to a love that avoids gossip, which tears down a person, selfish attitudes that don’t look out for others, and criticizing someone for something we are guilty of. We are all guilty of the death of Jesus. The mission of a saved life leads to a greater perspective that focuses less on the divisive tendencies of the flesh and more on the promises of salvation. This promotes peace. The brotherly love we have for one another should help others see the compassion and the grace of Christ, which is the witness we have.

The Word of God is timeless, while we are not. In our desire to turn from old ways, and live for God, our familiarity with the word of God should be like that of a new baby craving their milk. An infant’s milk is the only food they hunger for, because milk is all that it knows. A baby relies solely on milk to survive. An infant needs milk to become stronger, and that milk helps a baby grow and develop physically. It also is their source of security and comfort. God’s word should also be our spiritual milk. God’s word should be everything that we know we need to grow and become stronger. Just like a baby with their first taste of milk, we grow in our spiritual strength and learn over time that the salvation we received was only the very beginning of more to learn. We can pray that this growth will continue to come from God’s word in our lives as believers. The compassion and love Jesus has displayed for us through his forgiveness and grace compels us to remember the need we have to grow in God’s truth.

Since we have been born again, our obedience to the truth is shown in the love we have for each other. According to Wiersbe, “Truth without love is brutality, and love without truth is hypocrisy.” Love and truth must be constantly balanced. We can have a relationship built on truth, but it will lack greatly in depth and compassion of the love Jesus teaches. In 1 Corinthians 13:2, Paul says, “If I... understand all mysteries and all knowledge... but have not love, I am nothing.” That can be a wakeup call. If you are one that is so full of biblical truth, just know that is essentially nothing. A friend might easily be able to correct you, point out your flaws, and still they also may be unable to love you. They would come across as insulting and judgmental. The motivation, approach, and the nature of the relationship can impact the way a person perceives guidance with the truth. Do people see that you care about them?

On the other hand, a relationship of only love would be encouraging and make you feel good, but it would not lead to growth, or motivate you to look deeper into the truths of God. In 1 Corinthians 13:6, “Love rejoices in truth.” If you think you are being loving by avoiding the honesty about what is sinful, that Jesus exemplifies in his conversations, that is not love. Do people feel driven to fulfill their purpose around you? As God’s children, we must become more loving and more truthful. We should be led to develop a loving character that builds the desire of others to pursue good and grow in their own godly character. In this new identity we have in Christ, we can see that it is through his love for us that he has shown us that we are chosen to live a new lifestyle that advertises God’s mercy and goodness.

– Contributed by Kate Walters

## Read Also:

Ephesians 4:17-32	[living the new life]
Isaiah 28:16-17	[the Cornerstone is laid as the foundation]
Hebrews 5:11-14	[the problem with immature faith]
Ephesians 4:15	[speaking truth in love]
1 Corinthians 3:1-3	[immaturity in Christians]
Psalms 34:8-10	[God is good and provides]
Psalms 118	[God gives what His people need; rejected cornerstone]

## Group Discussion Questions - Theological Considerations

- Define truth.
- Define love.
- What is the priesthood of all believers?
- What is the new temple?
- What is sanctification?
- What does Peter mean "they stumble because they disobey, they were destined for this?"

## Group Discussion Questions - Digging Deeper

- What types of deceit, envy, hypocrisy, and slander have you seen create division?
- What are some things you put hope in?
- What are your greatest sources of security?
- How are you seeking your own sanctification?
- Who are you currently discipling? How are you doing that?
- What has God been teaching you lately? Where do you find this in Scripture?
- How does a desire to grow or a lack of desire to grow point to whether our salvation is true or not? How do we measure this in our own lives?
- How have you seen truth without love? What is the fruit or the danger of this?
- How have you seen love without truth? What is the fruit or the danger of this?

Week of Monday, January 25, 2021

## 1 Peter 2:11-17

*11 Dear friends, I urge you as strangers and exiles to abstain from sinful desires that wage war against the soul. 12 Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that when they slander you as evildoers, they will observe your good works and will glorify God on the day he visits. 13 Submit to every human authority because of the Lord, whether to the emperor as the supreme authority 14 or to governors as those sent out by him to punish those who do what is evil and to praise those who do what is good. 15 For it is God's will that you silence the ignorance of foolish people by doing good. 16 Submit as free people, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but as God's slaves. 17 Honor everyone. Love the brothers and sisters. Fear God. Honor the emperor. -- 1 Peter 2:11-17 (CSB)*

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## Weekly Devotional

“Believers are to be model citizens, known as law abiding not rabble-rousing, obedient rather than rebellious, respectful of government rather than demeaning of it. We must speak against sin, against injustice, against immorality and ungodliness with fearless dedication, but we must do it within the framework of civil law and with respect for civil authorities. We are to be a godly society, doing good and living peaceably within an ungodly society, manifesting our transformed lives so that the saving power of God is seen clearly.”

– John MacArthur

There are few public debates today that are hotter than that of the debate over the Christian responsibility to submit to the authority of earthly governments. At what point does the Christian obligation to submission to governmental authorities cross over into the moral obligation to civil disobedience? Are there clearly defined lines? Some things seem obvious, abortion is an example. However, even with abortion, where do we draw the line? What about vaccines? Should a Christian participate in a mandated vaccine? Vaccines seem like a good thing, but what if vaccines use aborted fetal tissue? What about mandated quarantines? Quarantines can be good for the health and safety of others, but what if that quarantine prevents the gathering of believers of the local church? Where do we draw those lines?

I am not setting out in this devotional to answer those questions for you or to give you clearly delineated lines on when a Christian should and should not engage in civil disobedience. What I want to do is address what I am seeing as an issue among Christians that stands in contrast to what Peter is teaching here. Oftentimes, Christians forget that God, throughout all of history, has used secular leaders, secular laws, and secular purposes in order to achieve His purposes and will. Judge Roy Moore said, “It can have a secular purpose and have a relationship to God because God was presumed to be both over the state and the church, and the separation of church and state was never meant to separate God from government.” So, what Christians do is they rebel against the wrong things in the idea that they are standing firm on biblical conviction rather than personal conviction. Sure, that would be fine if everyone’s personal conviction was truly biblical conviction. However, we all have a fleshly tendency to merge parts of our own ideas and views into what we call God’s desires.

Peter tells us here that, as Christians, we are to submit to every human authority placed above us. We are to do this for two reasons: “because of God” and so that we will stand as a witness to the world by those who “observe our good works and will glorify God.” However, it is important to read there that we are to submit to every human authority, not necessarily every human law. Peter himself shows us this by example in Acts 4 & 5. Daniel is also an example of this when he continues to pray in spite of the law banning prayer.

