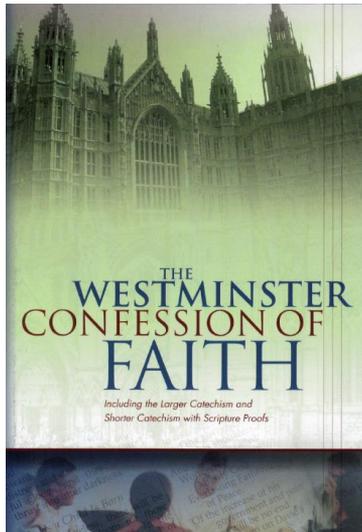


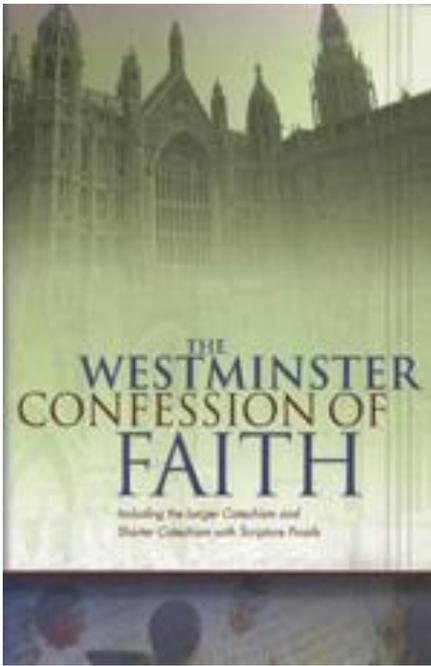
# March 2018 Bible Reading Plan

## 1 & 2 Peter of the General Epistles And the Westminster Standards

*1 Peter 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith-- more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire-- may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*







**The Westminster Confession of Faith and Larger and Shorter Catechisms are perhaps the finest confessional statements of Biblical Teaching available to us. They were developed by some of the godliest men who lived at that time. Yet they remain unfamiliar to many of us even though they are in most of our homes. My hope is that over the next number of months, that will change, and each of us will realize the rich resource we have in our Westminster Confession of Faith and Larger & Shorter Catechisms.**

From the Pastor:

This month we will cover 1 & 2 Peter, and a little of the end of the Gospel of Matthew as we approach the week leading up to Easter Sunday. We will continue to reference passages to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Larger Catechism to various passages along the way.

My intent has been to encourage us to take our Westminster Confession/Catechisms off the shelf, and actually use them in our daily Bible reading. They are very rich and doctrinally solid statements. In a day when doctrine is not greatly appreciated by many, and when precision is considered unnecessary, we are deeply in need of a concise and accurate statement of doctrine that is rooted solidly in that revelation that God has given by his Spirit to the Church to be the only infallible rule of faith (what we believe) and practice (how we are to live).

Our great Enemy and the destroyer of souls, the one who has brought us under a curse through his temptations and lies, would like nothing better than to keep us from the truth God has given us in the Scriptures. And because he holds sway over “the sons of disobedience,” whose thinking and ways have such incredible influence over “the course of this world” (Ephesians 2:1-3), we desperately need a word from our Creator! And we have it in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for

correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” (*Timothy 3:16-17*)

However, although we possess this treasure freely, it is not given us in a manner to spoon feed us. It is given in a manner that challenges us to dig and labor to bring together its teachings in a coherent manner that satisfies the demands of our finite minds for clear and fairly comprehensive systematic statements, rather than scattered fragments that do not allow us – or most of us – to gain an adequate understanding to undermine the subtleties of our Enemy and of the world through which he works.

For that reason, we are most privileged that some of the godliest and most Biblically astute men of a great era have given to us -- through long hours and days over several years – the Westminster Confession of Faith and Larger and Shorter Catechisms to aid us in understanding the whole counsel of God.

We have been so influenced by our culture, that we have often neglected these treasures and fallen prey to the fuzziness of head that enables the forces of evil to prevail all too much in our minds and hearts. We are exhorted by the apostle Paul to “not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of our minds” (Romans 12:2) by that “truth [that] is in Jesus” (Ephesians 4:21).

