

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

JULY 3 - 7, 2023

Sermon Series 5.28 - 8.13

FORGED

IN THE FURNACE

MONDAY

Read **1 Peter 3:8**

Doing Life Together in Tough Times

In the midst of a polarizing culture, the body of Christ needs extra help and encouragement from the Holy Spirit to maintain our togetherness, a closeness that stands in stark contrast to the world around us. Up to this point, Peter has been addressing right relationships in society and in our home life.

“*Finally*,” here in verse 8, Peter sums up the qualities God wants us to experience—and the world to see—within our fellowship with fellow believers.

The text gives us five significant words/phrases to reflect on and to grow in as a church body:

- “*Unity of mind*” refers to how well we align with each other on doctrine *and* on what’s most important for our particular congregation.
- “*Sympathy*” refers to our willingness to share in each other’s feelings. We’re called to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. When breakthroughs come, we’re to celebrate with each other. When tragedy strikes, we grieve together without trying to “cheer” each other up.

- “*Brotherly love*” means caring for each other as family—because we are. We all have the same Father! People who’ve never experienced a close, loving family may find church both wonderful and scary. They’ve had no chance to learn that conflict is inevitable but also resolvable. Conflict can actually draw us together as we work out our differences, deepening our love for each other.
- “*A tender heart*” is willing to acknowledge and repent of any area in our heart that has become hardened through unresolved hurt, bitterness, or pride. A heart that is tender can receive new insight, new awareness, and open up to the healing that God’s Spirit makes available.
- To have “*a humble mind*” is to have a teachable mind, a readiness to learn from Sunday’s sermon, a Sunday School or Bible study lesson, or the words shared by a friend or even a stranger. God has many ways to deliver both affirmation and correction. When we’re listening, He speaks!

QUESTIONS

Today, as you read this list and consider these qualities, how does your soul respond? Is there a specific area for you, as there is for me, where the Lord is saying, “This needs attention?” Let’s trust Him to help us grow as a body of believers, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in His pure love.

PRAYERS

For Sewing Seeds for Life

We ask for the light of the Lord to shine on and direct the programs of Sowing Seeds for Life and those who provide them. Help them all through the challenging times personally and professionally so they are always able to do good work.

TUESDAY

Read **1 Peter 3:9–12**

Our Response to Being “Dissed”

One of the hardest things God calls us to do is respond calmly and graciously to being disrespected, criticized, and/or ridiculed. Our instinct is to avoid such pain at all cost or to reply in kind. Peter was able to learn by observing how Jesus responded to those who mocked and reviled Him, even to those who betrayed Him. We can observe and learn, too, as we read the Gospels.

Once again God calls us to do what *only* His Spirit makes possible. Any of us who may have tried in our own strength to obey verse 9, to refrain from retaliating and “to *bless*” the one(s) mocking us, we must admit to failing miserably. Discerning *how* to respond to evil intentions and words in some way *other* than to counterattack, in a way that seeks peace, takes supernatural wisdom.

Peter follows up his exhortation by quoting a portion of Psalm 34. In this psalm, David reflects with honesty on a time when he reacted in his own strength. Like Abraham facing danger from Abimelech (see Genesis 20), David protected himself from King Achish by means of deceit and trickery. (see 1 Samuel 21). David escaped danger, but only because our gracious God stepped in on his behalf.

Jesus lived in such close communion with the Father that “*speaking the truth in love*” (Ephesians 4:15) was a continual byproduct. Jesus consistently knew how to respond to insult, sometimes with a penetrating question or comment, sometimes saying nothing and simply walking away from further confrontation.

All four Gospels show us how Jesus’ responded to Peter’s betrayal. He looked Peter straight in the eye, expressing unbroken connection. Then, in a perfectly timed follow-up conversation, Jesus engaged Peter in a conversation that brought healing and profound restoration to Peter’s soul and calling (see John 21:13ff).

Never forget that “*the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous [including you and me, by faith] and His ears are attentive to their [our] prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil*” (Psalm 34:15). It’s especially helpful to remember that evildoers are, ultimately, God’s to deal with!

QUESTIONS

How can we prepare ourselves to handle suffering for doing or speaking in faithfulness to the Lord? What are we willing to say or do in pursuit of peace and blessing—even if we’ve messed up?

PRAYERS

For Sewing Seeds for Life

We pray for a loving community to step up and share their precious gift of time through volunteerism so that SSFL can continue to care for their neighbors struggling with hunger in this difficult year.

WEDNESDAY

Read **1 Peter 3:13–15a**

How to Deal with Our Fear

Peter begins this next part of his letter with a rhetorical question, “*Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?*” (1 Peter 3:13). In a civil society, the obvious answer is “no one.” However, in a society like the one in which these early Christians lived, a society devoid or dismissive of biblical truth and of moral-ethical values (like much of the world of today), the answer is less certain. So, Peter adds, “*Even if ...*” (v. 14).

For as long as men and women have been carrying the Gospel message—the announcement of Christ’s victory over sin and death, available to all by faith alone—people have suffered for their eagerness to speak and to do what is good and right. Our Mission Partners can attest.

Even here in Glendora and neighboring cities, Christians may suffer loss of opportunity, loss of income or jobs, loss of respect, and sometimes outright contempt, simply for identifying as followers of Jesus and for graciously upholding biblical truth.

Nevertheless, these people will attest to being “blessed” even as they suffer for what’s good and right. They know and rejoice that they’ve been counted worthy to share in Jesus’ sufferings. They know that God is working to bring them to full maturity. They know that God’s nearness becomes especially tangible at such times.