Remember, Christian, God’s plan is never thwarted by human action. Also, remember that you have a biblical mandate to submit to the leaders God has ordained to be in authority over you, because no leader leads without the permission of God. Sometimes those leaders will enact laws that may or may not align with Scripture that we must obey. However, sometimes they will enact laws that stand in absolute contrast to Scripture that we must not. All those decisions must be made in prayerful study of God’s Word, not in pride.



## Read Also:

Acts 4:1-31	[Peter and John face earthly authorities]
Acts 5:17-32	[Peter and Apostles stand trial again]
Romans 13:1-7	[Christian duty to the state]
Acts 16:16-40	[Paul sets example of submission to authorities]
Daniel 6	[Daniel is faithful to God's law over man's]
1 Timothy 2:1-3	[instructions to pray for governmental leaders]
Titus 3:1-3	[submit to authority]
John 19	[government authority comes from God]
Matthew 22:15-22	[Jesus says to pay taxes]

## Group Discussion Questions – Theological Considerations

- What does it mean that God ordains rulers and authorities?
- What is God's law?
- How do we build a theological framework around things that the Bible does not directly discuss (ie, abortion)?
- Where does morality come from?
- Can people be moral without knowing God? Explain.

## Group Discussion Questions – Digging Deeper

- What are some clear-cut laws that Christians should obey? What are some clear-cut things that Christians should stand against?
- What does civil disobedience look like for a Christian?
- How does our submission to authority act as a witness to the world?
- Why is the separation of church and state a good thing?
- What is the difference between having a "Christian government" and having Christians in our government?
- What are appropriate measures for a Christian to take if they find a law stands in contrast to God's Word? How far is too far?
- What are examples of Jesus submitting to earthly authorities?

Week of Monday, February 1, 2021

1 Peter 2:18-20

*18 Household slaves, submit to your masters with all reverence not only to the good and gentle ones but also to the cruel. 19 For it brings favor if, because of a consciousness of God, someone endures grief from suffering unjustly. 20 For what credit is there if when you do wrong and are beaten, you endure it? But when you do what is good and suffer, if you endure it, this brings favor with God. -- 1 Peter 2:18-20 (CSB)*

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## Weekly Devotional

“No healthy Christian chooses suffering; he chooses God’s will, as Jesus did, whether it means suffering or not.”

– Oswald Chambers

I played baseball from a young age through junior college. On almost every single team I played on, there was at least one guy who was known as a power hitter. This guy was someone you could rely on to hit homeruns even in high pressure situations; someone every pitcher feared. While not very often, there were times when these powerful, homerun hitters were asked to lay down a bunt to achieve the team’s goals. You could easily see in those moments which guys were in it for their own glory and which ones were in it in order to bring glory to another. They were asked to step outside their own desires in order to serve the will and purposes of another; in the case of baseball, the will and purposes of the team or coach.

While baseball is a very poor illustration for a passage on slavery, the context of this passage is similar enough to draw a comparison between the heart and desires of those being asked to forego their own will for the will of another. Jesus, who is in His very nature perfectly just, suffered incredible injustice so that He would perfectly fulfill the will of God. We are sometimes asked as Christians to suffer horrible injustices. How we respond to those injustices will show whether our heart and desire is to glorify God and to fulfill His will or to bring ourselves some measure of glory, comfort, and ease. Sometimes God will see fit that we suffer injustices at the hands of others. But as we saw earlier in 1 Peter, chapter 1, verses 6-7, this suffering will refine us and make our faith purer and create in us a character more like that of Jesus Christ Himself!

As a society, we focus so much of our energy on those perpetuating injustices. That is a good thing. We should be a people who “act justly and love mercy” (Micah 6:8). We should seek to aid those who are oppressed. However, no matter how well-intended, when we attempt to attack injustice by instituting unjust policies or systems, we become the oppressor. Plato once said, “He who commits injustice is made ever more wretched than he who suffers it.” So, while we seek to remove injustices, we must also focus on properly loving those who are suffering injustice and we must seek the will of God when we face it ourselves.

Peter tells us that acting in righteous ways in the face of injustice brings greater glory to God than enduring a punishment that is deserved. And that is at the very core of the gospel. God, who is perfectly just, allowed His Son to suffer unjustly, so that those who deserve punishment can receive that which they do not deserve, the very glory of God. Jesus is our model. He suffered a tortuous, undeserved, unjust death at the hands of those who deserved that very punishment. “For the joy that lay before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame” (Hebrews 12:2). Look to the eternal joy that lays beyond the suffering, endure the pain, and hate the shame it brings; but in doing so, you bring glory to God and will one day share in that glory with Him.

## Read Also:

Micah 6:8	[be a people of justice]
Hebrews 12:1-13	[endure suffering as Christ did]
Titus 2:9-15	[slaves and masters]
1 Timothy 6:1-3	[slaves and masters]
Colossians 3:18-4:1	[slaves and masters]
Ephesians 6:5-9	[slaves and masters]
Exodus 21	[God's law only allowed for voluntary servitude]
Deuteronomy 23:15-16	[returning fugitive slaves was against God's law]
Deuteronomy 15:12-18	[releasing of slaves following their service]

## Group Discussion Questions – Theological Considerations

- When we say that God is a God of perfect justice, that He is just in His very character, what do we mean?
- What is the “problem of pain?” How do we account for it?
- How can God be a God of comfort and mercy and justice but allow so much injustice in the world?
- How do God's sovereignty and man's responsibility interact when it comes to evil?
- Does God simply allow or does God plan/will evil for His own purposes and glory?
- What is a theodicy?

## Group Discussion Questions – Digging Deeper

- How do you address someone who says they couldn't follow a God that would allow good people to suffer unjustly?
- Talk about a time you or someone you know suffered unjustly. How did you respond? What did you learn that can help you respond differently next time?
- What part of this passage can you memorize so that you approach suffering with a mindset focused on God?
- How was Scripture improperly used to justify the brutal slave trade of early America?
- How would you address an unbeliever that says passages like this show that God allows or even condones slavery?
- Where do you see unjust suffering around the world bringing glory to God?
- C.S. Lewis summarizes the problem of evil, as seen by unbelievers or those struggling with doubt, as “If God were good, He would make His creatures perfectly happy, and if He were almighty, He would be able to do what he wished. But the creatures are not happy. Therefore, God lacks either goodness, or power, or both.” How do you respond to this?