I know of no better way to help you do that than to encourage you to read the Scriptures, and to stimulate you to use the Westminster Confession and Catechisms to aid you in understand the teachings scattered over the pages of those Scriptures.

That is a legacy I would like to leave behind!

*Bill Tyson, pastor*

## PRAYING FOR OUR MISSIONARIES

1. Apologetics Resource Center (ARC); Partners in Asian Ministries (PAM/India). Rev Clete Hux, Director. Great salary shortfall for several months, office relocation expenses, remodeling expenses to create library and study/research area.
2. Ronda Coon Women's Home/Family Life Ministries, FWB. Long-term persistence, assistance and support for women in crisis pregnancy, protection of unborn and newborn babies. Wishes to speak to WPC congregation.
3. Good News Jail & Prison Ministry. Chaplains John Lennon & Josiah Allredge, Okaloosa County Jail. Praise for WPC graders of inmates' Bible Studies. Will you help? To become a grader, e-mail [ablacks657@aol.com](mailto:ablacks657@aol.com).
4. Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF), Cyprus, Pastor Victor Atallah. Teaching bush-pastors, using free Internet in multi-language broadcasts, reaching places where Christian pastors cannot go. Prayer: Safety for new believers.
5. Presbyterian & Reformed Commission on Chaplains (PRCC). Pray for fruitful Spiritual counseling. Praise for the men in new assignments, support for deployed military and their families.
6. Brenda Carter, MTW, San Yi, Taiwan. Brenda had a 'welcome home' at a ladies weekend at a Hot Springs Retreat. Pray for God's leading in her decisions about where can serve.
7. Rev. Chuck & Wyema, MTW, church planting and growth in Europe. Chuck spent several months traveling and filling the gap left by a couple on HMA. Pray for improved Farsi language skills.
8. Rev Clay and Darlene Quarterman, MTW/Kiev, Ukraine. President, Evangelical Reformed Seminary. On HMA. They will be at WPC on April 22 to speak and have lunch after service. Pray for the end to Russian aggression. Return to Ukraine late 2018.
9. David & Jan, Enterprise/MTW/Europe. Supports new church plants across the Atlantic. Praise for whole family who was able to celebrate Holidays for David & Jan's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary.
10. David and Jill Martin, MTW/Odessa, Ukraine. Teaches missionary kid and some local children. Praise for the school's

progress, the dedicated students. Pray for end to Russian aggression.

11. David & Marcia, MTW/Europe. HMA through May 2018. They are speakers for WPC Missions Conference 9-11 March. Praying for their finances and return to the field. Likes to visit local Mosques.
12. Manila, Philippines, pastoral support for church plants and outreach in depressed areas. Pray for Grace, humility, friendship, warm relations, safety and teachable hearts.
13. OneChild Ministry, Ang Bahay Parola (The Lighthouse), Manila, Philippines. children Leah Andaya and Marvin Evangelista are in the care of ABP Hom. Pray for loving house parents and safety.
14. Kiev, Ukraine Seminary/MTW. Seminary students' support. Pray for greatly needed facility for seminary/dormitory/library.
15. Perry & Betty, MTW/Mediterranean. Perry lectures at nearby universities. They battle papal comments like: *"There are those who believe they can have a personal, direct relationship with Jesus Christ outside of the communion and mediation of the church. These temptations are dangerous and harmful."* Pray for this ministry.
16. Robert & Lisa Stewart, MTW/church planting, Tokyo, Japan. Praise for a growing congregation, larger church site and new seekers, for Youth Group growth.
17. Joel and Stephanie Swanson, son Pascal. MTW/Toulouse, France. Church planting. Pray for Pascal's healthy growth, Joel's emersion in the study of French, the French pastor and his family, and for fruitful neighborhood contacts.
18. Dr. Tom and Connie Edwards. Hope Health Center, Fairfield (Birmingham) AL. Quarterly medical trips to Haiti, semiannual medical trips to Ivory Coast. Pray for the clinic staff, volunteers, and patients. Pray for humility and for protection against pride.
19. Verne & Alina Marshall, MTW, Santiago, Chile & Cuba. Pray for ongoing persecution in Cuba. Pray for God's solution to a Chilean problem pastor who is divisive, without compassion or love, uses social media to criticize people/doctrines, which greatly affects our small presbytery. Also pray for our needed financial support!

