

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

MAY 22 - 26, 2023

Sermon Series 5.28 - 8.13

FORGED

IN THE FURNACE

MONDAY

Read **1 Peter 1:1-9**

Persecution and Hope

When Peter calls his readers foreigners, exiles, or aliens, he is referring to their situation as Christians living in this world but whose true home is with God in His Kingdom. Because of persecution, many believers had been scattered throughout the Roman Empire. God was moving His people to the ends of the earth with the Gospel!

The apostle Peter wrote this letter to encourage believers who would likely face trials and persecution under Emperor Nero. All Christians would very likely be misunderstood; some would be harassed; a few would be tortured and even put to death. Today, this happens around the world with alarming cruelty. However, the Gospel is not hindered from going out to people who need the Good News.

This letter is still helpful for any Christians facing trials or living as displaced persons or refugees today. Many Christians around the world are living under governments more repressive than the Roman Empire of the first century.

No one escapes catastrophe, pain, illness, and death—trials, like persecution, that make us lean heavily on God's grace. For today's readers as well as for Peter's original audience, the theme of this letter is hope.

Peter mentions all three members of the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ), and God the Holy Spirit. All members of the Trinity work to bring about our salvation. The Father chose us before we chose Him (Ephesians 1:4). Jesus Christ, the Son, died for us while we were still sinners (Romans 5:6-10). The Holy Spirit brings us the benefit of salvation and sets us apart for God's service (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

Imagine if you rested in the knowledge that God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are together with you, and you have access to them simply through prayer. Our salvation and security rest in God's merciful choice; no trials or persecutions can take away the eternal life He gives to those who believe in Him!

"Grace and peace be yours in abundance" (1 Peter 1:2).

QUESTIONS

What does persecution look like to you as a Christian? How do you feel knowing your faith will be tested by trials, etc.? Who will you honestly turn to when trials and suffering come? Family, friends ... they are broken like we all are. Leaning into God our Father, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus is the best answer.

PRAYERS

For African Enterprise

Pray for peace in Sudan where full-scale civil war threatens to break out in a country neighboring African Enterprise's Team in South Sudan.

TUESDAY

Read **1 Peter 1:3-5**

A Living Hope

Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we've been given a brand-new life and have everything to live for, including a future in heaven—and the future starts now! New birth refers to spiritual birth (regeneration)—the Holy Spirit's act of bringing believers into God's family—a new life from and in God. A person cannot be a Christian without a fresh beginning based on the salvation Christ brings. When we receive God's magnificent gift, He brings us new freedom, a new identity, and a new family.

Because we believe and have been born again, we are heirs with Christ. We receive an inheritance from God our Father, pure and perfect, that will never perish, fade, rust, or decay. Therefore, we can live with great expectation for the coming Kingdom and enjoy our inheritance in heaven.

Peter's words offer joy and hope in times of trouble. He bases his confidence on what God has done for us through Christ Jesus. We are called into a living hope of eternal life. Eternal life begins immediately when we trust Christ and join God's family. God will help us remain true to our faith through whatever difficult times

we must face. No matter what trials or persecution you may face, your soul cannot be harmed if you have accepted Christ's gift of salvation. You will be protected by His power.

What does "living hope" look like? No matter what is happening in life around you, you can live with and in hope that God our Father will keep His promises, as He has from the beginning of time. "Living hope" means you are filled and fueled by the Holy Spirit.

The prophet Isaiah says: *"But those who **hope** in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint"* (40:31).

The Apostle Peter describes the Christian hope as "a living hope." What does that mean? The opposite of a "living hope" would be a "dead hope." Living hope is hope that has power and produces changed lives. Christian hope is a strong confidence in God, who has the power to produce changes in how we live.

QUESTIONS

Do you need encouragement? Do you have living hope? Pray about these things. Ask a pastor or elder to guide you if you have questions

PRAYERS

For African Enterprise

Pray for follow-up in the evangelistic missions to Atakpame, Togo, and the University of Accra in Ghana.

WEDNESDAY

Read **1 Peter 1:6-7**

Joy and Trials

Christians were the target of persecution in the Roman Empire because they refused to worship the emperor as a god. They were viewed as traitors. Because Christians would not worship at pagan temples, moneymaking enterprises declined wherever Christianity took hold. They did not support the Roman ideals of self, power, and conquest. The Romans scorned the Christians because of their self-sacrificing service.

Peter mentions trials and suffering several times in this letter: 1:6-7; 3:13-17; 4:12-19; 5:9. All believers face such trials when they let their light shine into the darkness. Trials are a part of the refining process that burns away all the impurities. During trials we learn more about what it is like to live in the Kingdom on earth.

Jesus loves us and He wants to present us holy and blameless to God. James 1:2-4 says that we should “*consider it pure joy when we face trials because these trials will produce perseverance*” for whatever comes next. James also says “*perseverance must finish its work so we may become mature and complete, not lacking anything*” and without impurities. This makes our faith purer and stronger so that we can be more useful to God.