Week of Monday, February 8, 2021

1 Peter 2:21-25

*21 For you were called to this, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. 22 He did not commit sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth; 23 when he was insulted, he did not insult in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten but entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. 24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree; so that, having died to sins, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. 25 For you were like sheep going astray, but you have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. -- 1 Peter 2:21-25 (CSB)*

HOPE Journaling

H – Highlight what stands out to you

O – Observe what it teaches

P – Practice this in your life

E – Express this in your prayers

## Weekly Devotional

“Hello, my name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die.”  
– Inigo Montoya in “The Princess Bride”

Have you ever been so angry after a conversation with someone that you planned what you would say the next time you saw them? I cannot tell you how many times I have replayed an argument in my head and had all the perfect comebacks that I wish I would've had during the argument itself. I filed them away in my head, not necessarily hoping that I would argue with that person again, but just in case I did. It is so within our sinful nature to want to exact revenge on someone and get back at someone for the wrong they perpetrated on us, real or perceived. We see this in the very first murder when Cain killed Abel because Abel “showed him up” before God. Inigo Montoya, in the movie “The Princess Bride,” spends his entire life looking for the man with six fingers on his right hand so that he can exact revenge for the murder of his father.

It may be in the nature of our flesh and sin to desire revenge, but Jesus tells His disciples (and us) “If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24). We are not to give into to our fleshly desires. Instead, we are to follow the example of Jesus by denying ourselves and follow Jesus to sacrificial death to self on the cross. We are to follow Jesus' example in that our focus is not on our own purposes or goals, but instead on the purposes and will of the Father.

Part of that example we are to follow is seen here in this passage. When we face suffering, especially unjust suffering, we are not to exact revenge or seek to get even with someone. We are not to return insult for insult or return blow for blow. In fact, we are called to the opposite. We are called to follow the example of Jesus who “entrusted himself to the one who judges justly.” Jesus sets such a high standard in this regard. The Son, the perfect and just judge of all people, “emptied himself...humbled himself...became obedient” (Philippians 2:7-8) and literally carried the physical cross and “he who knew no sin became sin for us” (2 Corinthians 5:21) and bore injustice upon Himself so that we might “become the righteousness of God.”

Jesus shows us that He did not desire the cross and the pain and suffering He was about to endure. In deep grief and sorrow, He asked the Father to allow this wrath to pass by Him. Although Jesus did not relish the suffering and pain He knew was coming, He ultimately desired that the will of the Father be done, “[Jesus] fell facedown and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will’” (Matthew 26:39).

That is our example. We are to face suffering and pain, even, or perhaps especially, if it is unjust. We are to face it, not because we desire pain and suffering, but because we desire the will of God to be done over our own will. In fact, we should seek to make the will of God our own. Charles Spurgeon once said “When your will is God's will, then you will have your will.” Do not seek retribution. Seek God.

## Read Also:

Matthew 16:24-28	[take up your cross]
Romans 8:12-39	[suffering with Christ]
Romans 12:9-21	[vengeance belongs to God; how to treat our enemies]
Isaiah 53	[Peter quotes from this at least 4 times in this passage]
Psalms 23	[the Lord is our Shepherd]
Philippians 2:7-8	[Jesus sets an example]
2 Corinthians 5:21	[Jesus became sin for us]

## Group Discussion Questions - Theological Considerations

- How did Jesus suffer unjustly? If God is a God of perfect justice, why would He allow His Son to suffer unjustly? What does this teach us about our experiences in suffering?
- What is God's wrath? How did Jesus take that wrath for us?
- What does the Bible mean when it says that Jesus "became" sin?
- What is justice?
- What is God's vengeance?
- How is God a Shepherd?

## Group Discussion Questions - Digging Deeper

- What about "eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth?"
- What does it mean to "take up your cross" and follow Jesus? Answer both is metaphorically and practically.
- When God says that vengeance is His, that He will repay, what does that mean for us as a people who have to prosecute crime and seek justice for all peoples? Are we excused from seeking to correct injustices?
- Think about a time someone harmed you. How did you respond? After reading this passage, would you now respond differently? How can you pray for that situation and that person?
- What does forgiveness really look like? How do you forgive those that have hurt you most? Is there someone you need to forgive even if they haven't asked for it?
- How does knowing that God is our Shepherd and that Jesus is the Good Shepherd help us face and persevere through suffering?

## Week of Monday, February 15, 2021

### 1 Peter 3:1-7

*1 In the same way, wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, even if some disobey the word, they may be won over without a word by the way their wives live  
2 when they observe your pure, reverent lives. 3 Don't let your beauty consist of outward things like elaborate hairstyles and wearing gold jewelry or fine clothes, 4 but rather what is inside the heart — the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. 5 For in the past, the holy women who put their hope in God also adorned themselves in this way, submitting to their own husbands, 6 just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. You have become her children when you do what is good and do not fear any intimidation. 7 Husbands, in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker partner, showing them honor as coheirs of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered. -- 1 Peter 3:1-7 (CSB)*

### HOPE Journaling

H – Highlight what stands out to you

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## Weekly Devotional

Reporter: "Who wears the pants in the house?"  
Dennis Thatcher (Husband of Margaret Thatcher): "I do. And I also wash and iron them."

We long to live in Heaven, together in God's glory. To live together down on earth, well, that's another story. When more than 2 people come together the potential for disagreement increases. Any moving machine will experience friction. The only way to eliminate is to stop the machine. Likewise, any living relationship will experience some degree of conflict. The goal is to reduce the friction as much as possible. This improves efficiency and prolongs the life of any relationship.

Peter says: "wives accept the authority of your husbands." During a time when the Christian movement was still young, both Peter and Paul say this. Peter does not have in mind here that women are somehow inherently lesser than men spiritually. As the rest of the verse explains, wives are co-heirs with their husbands in the grace of life.

Women can have a humble and submissive attitude and still use their intelligence, influence, initiative and individual abilities. Unity in Christ transcends everything. Women experience the saving grace of God on equal terms with men! When you have faith in Christ, you are an heir to the gift of eternal life.

Wives are called not to fear intimidation (v.6) and stand their ground on the issue of faith. When Peter says that women are weaker this was meant as a physical measurement, not intellectual. A wife is a husband's equal partner in God's gift of new life. Spouses are told to treat each other as instructed so your prayers will not be hindered. Spiritual relationships can suffer if your marital relationship isn't right.

If you are married, do you respect your husband, or do you subtly or overtly undermine his authority? If you are the husband, are you exercising authority in a way deserving of respect? Christian wives are to want to win their husbands for Christ. Wives must do their best to make their own life so attractive that her husband will be convinced of the reality and the power of Christ.

- Contributed by Lindsey Williams

## Read Also:

Colossians 3:18-25	[Christ in the home]
Ephesians 5:22-33	[wives and husbands, love and respect]
1 Timothy 2:8-15	[instructions to men and women]
Titus 2	[Christian living]
Isaiah 3:16-26	[outward adorning vs inward purity, God's judgment]
James 4:3	[hindered prayers]
Proverbs 28:9	[hindered prayers]
Mark 11:25	[hindered prayers]
Psalms 66:18	[hindered prayers]
James 1:5-7	[hindered prayers]

## Group Discussion Questions – Theological Considerations

- What is prayer?
- How does Creation inform our understanding of the marriage relationship?
- What is marriage?
- What is purity?
- What does the Bible tell us about the heart?