20. Franklin & Beth, MTW/Europe/Enterprise. Media Production, Videographers. Sensitive ministry. Pray for continued fruitful contacts, good health, church plants, growing ministry and funds for needed recording equipment.
21. RUF/Univ. of Florida. Rev. Brian and Jessica Thomas, children Noah and Evelyn. Settled in as new Pastor in June 2017. As the only campus ministry with ordained pastors, RUF Pastors are frequently called on for pre-wedding counseling and perform weddings!
22. RUF/Florida State University. Rev. Kelly and Caroline Jackson. and their family as they settle into their second semester at FSU. Praise their support is increasing, good stewardship of resources to reach students for Christ.
23. Dr. Barrett and Bryanne Jones and children. Their support dropped dramatically greatly, since their stay in Malawi extended many months than originally planned. They now seek funds to help with adoption fees. for little Chisomo. The costly adoption process for Grace is slow, with final papers coming early summer.
24. Pastor John and Sarah Ellen Carson. Pastor Carson recently retired from World Witness, yet he and Sarah Ellen continue to volunteer at Uganda Bible College, Africa and Leith APC church in Scotland. Praise for their many family members who continue the legacy in missions.
25. Rev. Scott and Katie Moore and five children. Trinity Family Ministries, Mobile, AL. This church plant by Grace PCA in Mobile, a good possibility for periodic mission trips. Faithful and effective prayer in a dangerous, depressed community. Violence and deaths are not uncommon.
26. Matt Elder/Arizona State University - Hope4ASU.org is a fruitful evangelism. Pray for faithful in friendships and student training to share the good news of Jesus. Praise for Matt's recent marriage. Pray for the new off-Campus site for Hope Church.
27. SALAMA, at risk children's ministry/George Crook, Nashville, TN. Pray for spiritual and physical nurturing, and protection for the ministry, and growing trust in the Lord Jesus Christ!

28. Dr. Lloyd Kim, MTW Coordinator. Pray for an effective prayer and emerging vision focus for each region, team and country for newly planted churches and teams.
29. Pray for the Missions Ministry Team and the Strategic Planning Team in revising a new strategic plan for support decisions. Pray as the team identifies mission trips for 2018.
30. John Rakshith and Kelly Beth Prabhakar in their new mission in Bangalore, India. They left the US January 10, and that their monthly support and one time moving needs are met.
31. Pray for 1% of WPC members with the desire to go, long term or short term, to the mission field. Pray for more members to join the Missions Ministry Team – Treasurer, someone to develop and maintain a data base, and pray-ers!.
32. Pray for our WPC Missions Conference 9-11 March, 2018 speakers Rev David and Marcia Jones MTW Europe, and Matthew and Diana Soerens, US Director of Church Mobilization, World Relief National Coordinator, Evangelical Immigration Table. Watch for itinerary.

### **Prayer for Bill and Mary Ann**

- Thanksgiving for Bill and Mary Ann and their ministry to us
- For hope and excitement during this transition phase as they await what the Lord has in store for them
- For Bill to be fulfilled in his work and effective in his ministry as he completes his time of being our Senior Pastor
- For the wisdom of the Lord in making decisions about what to do next in ministry and in life
- For God's timely provisions to be supplied in a way that will build faith in him for all their needs

### **Prayer for the Congregation**

- Unity around the truth of God's Word
- Devoted to seeking the will of God through the Word and prayer
- Protection from discouragement, impatience, and division

### **Prayer for the Pulpit Committee**

- That the PC would have the mind of Christ
- That the PC would recognize the pastor God has called
- For the PC to be dedicated to doing their work prayerfully, with thoroughness and thoughtfulness

### **Prayer for Knox and Mary and Their Family**

- That God would continue to strengthen the gifts he has given Knox during our pastoral transition and under the ministry of a new pastor
- That Knox and Mary would be a great help to our future pastor and his wife in both fellowship and ministry
- For the White family to be nurtured and blessed under the ministry and shepherding of our future pastor

### **Prayer for Future Pastor**

- That God would increase his passion for preaching the Word of God
- That he would sense a clear calling to WPC from the Lord
- That God would give him a love for our church
- For new relationships to form at our church in meaningful ways during the search process
- For God to prepare him to shepherd our flock more effectively through the trials and blessings he has faced or currently faces
- For his family (wife, children, & closest friends) to be encouraging and to be at peace, as they consider a call to WPC. Pray for their comfort and strength in the Lord as they consider leaving their current setting and going to a different church.