Peter points to familiar Scripture passages (see Psalm 27:1, Psalm 118:6, Isaiah 8:12 and 51:12, for example), encouraging us not to be afraid of what people may say or do, not to fear the things they fear. What makes such courage possible? What can keep us from being paralyzed by fear?

The answer becomes crystal clear in Peter's next words. The *Amplified Bible* reads, "*But in your hearts set Christ apart [as holy—acknowledging Him, giving Him first place in your lives] as Lord*" (v. 15).

When Jesus holds the highest place in our lives, we can be sure He's watching over every encounter, every situation we may face. This is what His "Lordship" really means. What if we were to revere Him more than we fear anyone or anything we may face?

QUESTIONS

Are you prayerfully placing your fears where they belong in the hands of Jesus, our Almighty Protector and Provider, the One who seeks only and always to bless us—and to bless others through us?

PRAYERS

For Sewing Seeds for Life

Pray that Sowing Seeds for Life continues to spread blessings with all of the clients who rely upon it throughout the year. Pray that their programs will be funded for the good of the hearts they serve.

THURSDAY

Read **1 Peter 3:15b-17**

Readiness to Make a Case for Hope

Every one of us who belongs to Jesus Christ has reason for *Hope*, with a capital *H*! As the Apostle Paul tells us, the indwelling Holy Spirit is a deposit, a down payment, a first installment, and a guarantee of our promised inheritance (see Ephesians 1:14). Ours is a hope that exceeds, by far, the unsecured promises of every other belief system in the world.

“To the praise of His glory,” we can always be hopeful, even on a day when we’re not in a particularly hopeful or happy mood. Why? Because this hope is more than a feeling, and it belongs to everyone who belongs to Jesus Christ.

So, what exactly are we to be ready for—always? *Questions*, people’s curiosity about why we Christians, even in the midst of difficult times and hostile environments, neither despair nor lose heart.

Challenge #1: Can people around us see in our lives the hope that Christ offers? Do we clearly reflect the unique hope that faith in Jesus provides?

Challenge #2: Are we to make a convincing case that supports our hope in Christ?

From 1 Peter 3:15 comes the term *apologetics*, which means “a reasonable defense of one’s beliefs.” Peter recognizes that the world of these early Christians, as our world today, abounds in competing ideas, religions, superstition, and skepticism.

Imagine what defense these early believers could have made, even without the many helps available to us: They understood the necessity of a Creator, One with the power to make the stars above and the earth below, to bring life from non-life, to give reason to what is not conscious. They knew that this Creator could be in heaven and on Earth at the same time in the person of Jesus, a Man who lived without sinning, died without blaming, rose bodily from the grave, and appeared to hundreds of eyewitnesses. They knew Jesus turned enemies into friends and murderers into messengers of forgiveness and grace.

On top of all this, they knew, as we do, that God’s goodness counts as ours and that nothing in this world or beyond can separate us from His love. Of course, each of us can *add* to this fact-based case a personal account of God’s care for us.

QUESTIONS

Are you ready to speak up? Can you make a case for hope in Christ? Spend some time today giving thought to the words and evidence you might use?

PRAYERS

For Sowing Seeds for Life

Pray for the clients of Sowing Seeds for Life—from the babies to the seniors, from the students to veterans, and every heart they touch. Help the hungry to be nourished in every way possible through the many gifts of the Lord.

FRIDAY

Read **1 Peter 3:15b-22**

The Value of Preparation

A video recorded in England captures people's responses to a random sidewalk interviewer asking, "Who is Jesus?" As expected, answers vary from person to person. Some say, "A good man." Others identify Him as "the Son of God." Some don't know what to say. Not a single person interviewed had anything negative to say about Jesus.

We know answers would be less favorable if the interviewer asked how people felt about Christians. Many reasons could be given for the less-than-stellar reputation of people who call themselves Christians, but three of the most significant are highlighted here in 1 Peter 3. Let's consider how successful we believers have been in delivering our good reasons for hope in Christ with "*gentleness,*" "*respect,*" and a "*clear conscience.*"

Thank God for those who have shared Christ per Peter's guidelines and still do so. You and I might not be part of God's family today if not for them. It's also true that God can use even the ungentle, disrespectful, and prideful delivery of the gospel to draw people to Himself, thanks to the powerful intervention of the Holy Spirit.

Clearly, our readiness to share the gospel involves prayer, asking God to use us in bringing others to know and trust Him. What may seem less obvious, though, is the need for practice. Imagine trying to give any kind of presentation without first practicing! Try following a new recipe while a group of hungry people waits to eat. Try driving a golf ball after watching a brief training video.

Practice is key to staying calm and attentive when asked—or challenged—about our faith. The more practice, the better, especially in the face of potential rejection or mockery.

Practice is something we can all work on together. If you haven't done so before, try role-playing with someone. Take turns playing the part of a skeptic and the part of a Christian case-maker. Get others involved, too, perhaps in the context of a small group meeting. You'll be amazed at how challenging this can be and then, again, at how much readiness grows with ongoing practice.

QUESTIONS

Will you take a moment right now to give close attention to whatever God may be impressing upon you from this portion of 1 Peter 3? Then expect Him to do great things in you and through you!

PRAYERS

For Sewing Seeds for Life

Pray for every person touched by Sowing Seeds for Life that they receive the strength of the Lord to sustain them throughout all difficulties and raise them up to meet the challenges they face.



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