## Group Discussion Questions – Digging Deeper

- What does it mean that prayers are hindered? What are some other times that our prayers may be hindered?
- How do you respond to someone that says that passages about a wife's submission allow for husbands to be abusive or domineering?
- A wife's submission...does that mean that she simply does whatever the husband decides?
- How does a home practically work in a model as seen here in this passage?
- What does Peter mean about adorning yourself inwardly rather than outwardly? Does that mean we should not wear nice clothing or jewelry?
- How does culture teach about modesty? Does it set different standards for men and women?
- If a Christian woman is married to an unbeliever, does that change the God-ordained order of marriage? What does this passage teach us about this scenario?
- Talk about verse 7, what does all of that mean?

Week of Monday, February 22, 2021

1 Peter 3:8-12

*8 Finally, all of you be like-minded and sympathetic, love one another, and be compassionate and humble, 9 not paying back evil for evil or insult for insult but, on the contrary, giving a blessing, since you were called for this, so that you may inherit a blessing. 10 For the one who wants to love life and to see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit, 11 and let him turn away from evil and do what is good. Let him seek peace and pursue it, 12 because 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 what is evil. -- 1 Peter 3:8-12 (CSB)*

HOPE Journaling

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## Weekly Devotional

“Q: What is the chief end of man? A: Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.”

– Westminster Shorter Catechism

So many in our world today are consumed by the pursuit of a happy life. Constantly seeking material things, relationships, education, or jobs that might finally fill that void and truly make them happy. This is not a new problem but one that has been around for some time now. You look at the life of Solomon in the Bible and in spite of being so wise still tried to find fulfillment through great wealth, numerous wives and every other pleasure, and ultimately concluded that all of these things are meaningless.

“Living your best life now” is a phrase borrowed from those whose erroneous theology links strong faith with wealth, health, and happiness. While that idea is clearly not one found in the Bible, it does not mean we are not to enjoy life now. What is critical here is perspective: what does true enjoyment of this life really mean for disciples of Christ? What does Peter mean by a blessing and what does the Bible mean by “one who wants to love life and see good days”?

Peter is not saying that the good days means the absence of problems, it is more about an attitude of faith and grace. He outlines for us five traits that contribute to this. We are to be like-minded, sympathetic, loving, compassionate, and humble. Like-minded with fellow believers means there is harmony, a desire for the body of Christ to live in unity. We live in a time where the United States feel very divided, there is no middle ground that can bring the two sides together. What a fantastic opportunity for the church to demonstrate to the world the true unity amongst people is found in Christ. We are to be sympathetic to those around us, seeing their suffering and struggles and seeking to lighten their burdens in practical ways and by sharing the truth of the gospel with them. We should be a people that shows love to fellow believers. Our lives should be marked by compassion with care for those around us, and finally all of this is done with a spirit of humility.

Peter pushes this a bit further with a few examples of how this plays out in our daily lives. How often has someone wronged or insulted us in some way and our first reaction is to bless them. If we are being honest that is not likely what initially comes to our mind. We seek justice for the wrongs committed against us so that the reaction Peter is asking of us does not come naturally. It is only by the work of the Spirit in our lives that this becomes possible and our display of grace in these moments is an incredible example to the world around us. Choosing to forgive instead of retaliating many times will open the door to a conversation about the gospel with those that do not believe.

Peter shares a part of Psalm 34 that explains what good days truly are. Those that pursue righteousness can know the nearness of God and his answer to our prayers. So that no matter what is going on around us we can trust that God sees us and that he hears us and is shaping us into the likeness of Christ. A truly good life is an understanding that God is for you and not against you and this life is found only in Christ.

– Contributed by Eric Foster

## Read Also:

Psalm 34	[context for Peter's quote]
Ephesians 4:32	[how believers should relate to each other]
Colossians 3:12	[characteristics of a believer]
Matthew 5:9	[we are to be peacemakers]
3 John 11	[believers are to turn away from evil]
Romans 12:9-21	[closely parallel the words of Peter]

## Group Discussion Questions – Theological Considerations

- What is righteousness? What role does the Holy Spirit have in helping us pursue righteousness?
- What is the grace of God?
- Does God only hear the prayers of believers?
- If God is unchanging, why do we pray? Do our prayers have any effect?

## Group Discussion Questions – Digging Deeper

- Why does God want His people to respond to evil with good?
- What blessing will believers inherit?
- How can you bless someone who has wronged you?
- In what ways do you seek peace in your life?
- What does it mean to be a peacemaker in a world of turmoil and conflict?
- How are you seeking righteousness in your life?
- What is the difference in joy and happiness? How have you confused the two in the past?

Week of Monday, March 1, 2021

1 Peter 3:13-17

*13 Who then will harm you if you are devoted to what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness, you are blessed. Do not fear them or be intimidated, 15 but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. 16 Yet do this with gentleness and reverence, keeping a clear conscience, so that when you are accused, those who disparage your good conduct in Christ will be put to shame. 17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. -- 1 Peter 3:13-17 (CSB)*

HOPE Journaling

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## Weekly Devotional

“Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.”

– Abraham Lincoln

I recently purchased a dashcam for my car. These little cameras are surprisingly inexpensive. So, I purchased one in the hope that I would never need it for its intended purpose, but just in case I did. The reality is that auto insurance fraud and car accident scams (via staged accidents) cost innocent victims billions of dollars a year in America alone. Whether I need it or not, the camera runs constantly, recording my travels and the road in front of me. The hope is that should I ever find myself in a situation where I must provide evidence for my innocence in an accident, I would have a ready and prepared defense because the camera was recording the whole time.

The same is true of our preparation as witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The way I see it, there are three primary ways that we act as witnesses in our walk as Christians.

1. In our everyday lives, we live out the gospel and disciple those who are in our direct spheres of influence: our families, those we mentor, our small groups, and so on.
2. In our evangelism efforts as we seek to proactively share the gospel with unbelievers: neighbors, family, coworkers, and others we engage with from time to time.
3. As an explanation or an apology (meaning defense) for the reason we have faith, whether it is because someone has asked us questions or we are facing persecution and must be prepared to defend our faith and the foundation of our hope.

Regardless of the reason that we find ourselves in the role of witness, we must be prepared to do so. With baseball season quickly approaching, Spring training is firing up. The whole point of Spring training is to get the athletes prepared for the trials and grind of the season ahead. They are preparing themselves in-season and during the off-season. We must do the same as Christians. We must “be ready in season and out of season” (2 Timothy 4:2) as well. This preparation is a lifestyle focused on Jesus and knowing Him more. So how do we train ourselves so that we are prepared to offer a defense for our hope at all times?