1 Peter is addressed to the “elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.” In light of certain comments in the epistle, it is likely that this embraced both Jewish and Gentile Christians. The book was likely written in 60’s before Nero’s persecutions.

**Read 1 Peter 1:1-2.**

1. If Peter addresses the “elect exiles ... according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,” which comes first – election or foreknowledge? \_\_\_\_\_

Because I don’t know how to easily ask questions that would lead to understanding this passage, I am going to comment on it, but ask you to examine several Scriptures to see if what I say appears to make sense of God’s Word.

First, if the recipients of the letter are “elect ... according to the foreknowledge of God,” then “foreknowledge” logically comes before “election.” If I were to say to the congregation: “You are to nominate elder and deacon candidates according to the qualifications found in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9,” which would logically come first, the qualifications or your nomination?

So, if that made sense to you, then the logical order of the things mentioned in 1 Peter 1:1-2 would be as follows:

Foreknowledge  
Election  
in the sanctification of the Spirit  
for obedience to Jesus Christ  
for sprinkling with his blood

The next question is “What is meant by “Foreknowledge””? Many people think it means “foresight,” so that God chose those whom he “foresaw” would believe. But that is not the only way one can “foreknow” what is going to happen. More importantly, how is the term used when speaking about God and unfolding events.

The noun “foreknowledge” is used here and in Acts 2:23, both by Peter. The verb “to foreknow” is used 3 times in the New Testament with respect to God: Romans 8:29, 11:2, and 1 Peter 1:20. Unless you take the whole context of Romans 9-11, Romans 11:2 is not as clear – although it is clear in that larger context. But we’ll leave it aside for our purpose and time’s sake.

2. **Look at 1 Peter 1:18-20** – I said above that “foresight” is not the only way to “foreknow” something. I can “foreknow” that the window I am looking out of is about to be broken because as I look out, I see a boy about to throw a rock through it. That’s foresight, *seeing* before the event. But I can also “foreknow” the window is about to break because I have a hammer in my hand, and I have *purposed* to break it. If I “foresee” that the window is about to be broken by the boy with the rock, then his purpose comes before my knowledge. But if I have purposed to break the window, my purpose (= foreknowledge) comes before the event itself. Which is true of 1 Peter 1:18-20? Did God the Father “foreknow” that Jesus would die and shed his blood like a lamb without blemish because he looked down the ages and “foresaw” that men would put Jesus to death, and decided that he would make something good out of their evil act? Or, did he pur-

pose to send his Son into the world to die at the hands of men as a lamb without blemish? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Now look up Romans 8:28-30.** Romans 8:28 is a very well-known verse. What is not as well understood, perhaps, is what is meant by “working all things together for good.” What “good”? Verse 29 seems to explain that, so that “whom he foreknew” is picking up the word “purpose” of vs 28 and explaining that the reason all things work together for those who love God and are called according to his purpose is that those whom he included in his purpose, that is, those whom he “foreknew” he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son. Therefore all things are worked together to accomplish that purpose, and that purpose unfolds because he predestined to accomplish it, and then fulfils what he had determined to do by powerfully calling those whom he purposed to save and transform into the likeness of his Son, so that they believe and are justified and will finally be glorified, which is when they would perfectly reflect the image of his Son. Remember what I was saying about purposing to break a window?

3. But the final reference to “foreknowledge” is uttered by Peter at Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2:23. **Look up and read Acts 2:22-24, and note the words that are put together in 2:23.** In the ESV it has “definite plan and foreknowledge.” The Greek could be translated “determined purpose and foreknowledge.” In either case, what is clear about the word “foreknowledge”?