Instead of asking, “Why me?” maybe ask: “What am I to learn from God in this season of trial.” Or “How shall I apply this to my life going forward?” Or “Is my suffering for someone else’s benefit”—because they see the grace with which I live for Jesus during trials. Be confident in the Lord’s plans for you. God wants us to continue our growth as He leads us to a better future. It is not easy when you are in the midst of the trial, but God promises that perseverance will help us when facing grief, anger, sorrow, loss, and pain—without becoming bitter and full of despair.

Therefore, take courage in Jesus as Savior; there is no need to be afraid. He who suffered for us will not abandon us. Jesus carries us through everything!

QUESTIONS

What is your typical reaction to a trial or hardship in your life? Looking back on a particular tough season, how and where do you see God working in the situation? How have you been changed? Have you been changed? If not, ask for the Holy Spirit to work in your heart, mind and soul to bring about the change God wants for you.

PRAYERS

For African Enterprise

Pray for preparations for African Enterprise’s evangelistic mission to Mutare, Zimbabwe, in May.

THURSDAY

Read **1 Peter 1:8-9**

Present and Future

After Jesus was resurrected on Easter Sunday, He visited His disciples. Thomas was not in attendance the first time Jesus visited. Thomas came to believe after seeing the resurrected Christ: *“Because you have seen Me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed”* (John 20:29). Peter, having heard those words, echoes them here: *“Though you have not seen Him, you love Him”* (1 Peter 1:8). Faith brings both salvation and the promise of a day when pain will end and perfect justice will begin. Faith will be rewarded, and evil will be punished. But what should we do until then? The Bible gives us simple but difficult answers:

In Matthew 22:35-40, Jesus replied: *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”*

Here is a simplified version: Love God. Love others. Teach others to do likewise.

“Then the disciples gathered around Jesus after the resurrection and asked Him, ‘Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?’ Jesus said to them: ‘It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’” (Acts 1:7-8)

Jesus’ answer sounds simple and difficult.

It may help to think of the Acts verses in these terms: Jerusalem = the city you live in; Judea = the state or country you live in; Samaria = the people you do not like, or your enemy; Ends of the Earth = India, China, North Korea, Iran, Afghanistan, Cuba, Haiti, etc.

Because we know the future, we must faithfully serve God here and now. If today that means resolving a conflict, mending a hurt, confronting a wayward child, rebuilding a marriage, or just waiting for guidance, do it all with the joy of God, who will return with the reward He has promised!

QUESTIONS

How are you following Jesus’ simple yet difficult instructions in these areas? Jerusalem? Judea? Samaria? Ends of the Earth? Loving God? Loving others? Teaching others to do likewise?

PRAYERS

For African Enterprise

Pray for new leadership for African Enterprise’s Team in Congo-DRC and for wisdom for the Board of Directors there.

FRIDAY

Read **1 Peter 1:1-9; Daniel 1-3**

Praising in the Furnace!

Daniel and his friends did not have it easy as Babylonian captives. They faced three different temptations to ignore God's commands and plans. They were likely afraid. Yet, they obeyed God amidst extreme trials.

The first trial is found in Daniel 1: Eat wrong food—tested over ten days under threat of death.

“But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.” (v. 8)

“Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, ‘Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see.’ So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.” (vv. 11-14)

At the end of the ten days, the guard saw that Daniel and his friends looked healthier and stronger than those who ate the royal food. It was probably difficult passing up the king's food, but they praised the Lord amidst their trial.

The second trial is found in Daniel 3: Bow down to idols—thrown in furnace.

“King Nebuchadnezzar made a gold statue ninety feet tall and nine feet wide and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. ... So all the officials came and stood before the statue King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.” (vv. 1-3)

Daniel’s friends did not bow down to the idol, for they worshipped only the true God. They followed the commands of God: *“You must not have any other god but Me and You must not make for yourself an idol”* (Exodus 20:3). They knew the punishment was to be thrown into the furnace. The friends responded to the King by saying, *“If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty”* (Daniel 3:17). These men walked in the fire WITH Jesus, praising God in the furnace, and came out of the furnace without even smelling of smoke.

Read Daniel 1-3 to get the “rest of the story.” Read Daniel 6 to learn how Daniel remained faithful and survived the lion’s den (the third trial).

QUESTIONS

How do you handle things when you are tested? When you are put in “the furnace”? When you are “thrown to the lions”?

PRAYERS

For African Enterprise

Pray for preparations for African Enterprise’s evangelistic outreach to the capital city of Kigali, Rwanda.



Glenkirk Church | 1700 Palopinto Ave, Glendora, CA 91741 | 626.914.4833
GlenkirkChurch.org |  **@GlenkirkChurch** |  **Facebook: GlenkirkChurch**