We must spend time in Scripture. If you are reading this, there is a good chance that you have some of these practices in place already! We must also spend time in other spiritual disciplines that make us more like Christ: prayer, hospitality, giving, serving, sharing, fellowship, gathered worship, and more. The more you engage in these things, the more you become like Jesus. Like the dashcam, you are always on, always ready to, at a moment’s notice, provide evidence and a defense for the hope that we claim through faith in Jesus!

## Read Also:

Isaiah 8:11-22	[fear God alone, turn to His Word for your testimony]
Isaiah 41:10-14	[do not fear, we will not be shamed, God will help us]
Matthew 5:6-12	[blessed are those persecuted for righteousness' sake]
2 Timothy 4:2-4	[be prepared to offer truth]
2 Timothy 2:24-26	[God uses gentle teaching to bring repentance]
Luke 21:10-19	[God will ultimately give us the words to say in time]
Hebrews 13:18	[having a good conscience, living honorably]

## Group Discussion Questions - Theological Considerations

- What is the Great Commission? Where do we find it in Scripture?
- What is fear of God?
- How does God bless those persecuted for His name's sake?
- What is discipleship?
- What is hope?
- What is apologetics?
  - o Give an apology for the sanctity of human life
  - o Give an apology for biblical marriage
  - o Give an apology for the authority of Scripture

## Group Discussion Questions - Digging Deeper

- How does biblical hope contrast earthly hope? What is something that deepens or strengthens your hope in Jesus?
- What are you afraid of? How does this fear contrast right fear of God?
- Is fear sinful?
- What is your testimony?
- What can you foresee being a reason you would need to offer a reason for your hope?
- How is a witness to God similar to a witness in court?
- What does devotion and reverence look like?
- Why is it better to suffer for doing good than it is for doing evil? How does this point to the Gospel?
- What do you think of the saying "Preach the Gospel always and, if necessary, use words?"



Week of Monday, March 8, 2021

1 Peter 3:18-22

*18 For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, 19 in which he also went and made proclamation to the spirits in prison 20 who in the past were disobedient, when God patiently waited in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared. In it a few — that is, eight people — were saved through water. 21 Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you (not as the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge of a good conscience toward God) through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him. -- 1 Peter 3:18-22 (CSB)*

HOPE Journaling

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## Weekly Devotional

“Symbols are powerful because they are visible signs of invisible realities.”

– St. Augustine

In 2006, Tesla and its CEO, Elon Musk, unveiled the very first Tesla concept car as they announced their entry into the Electric Vehicle (EV) market. Two years later, Tesla delivered its first production-run of the Tesla Roadster. This Tesla Roadster was the real deal. It was a working, viable automobile that would drive long distances on a single charge. The concept car that was produced for car shows and publicity was not the real deal. It was simply a representation of what was to come. It pointed to the real deal, but it did not function or replace the real deal. The concept version of the car was a sort of prophetic symbol that stood in the gap until the real Tesla Roadster arrived.

That is a rough illustration of the biblical doctrine of typology. Typology is a doctrine that shows how events, person, practices, and more in the Old Testament relate to or pre-figure similar things in the New Testament, most typically, Jesus Christ Himself. Let me word that a little differently. Sometimes things in the Old Testament are merely pictures that point to a coming reality in the New Testament. For example, the Old Testament sacrificial system was a type, or a prophetic symbol, for the salvation that would come through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Moses, who led God’s people out of slavery to the Egyptians into the promised land, was a type for Jesus who would come to lead His people out of slavery to sin and into the promise of eternity with God.

Here, in this passage, we see another type. We see that the flood that covered the earth during Noah’s day is a type for baptism. The water that cleansed the earth of the wickedness of man is a prophetic symbol that points to water baptism. It is through this lens of typology and symbolism that we must view this passage lest we begin to think that the act of baptism itself saves. Think about the story of Noah, the ark, and the flood. Was it literally the water that saved Noah? No. It was God that saved Noah. It was Noah’s faith and trust in God that saved him. Had Noah disobeyed God and refused to build an ark and step into that ark, he would’ve been killed just as the rest of humanity was. Had God not “shut him in” the ark (Genesis 7:16), he would’ve been killed as the vessel would’ve been overwhelmed by the water. The water acted as a cleanser to wipe away the wicked flesh of man on earth; but it did not save Noah. It was Noah’s faith that saved him through the vessel of the ark. God provided the means of salvation for Noah and his family.

In the same way, water baptism does not save. Instead, it is our faith that saves through the vessel of grace. The immersion of a believer in the waters of baptism paints the picture of the sinful flesh being cleansed of wickedness. It is not the water that saves, but God that saves and provides the means of salvation. Peter is reminding us that, through faith by grace, we are saved and we enter into the water for baptism, as a picture that points again to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

## Read Also:

Genesis 6-9	[Noah and the flood]
Acts 2:37-41	[Peter calls for repentance and baptism at Pentecost]
Acts 8:11	[belief → baptism]
Acts 22:6-16	[Saul/Paul believes and is told to be baptized]
Colossians 2:11-13	[typology of circumcision and baptism]

## Group Discussion Questions - Theological Considerations

- What is typology? Talk about the following typologies:
  - o Circumcision
  - o Adam
  - o Sacrificial system
  - o God fashioning clothing from animal skins
  - o The high priest and the temple veil
  - o The near sacrifice of Isaac
- What is baptism?
- What does it mean that Jesus “went and made proclamation to the spirits in prison?”
- Are Old Testament Jews in heaven?

## Group Discussion Questions – Digging Deeper

- Have you been baptized by immersion following your conversion? If so, talk about why it was important to you to take that step. If not, why not?
- What does it mean to die to Christ?
- How do you kill the flesh?
- Noah was still a sinful man. Why did God save him and his family?
- Noah still sinned after leaving the ark. Yet, he was saved through it. What about us as a people who sin after we are saved through faith by grace in Jesus?
- How do you respond to those who argue that baptism is required for salvation? How do you respond to those who hold to paedo-baptism (infant baptism)?

Week of Monday, March 15, 2021

## 1 Peter 4:1-11

*1 Therefore, since Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same understanding — because the one who suffers in the flesh is finished with sin —  
2 in order to live the remaining time in the flesh no longer for human desires, but for God's will. 3 For there has already been enough time spent in doing what the Gentiles choose to do: carrying on in unrestrained behavior, evil desires, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and lawless idolatry. 4 They are surprised that you don't join them in the same flood of wild living — and they slander you. 5 They will give an account to the one who stands ready to judge the living and the dead. 6 For this reason the gospel was also preached to those who are now dead, so that, although they might be judged in the flesh according to human standards, they might live in the spirit according to God's standards. 7 The end of all things is near; therefore, be alert and sober-minded for prayer. 8 Above all, maintain constant love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Be hospitable to one another without complaining. 10 Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve others, as good stewards of the varied grace of God. 11 If anyone speaks, let it be as one who speaks God's words; if anyone serves, let it be from the strength God provides, so that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ in everything. To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen. -- 1 Peter 4:1-11 (CSB)*

## HOPE Journaling

H – Highlight what stands out to you

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# Weekly Devotional

“...the one who suffers in the flesh is finished with sin.”