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**For your Meditation and Prayer:** If you are a genuine follower of Christ, which is fairly likely if you are using this Bible Reading Plan, then it is because he had purposed to save you, which is good reason to give thanks over and over again. But it also means he has purposed that you would be conformed to the image of his Son. That is a long term goal, and includes all that happens in our lives as believers. I imagine it is not only an individual matter, but that sometimes what happens to one believer may be for the benefit of another, as when health declines, and someone becomes totally dependent on others, especially if something like Alzheimer’s is involved. That may be used to accomplish things in the caregiver. Our task it not to always fine what God is trying to accomplish in our lives, but to seek to honor him in all circumstances. In doing so, God’s purpose is being worked out in our lives even when we don’t realize. Sometimes it may simply be creating a dissatisfaction with this life in its fallenness, and lifting our eyes to the life to come in a new heaven and new earth when Christ comes. Ask the Lord to help you, and the rest of us, to trust him and his providence, especially when we don’t have a clue about what is happening or why.

Let's return to 1 Peter 1:1-2 again today, and then we'll begin to move a little more quickly.

In the order of the unfolding of the various aspects of salvation that are mentioned here we noted yesterday that they unfold like this:

Foreknowledge

Election

in the sanctification of the Spirit

for obedience to Jesus Christ

for sprinkling with his blood

Today, let's think about the last three lines. Often when we read "sanctification" we think of the progressive growth process, and "obedience" as the keeping of the Law or of the ethical commands of the New Testament. But is that what these mean?

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 and compare with the above. Notice a similar order. Out of love (God's purpose to set his love upon some altogether of grace – remember, purpose = Foreknowledge), he chose you to be saved (Election), through Sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth (what Paul in Romans calls the "obedience of faith" as opposed" to "they refused to love the truth and so be saved" up in vs 10), that that they might obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (in Romans 5:1-2 Paul says: "since we are justified by faith [= "sprinkling with his blood"] we have peace with God ... and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God."). There are lots of parallels in these passages.

"Sanctification" sometimes does mean progressive growth in holiness, but here it seems to carry the more basic idea of being set apart for God by working in us to create "belief in the truth" of the Gospel "so that we may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." That is the same thing we find in 1 Peter 1:1-2. Read it again.

1. Look back to Hebrews, a couple of books earlier, and quickly read Hebrews 9:18-24, 10:11-25. What insight might you gain from these passages as to what the "sprinkling with his blood" here in 1 Peter 1:2 alludes to and means? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What practical application does Hebrews 10:19-25 make of these matters? \_\_\_\_\_

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For your Meditation and Prayer: Verses 19-25 of Hebrews 10 are worth meditating upon, and praying in light of. There is much to give thanks for. There is encouragement to draw near with a true heart. . . .

*Read 1 Peter 1:3-12.*

1. Peter begins the main portion of his epistle much like Paul begins Ephesians (see Eph 1:3ff). Why do both begin with praise to God? What is it about our salvation that brings forth such immediate praise, or thanksgiving? See also 1 Thessalonians 1:2ff and 2:13 and 2 Thes 2:13-14. \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. Are you born again (assuming that you are) because you believed, or did you believe because you were born again? \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. Let me put that a different way to make the point: Do you pat yourself on the back, or do you praise and thank God for being born again? You don't have to answer that, but if you answered above that you believed in order to be born again, you ought to stop and think about the question I just asked, and then you ought to wonder why Paul and Peter both thanked and praised God.

4. Why do you think we have a "living" hope because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead? What does that have to do with our hope? \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. What does "this" refer to in vs 6, and why are we to "rejoice" in it? \_\_\_\_\_  
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6. People often get mad at God when they experience trials, sometimes rather severe trials. What's at stake according to his passage? \_\_\_\_\_  
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7. Compare 1 Peter 1:10-11 with Luke 24:25-27 and 24:44-49 – what do you learn about the Old Testament Scriptures from these passages? \_\_\_\_\_  
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8. What does 1 Pet 1:11-12 say to you about your Bible? \_\_\_\_\_  
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***For your Meditation and Prayer: Reflect*** on 1 Pet 1:8-9, and make that the basis of your prayer today.

**Read 1 Peter 1:13-21.** To this point of this month I have not referenced the Westminster Confession of Faith or Catechisms, which if you do not have one, may be found at this URL -- <http://www.pcaac.org/resources/wcf/> . Today I want you to focus on some portions of the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF). If you have a copy, or look online at the one with Scripture proofs, it would be good to note some of the references given. Since some of you may not have a WCF, here is the text I want you to focus upon (read it carefully a couple of times):

WCF 3.6 As God has appointed the elect unto glory, so has He, by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore, they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ; are effectually called unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by His power, through faith, unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.

WCF 8.1 It pleased God, in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man; the Prophet, Priest, and King; the Head and Savior of His Church; the Heir of all things; and Judge of the world; unto whom He did from all eternity give a people, to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.

WCF 8.5 The Lord Jesus, by His perfect obedience and sacrifice of Himself, which He, through the eternal Spirit, once offered up unto God, has fully satisfied the justice of His Father; and purchased, not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father has given unto Him.

WCF 8.8 To all those for whom Christ has purchased redemption, He does certainly and effectually apply ... the same; making intercession for them; and revealing unto them, in and by the Word, the mysteries of salvation; effectually persuading them by His Spirit to believe and obey; and governing their hearts by His Word and Spirit; overcoming all their enemies by His almighty power and wisdom ...

These selected paragraphs bring together a lot of Biblical teaching, some of which we have seen in the past several days' readings. They emphasize the purpose and plan of God to save a people from this fallen mass of mankind, altogether by grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. They emphasize that Jesus accomplished the will of his Father in his death for those whom he came to save, those whom the Father had given him. They mention in WCF 8.1 above that Jesus is the Priest of his people, as we saw in Hebrews last month. His role as High Priest was to offer the only sacrifice that was sufficient to atone for the sins of all for whom he died, which meant offering himself – for it was the infinite dignity of the one who came that gave infinite worth to what he did in the Cross.

But there was, and is, another aspect of that ministry that was no less critical. It was his ministry of intercession on behalf of those whom he came to save. So today I simply want to leave you with one question, and then with the lyrics of one of the songs we sing fairly often when we celebrate the Lord's supper. Here

is the question: WCF 3.6 earlier in this reading says: "... and kept by His power, through faith, unto salvation." **In the final analysis, does "through faith" mean that in the end it is all up to me?** The statement in the WCF is directly from 1 Peter 1:5. What do you think? \_\_\_\_\_  
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If you have answered that question, turn now to Luke 22:31-34, and see if it addresses the concern I raised in that question. Do you need to revise your answer?

*For your Meditation and Prayer:* Reflect on "Before the Throne of God Above." Pray through it, thanking God for the truths it portrays.

Verse 1

Before the Throne of God above  
I have a strong and perfect plea  
A great High Priest Whose Name is Love  
Who ever lives and pleads for me  
My name is graven on His Hands  
My name is written on His Heart  
I know that while in Heaven He stands  
No tongue can bid me thence depart

Verse 2

When Satan tempts me to despair  
And tells me of the guilt within  
Upward I look and see Him there  
Who made an end to all my sin  
Because the sinless Savior died  
My sinful soul is counted free  
For God the just is satisfied  
To look on Him and pardon me

Verse 3

Behold Him there the Risen Lamb  
My perfect spotless righteousness  
The great unchangeable I Am  
The King of Glory and of Grace  
One with Himself I cannot die  
My soul is purchased with His Blood  
My life is hid with Christ on high  
With Christ my Savior and my God

Peter has referenced Christ’s second coming in 1:5,7, perhaps 9, and 11. Now, in vs 13, he says “Therefore…”

**Read 1 Peter 1:13-21.**

When we see the word “Therefore,” we always need to look to see what it is “there for.” In this case, it appears to me to look back to vs 11, to “the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.” “The subsequent glories” references Jesus’ resurrection to exaltation at the right hand of the Father, but also anticipates the glories that will come when he returns again, what Peter calls “the revelation of Jesus Christ” in 1:7. Throughout this epistle, Peter makes it clear that the pattern of his sufferings and then glory is to be true of the Christian life. We’ll be watching for that emphasis throughout. That pattern is in huge contrast to the “Health, Wealth, and Prosperity” message of our day, which discounts the emphasis on suffering and trials in this life.