– 1 Peter 4:1b

Have you ever been hurt? Assuming we all have been hurt, does that mean we have suffered in the flesh and are done with sin? No. Sadly, it is not that easy. Being physically hurt does not make you a better person or a better Christian. There are criminals who are punished rightly for their misconduct who are no better off for their suffering. Suffering does not justify an individual. And as a Christian, searching out ways that you might suffer would not serve to make you any more fit for grace.

We know this because Peter explains, “The one who suffers in the flesh is finished with sin - *in order to live the remaining time in the flesh no longer for human desires, but for God’s will.*” Peter is focusing on our motivation. It is our willingness to lay down our own desires for the sake of God’s will, even when this would not make any worldly sense, that shows that we are done with sin.

We are constantly faced with choices. Daily. Hourly. Some minute. Some significant. Each being made for a reason. We turn left because we want Ribbon Box. We go straight because we want to park in the back lot and get Ribbon Box. ;)

When we align ourselves with God, our concerns align with His concerns and forsake the worries of the world. This is seen through our actions. You might be able to get a new roof completely paid for if you stretch the truth, but you will not do it. You would rather suffer the cost than have dishonest gain. You may get free bussing if you borrow your friend’s pass that his work pays for, but since this is not permitted and would be considered a form of stealing, you do not do it. You would rather suffer the inconvenience. You may have a model family, but still you choose to seek out and welcome a child into your home who does not even trust you. You stand up for things that do not make sense to the rest of the world. You are honest. You are loving. You exult God rather than yourself. You seem happy when you support others who surpass you in success. You give away your time to those who have nothing to offer you in return. And you do not consider money your security, but as a gift from God that can be used to support yourself and others.

Simply put, you will do things that, on the surface, work contrary to your own good. You will not continually be fighting for your own happiness. Your gifts will not be viewed as your personal advantages. Money will not be viewed as a thing to be hoarded. The ability to speak will not be used for manipulation or any type of deceit. Other people will not be pawns in your game to find happiness.

Your actions will be judged foolish to those who are seeking their fulfillment outside of God’s will. And sometimes we are tempted to believe that they are right. But the true Judge will have the final word. By the world’s judgment, it does not make sense to selflessly love; by God’s standard it is the only way. When true judgment is pronounced, those who sought to fill themselves will be found wanting, while those who sought to love will find themselves filled. What are we motivated by?

- Contributed by Ryan Arrington

## Read Also:

Matthew 5-7	[Sermon on the Mount]
Romans 5:1-5	[character built in suffering]
Proverbs 10:12	[quoted by Peter here]
Galatians 5:16-26	[Spirit vs flesh; fruits of the Spirit]
Philippians 2:1-18	[Christ's example]

## Group Discussion Questions - Theological Considerations

- What is joy?
- What is sacrifice?
- Define hospitality.
- Define love.

## Group Discussion Questions - Digging Deeper

- What motivates you?
- Does God want you to be happy?
- Does God want you to be wealthy?
- Why are we surprised by the actions and attitudes of unbelievers?
- How do you remain alert and sober-minded for prayer?
- What does it mean that love covers a multitude of sins? What does this mean in a culture and, sometimes the church, that says all we need is love?
- How do we balance truth and love?
- How do you use the gifts you've been given by God? What ways have you used them for blessing? What ways have you used them selfishly?
- Does God want His people to suffer? Does God plan suffering? Do you have to suffer? How has avoiding suffering affected us?

Week of Monday, April 5, 2021

1 Peter 4:12-19

*12 Dear friends, don't be surprised when the fiery ordeal comes among you to test you, as if something unusual were happening to you. 13 Instead, rejoice as you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may also rejoice with great joy when his glory is revealed. 14 If you are ridiculed for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 15 Let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or a meddler. 16 But if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God in having that name. 17 For the time has come for judgment to begin with God's household, and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who disobey the gospel of God? 18 And if a righteous person is saved with difficulty, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner? 19 So then, let those who suffer according to God's will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator while doing what is good. -- 1 Peter 4:12-19 (CSB)*

HOPE Journaling

H – Highlight what stands out to you

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P – Practice this in your life

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## Weekly Devotional

“I was thinking about how people read the Bible a whole lot more as they get older. Then I realized they are cramming for their final exam.”

– George Carlin

There are two types of students. The first type of student is the person who is studious and a bookworm and studied for days or weeks in advance leading up to an exam. They took notes in class and studied them at home. They took notes while studying their notes and studied those also. Their final score was often evidence of their preparation and time invested. The second type of student is the one who procrastinated and put off what they should have been doing all along or just remembered the night before the test and spent the night cramming. They poured over stuff in the final hours trying to capture and retain enough information to pass. Their test scores were often one of two results: poor because they did not prepare, or they were ok because they were the kind that never really had to study anyway.

Comedian George Carlin put a humorous spin on how Christians often do the same thing. They wait until their final years to spend time in Scripture and preparing their hearts for the return of Jesus. However, this issue of “cramming” for eternity is only a symptom of a larger issue. The greater issue is that so many Christians are not prepared for life as a Christian, because they make little to no effort to prepare. So, when they face trials or difficulties, they are surprised or caught off-guard and are inadequately equipped to handle them. But Peter tells us in this passage, “do not be surprised...as if something unusual is happening to you.” Peter is telling us, “Be alert! Be ready! Trials and difficulties are coming, equip yourself now to handle them!”

One of the most common misperceptions that I hear from Christians is “God won’t give you more than you can handle.” That’s total garbage. In fact, God is going to give you a LOT more than you can handle, so that you learn just how much you need Him! Equipping ourselves as Christians allows us to make it through those things we cannot handle because we allow God to handle them for us. That means we must know God and we must build that relationship with God so that we can give those things over to Him. That means we must daily put on the Armor of God that allows us to stand strong in the midst of terrible storms. Remember, the disciples did not make it through the storm on the boat because of their sailing prowess and expertise. They made it through the storm because they turned to Jesus in desperation. Jesus calmed the storm and allowed them to make it through. Without Jesus, they likely would’ve been shipwrecked and died. It was in turning to the One who controls the storms that they were saved.

Spend time getting to know Jesus. Spend time equipping yourself with the armor of God. Spend time growing in trust and relationship with the One who is in control of all things. Do not be surprised or caught off-guard when trials come. Prepare now. Besides, whether you know it or not, you need Him every day; even in the good ones.



## Read Also:

Proverbs 11	[quoted in this passage; contrasts fools & righteous]
Ephesians 6:10-18	[the armor of God]
Mark 4:35-41	[Jesus calms the storm]
Matthew 6:25-34	[trusting Jesus in anxiety and fear]
2 Corinthians 12:9-10	[God's power is perfected in our weakness]
Psalms 23	[God is our shepherd and protector]

## Group Discussion Questions – Theological Considerations

- What is the armor of God?
- What is a fool?
- How does a fool differ from the wise?
- What is God's sovereignty?
- What is the judgment of God? Who will be judged? How will judgment differ for Christians and non-Christians?
- Who is the Holy Spirit? What role does He play in our suffering?

## Group Discussion Questions – Digging Deeper

- When is a time you trusted in your own ability rather than God's?
- How have you been a fool?
- How have you experienced God's blessing of wisdom?
- How do you practically give your cares and concerns to God?
- When is a time that you would not have survived (literally or figuratively) if not for God?
- What is a storm that God has calmed in your life?
- Is God going to calm every storm? Why or why not?
- How do you practically trust God in the midst of a storm of suffering, trials, and so on?
- What does Peter mean by "if a righteous person is saved with difficulty?"
- Have you ever been "ridiculed for the name of Christ?" Talk about it.

Week of Monday, April 12, 2021

## 1 Peter 5:1-5

*1 I exhort the elders among you as a fellow elder and witness to the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory about to be revealed: 2 Shepherd God's flock among you, not overseeing out of compulsion but willingly, as God would have you; not out of greed for money but eagerly; 3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. 5 In the same way, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. All of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. -- 1 Peter 5:1-5 (CSB)*

## HOPE Journaling

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## Weekly Devotional

“Servant-leadership is more than a concept. It is a fact. Any great leader, by which I also mean an ethical leader of any group, will see herself or himself as a servant of that group and will act accordingly.”

– M. Scott Peck

For 18 days in 2018, 12 young boys and their soccer coach were trapped in the Tham Luang caves in Thailand due to an unexpectedly early rainy season that flooded the caves. The coach, 25-year-old Ekkaphon Chanthawong, received high praise for his actions. Although the coach was the one to lead the boys into the cave, he could not be blamed for the players being trapped as the rains came far earlier than anticipated. However, it was his response to the circumstances that earned him such praise. Despite the situation that was out of his control, this young coach was able to lead and guide his young players through the long 18 days in the dark. He kept them calm with reassuring words of encouragement. He taught them how to meditate so that the boys could silence their fears and relax. He refused to eat the little food they had, instead imploring the boys to eat it. He scheduled times for the boys to take turns staying awake in the dark in case rescuers came. Eventually rescuers did come and with amazing heroism and against incredible odds, all 13 of those trapped survived.

Coach Ekkaphon could not control the weather. He could not control the floods. He could not reroute the cave system. He could not control what he could not control. However, as a leader, he was responsible for shepherding these young boys through this time and for instilling a sense of confidence that all would end well. That is similar to what your pastors are called to do as well.

There is so much that happens in the life of a local church and its people. Church members struggle with disease. Church members pass away. Communities experience natural disasters or heartbreak and the church becomes a focal point of hope or derision. People lose loved ones, spouses betray one another, kids wander from the faith into which they were raised. Governments implement legal changes or mandates that impact the way churches operate or meet. There are so many things that are outside the control of the pastor that the pastor must now navigate and lead his people through. The best pastors are not power- or attention-hungry. The best pastors are like Jesus in that they do not seek to be served, but to serve.

Your pastors should strive to serve you and love you in the midst of all the challenges and struggles that life or Satan can throw at you. Sometimes that means standing between you and the forces that come against you. Sometimes that means boldly pointing you back to Jesus when you stray. The way I see it, Peter includes this statement in this letter for two reasons: 1. So that pastors are reminded to focus on the glory of Christ and not seeking glory for self, and 2. So that the average church member is aware of the expectations placed on the pastor and knows what they can expect from their pastor in times of trial and in times of triumph.

## Read Also:

Proverbs 3	[quoted from in this passage]
Hebrews 13:7-19	[what your pastors can expect from you]
Acts 20:28-31	[a warning and command to pastors]
2 Timothy 4:1-5	[exhortation to pastors]
1 Corinthians 11:1	[pastors are to set the example]

## Group Discussion Questions – Theological Considerations

- What does it mean to be a shepherd spiritually?
- How was Jesus the Great Shepherd?
- Is shepherding a gift? Who can have this gift?
- What is discipleship? How is this similar and/or different than shepherding?
- What is pride? What does it mean that “God resists the proud?”

## Group Discussion Questions – Digging Deeper

- What should you expect from you pastors?
- What should your pastors expect from you?
- How do pastors resemble Jesus in the role of shepherd?
- What are things that pastors are responsible for?
- Who is someone that has shepherded you well? What have you learned from them that you can use when shepherding others?
- Who has been a great leader in your life? What have you learned from them?
- Is position or influence more important to leadership? Why? How does this impact the command to disciple others?
- What happens when a pastor seeks his own glory rather than God’s glory? Examples?
- Why is humility in leadership so hard?

Week of Monday, April 19, 2021

1 Peter 5:6-11

*6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you at the proper time, 7 casting all your cares on him, because he cares about you. 8 Be sober-minded, be alert. Your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour. 9 Resist him, firm in the faith, knowing that the same kind of sufferings are being experienced by your fellow believers throughout the world. 10 The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little while. 11 To him be dominion forever. Amen. -- 1 Peter 5:6-11 (CSB)*

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## Weekly Devotional

“Persecution is the compliment paid by a threatened lie to a conquering truth.”  
– Chapman Cohen, atheist and secularist

On Palm Sunday, 2017, two churches filled with Coptic Christians in Egypt were blown up. More than 50 people in attendance died and more than a hundred were injured. However, within a few hours of those blasts, Pastor Boules George stood in the remnants of his destroyed church and preached a message to a full congregation. His message was titled “A message to those who kill us.” It contained three brief points: 1. Thank you, 2. We love you, and 3. We are praying for you. Pastor George said “Thank you” for four reasons: 1. because the terrorists gave the dead the honor to die as Christ died, killed for the Truth, 2. because the terrorists shortened the victims’ journey to their heavenly home, 3. because the terrorists allowed Christians to fulfill Christ’s words in Luke 10:3, “Now go; I’m sending you out like lambs among wolves.”, and 4. because the terrorists’ actions reminded people that this world is temporary and they have an eternal home elsewhere. The church was, in fact, now overflowing with people who were unchurched and/or unbelievers. The pastor preached “We love you” because even murderers and thieves love those who love them, but only followers of Jesus are taught to love our enemies. Pastor George closed his message with “We’re praying for you” because, he reasoned, if a terrorist could taste the love of God even one time, it would drive hatred from his heart.