Jesus’ ministry included miracles of various sorts, including healing of sicknesses, of the blind and lame, even raising people from the dead. Were these intended to illustrate what was to characterize our lives in this age, or were they pointing to the power that would be unleashed with his return, when God will give us new bodies, when every tear will be wiped away, when suffering and death will be no more? It appears to me that Jesus clearly indicated that our lives in this era would follow the same pattern as his: sufferings now with the glories to follow at his return. So as we go through 1 Peter, watch to see if you think I am correct.

1. So what do my comments have to do with 1:13-21? Just this: what does the “therefore” of 1:13 look back to in the previous passage? Does it only look back only to the emphasis on “revelation of Jesus Christ” (vss 7 & 9), or does it look back to the pattern of suffering now, glory at Christ’s return? It makes a difference in what “preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded” (1:13) means. What do you think Peter means? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Does the concept of their (and our) being “exiles” (1:1), “in the time of their exile” (1:17), and “sojourners and exiles” (2:11), have any bearing on the discussion above? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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3. **Read WCF 13 “Of Sanctification,”** – how does it relate to 1 Pet 1:13-21?

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**For your Meditation and Prayer:** Reflect on 1 Peter 1:15-16 and your attention to holiness in your own life. How do those correlate? Pray over that?

*Read 1 Peter 1:13-2:1, an overlap from yesterday, but going further.*

1. What influence ought the “revelation of Jesus Christ” – his return – have on your daily life, and approach to life? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. If we are to be holy after the pattern of God’s holiness (1:15-16), how are we to know what that means practically? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What motivations should inspire us to such holiness in this entire passage?

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4. 1 Pet 1:22 – “having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth” – reflects 1:2 – “for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling of his blood.” Why do you think Peter moves so smoothly and seamlessly from “Having purified your soul...” to “for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart”?

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**For your Meditation and Prayer:** I want you to give a good bit of extra attention to this today. Spend some time given serious thought and reflection to what Peter has brought together here in 1 Peter 1:22-2:3. There is a strong emphasis and link between the “word of God” and “loving one another fervently,” which includes putting away those things mentioned in 2:1 and responding to 2:2-3. Why do these go together so tightly? Why has Peter combined these emphases as he has? They obviously are tremendously important, as is clear in how he has stated all of this. So spend some time reflecting on it, and praying about your own life in light of this passage.

**A Closing Note:** 1 Peter 2:1-2 is a footnote to WLC 160 about “What is required of those that hear the Word preached?” I encourage you to read that carefully. And as you do, note that we are told to that we should hear the word with “preparation,” and it is that statement that references 1 Peter 2:1-2, so look to see what they had in view by preparation in light of those verses.

Read 1 Peter 2:3-10.

“Lord” in 2:3 must refer to Jesus in light of vs 4, where “him” means Jesus in that context. So Jesus is spoken of as “a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious.”

1. What is the image Peter is developing here in 2:4-5? \_\_\_\_\_

When you see quotations like those in vss 6-10, it is worth looking each up and reading the context of the quotes. Usually your Bible’s cross-reference system (assuming it has one) will direct you to the source of the quote. In this case, the quotes fall out as follows:

2:6 quotes Isaiah 28:16

2:7 quotes Psalm 118:22

2:8 quotes Isaiah 8:14 (1 Peter 3:14-15 will quote or allude to Isa 8:12-13)

2:9 quotes Exodus 19:5

2:10 quotes Hosea 2:23

2. Let’s look at Isaiah 8:14, quoted in 1 Peter 2:8. Note what the LORD (Yahweh) speaks to Isaiah and tells him in Isa 8:11-12, keeping mind that Peter quotes or alludes to vs 12 in 1 Pet 3:14-15, substituting “Christ the Lord” for Isaiah’s “LORD (Yahweh) of hosts.” Why is that significant? \_\_\_\_\_

3. In Isaiah 8:14 (quoted in 1 Pet 2:8), it is the “LORD of hosts” who is “a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both the houses of Israel...” Turn to Luke 2 and read vss 25-35, and note especially vs 34. Then look back to Luke 1:43, where Elizabeth says to Mary (who is carrying Jesus in her womb), “And why is this granted to me that the mother of **my Lord** should come to me?” How do all of these passages intersect and fit together in perfect harmony? \_\_\_\_\_

4. In 1 Peter 2:9, Peter quotes from Exodus 19:5-6, which at that time referred to Israel as the chosen people, but now he applies it to the Church which he is calling out from among all the nations. Compare Isaiah 43:21 to 1 Pet 2:9b. So what are we to be about as a church? \_\_\_\_\_

**For your Meditation and Prayer:** Read WCF 1.5 and reflect on how it relates to what we have been seeing in these passages above, and thank God for his Word!