We live in a day and age when persecution against Christians is rampant around the world. Every single year, thousands upon thousands of Christians are killed for the name of Jesus. Thousands more are arrested and tortured. Thousands again lose their homes and their jobs. Nearly 1,500 places of worship are bombed, bulldozed, or set on fire annually. People do not attack things they simply hate. They attack things they fear. Satan, the king of lies, has convinced an unbelieving world that the gospel of Jesus Christ is a threat. And that is not entirely false. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is both offensive and exclusive. By its very nature, it stands against earthly kings and kingdoms. By its name it worships One who is Truth and calls all other “truths” false. That is a threat to the world and its gods of sex, power, money, and status. Ironically, Pastor George and the renowned atheist, Chapman Cohen, both agree that the reason that persecution takes place is because the lies that masquerade as truth are threatened by the only Truth that conquers all things. As a scornful and, often, deadly compliment to that conquering truth, the lies attack. Knowing that they already killed Jesus, yet He still lives, they attempt to take down those who claim His name.

While the persecution we face in America is so minor compared to what we see taking place around the world, it is growing at a rapid and ever-increasing pace. Peter shows us to imitate Pastor George as his congregation. Stand firm in the faith, give glory to God, and “do not neglect to gather together” for the encouragement, building up, and love for one another; and do so “all the more as the you see the day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:24-25)

## Read Also:

Hebrews 10:23-25	[the necessity of the local church gathering]
Psalms 89	[God is faithful to His people and has a mighty hand]
Psalms 55	[cast your cares on God even in the midst of betrayal]
Psalms 56	[God is a protector who hears our pleas for help]
Hebrews 13:6	[when we have God, we do not have to fear man]
Psalms 27	[when we have God, we do not have to fear man]
Psalms 118	[God delivers us, we do not have to fear man]
Romans 8:31-39	[truth wins]
Ephesians 6:10-12	[our real enemy and battle as Christians]

## Group Discussion Questions – Theological Considerations

- What is persecution?
- What does it mean that God is a God of Armies?
- What is fear?
- Who is Satan?
- What is the kingdom and rule of Satan? What is the extent of his power?
- What is spiritual warfare?

## Group Discussion Questions – Digging Deeper

- Man can hurt us, kill us, and ruin our livelihoods. What does it mean that we do not have to fear man?
- Why does God allow or plan suffering?
- Why does God allow or plan persecution?
- How have you seen persecution?
- How is persecution growing in America?
- How does the local, weekly gathering of believers in a local church help provide a barrier or protection against Satan?
- Research shows that a regular church attendee statistically attends twice a month or less. What danger does this present?
- Are there legitimate reasons to neglect the gathering of the church?
- How does knowing that Christians around the world are also experiencing suffering encourage you?

Week of Monday, April 26, 2021

1 Peter 5:12-14

*12 Through Silvanus, a faithful brother (as I consider him), I have written to you briefly in order to encourage you and to testify that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it! 13 She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, as does Mark, my son. 14 Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ. -- 1 Peter 5:12-14 (CSB)*

HOPE Journaling

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## Weekly Devotional

“A smooth sea never made a skilled sailor.”  
– President Franklin D. Roosevelt

This week, we wrap up our 16-week study on the First Epistle of Peter. In doing so, it is valuable to look back and remember the major theme of this book. The theme that weaved its way through this entire book was the idea that Christians are not at home in this world, but instead we are foreigners or strangers staying for a time in a land that is not our own. As foreigners, unwilling to bow to the customs and cultures in which we reside temporarily, we will experience suffering that is unjust and harsh. Christians will not be spared suffering because they pursue holiness and righteousness. In fact, it is quite the opposite in a couple of regards. The first is that people will hate us because they see our truth as a challenge to their ways of life, to their sin that brings pleasure in the flesh. The second is that our suffering will refine us as a goldsmith refines gold in a fire. It will remove imperfections and make us more like our perfectly just Savior, Jesus Christ, who suffered unjustly so that those of us who are unjust could be justified and made to be more like Him. It is specifically our pursuit of righteousness and holiness that will be the cause of our suffering and also the greatest benefactor of our suffering.

FDR gives us another illustration. A sailor who sets his boat out on the open sea is pursuing many things: adventure, new lands, new experiences, wealth, and more. However, in many ways, he is also seeking to grow as a sailor and become a master of his ship. The things can be learned in calm waters can also be learned on land, having never set sail in the first place; and we would never call a sailor who never set sail a skilled sailor. Instead it is through the trials, turmoil, and terror of massive waves crashing over the bow of the boat that make a sailor learn the trade. It is high winds and horrific storms that make a sailor skilled at the art and science of sailing. The sailor learns to sail in these unsettled seas because they are necessary for his growth as a sailor and they are necessary for his survival.

As Christians, the same is true of us. A life of ease and comfort, free from conflict and suffering, is one of complacency. Complacency has never been given credit for the growth of passion, gifting, or knowledge. The reason is that it becomes natural to think “Life is good. I got a good handle on this. I don’t need anyone else.” It is in the midst of suffering and pain and chaos that we realize that we cannot handle it on our own. It is in the midst of the storm that we dive most deeply into the things of faith and grace. Why? Because they are necessary for our growth and they are necessary for our survival. That does not mean that turning to God in our suffering precludes us from death or abuse. Instead it means that we can latch onto the promise of an eternity where pain and tears completely cease to exist. In our suffering, we look at our God, we look at Jesus, and we realize that our God knows what it’s like to be us. He can empathize with our suffering and poverty and grief and anguish because He experienced them also. That did not make Him weaker, it made Him human. However, because He is also God, we can trust that His promises are good, and we can “stand firm in it.”

## Read Also:

1 Corinthians 15:58	[stand firm in your labors]
Philippians 1:27-30	[stand firm and live worthy in suffering]
1 Corinthians 16:13-14	[stand firm in love]
Philippians 4:1	[stand firm]
Psalms 136	[God's love is steadfast]
Psalms 40	[remaining steadfast in trials]

## Group Discussion Questions – Theological Considerations

- What is perseverance?
- What does God's steadfastness tell us about His character?
- How does being in Christ give us peace?

## Group Discussion Questions – Digging Deeper

- What are practical steps you can take to stand firm in trials?
- Who has encouraged you recently?
- Who can you encourage in their faith this week? Commit to doing so within the next 7 days.
- What was a difficult struggle in your life that strengthened your faith? In what ways did those trials make you more like Christ?
- Why can laboring as a Christian be difficult? How do we stand firm in those labors?
- Peter tells us in this passage and Paul tells us in Romans 16, 1 Corinthians 16, 2 Corinthians 13, and 1 Thessalonians 5 to “greet one another with a holy kiss.” What is a holy kiss? Is this how we should be greeting one another still today? If all of Scripture is good for teaching and correcting, what does this teach us?
- Why do you think Peter qualifies calling Silvanus a faithful brother by saying “as I consider him”