Read 1 Peter 2:9-12, a short reading, and overlapping yesterday's, but we'll explore them more thoroughly.

1. Turn back to Exodus 19:1-9 and read those verses. Notice vs 5 – “if you will indeed obey my voice...” God comes down to the mountain and proclaims the 10 Commandments to the people. Now look back to 1 Peter 1:14-16 and 2:9-12. What similarity do you see between Exodus 19:1-9 and these passages?

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2. Isaiah 43:21, that we looked at yesterday in # 4, the Lord speaks of “my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise.” Read Deuteronomy 4:5-8 along with our text in 1 Peter, esp vss 11-12. Sometimes we think that “declaring his praise” is done only with the voice, either in singing or preaching to others about the Lord. But that isn’t all of it. Taking Exodus 19:5-6, 1 Peter 2:9-12, and Deuteronomy 4:5-8 together, what else is involved in declaring God’s praise to the world? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. In light of 1 Peter 1:1-3 and the text for today, why are those whom Peter addresses the people of God now? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. From 1 Peter 2:9-12, list the terms that describe who or what the Church is?

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5. Taken together, what are the implication of those terms for how the Church should live? How you and I should seek to live? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. If we do, what will likely be the non-Christian community’s reaction to us and our way of life and commitments now in this world? \_\_\_\_\_

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**For your Meditation and Prayer:** Reflect on your own life in light of the descriptions given in today’s reading, and pray in light of them,

**Read 1 Peter 2:12-25.**

1. What do you think “for the Lord’s sake” means in vs 13? Look back at several verses before for a clue. \_\_\_\_\_

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2. In verses 16 it challenges us to properly use the freedom we have in the Christian life. What are we free from and to? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What implications does 2:17 have for political and civil discourse? and also for how we treat the jokes and sarcastic political stuff that comes across our computers often? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. 1Pet 3:18ff addresses what we would call the work place in our day, and he portrays it as possibly less than an ideal situation. What does Peter seek to prepare the congregation for, why, and how does that square with the so-called *Health, Wealth, and Prosperity* “gospel”? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Peter appears to have been greatly influenced by Isaiah 53. He actually quotes Isaiah 53:5 in vs 24. What parallels can you see between Peter’s description here and Isaiah 53:4-12, and how does that relate to 1:11? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. One of the difficult experiences in life is being misrepresented or unjustly treated, verbally attacked, etc. How do we handle those experiences? \_\_\_\_\_

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**For your Meditation and Prayer:** Think through these passages and reflect on whether or not you order your life more by Christ or by the world in which we live.

Read 1 Peter 3:1-7.

In 2:13, 18, now in 3:1, and later in 5:5, certain persons are told to be subject to others. In no case does it imply superiority vs. inferiority as persons, that is, as though one is better than another because of his rank, shall we say. They each speak of the ordering of society in some manner. So here in 3:1-7 it is the God-ordained order of the husband-wife relationship that is in view, and order established by creation. Again, there is not implication of superiority as persons; both male and female are created in the image of God.

But there is no doubt that God established the man as the one responsible for the spiritual and moral leadership of the home. It is not a matter of dictatorial rule. Indeed, Paul makes it clear that the model for the man’s leadership is no other than Christ who loved his church and sacrificially laid down his life for her.

Peter speaks of the reality that sometimes a Christian wife may find herself married to an unbeliever, most likely because she became a follower of Christ after marriage, and her husband had not followed suit.

1. How does Peter counsel the woman to win her husband? \_\_\_\_\_  
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The stipulations regarding dress and adornment are not legalistic rules, but rather a matter of dealing with the heart and godliness.

2. Look up the following verses where the word “quiet” is found in other contexts. What does it seem to be getting at. It doesn’t mean silence necessarily.

1 Thess. 4:11 in vss 9-11 –

2 Thess. 3:12 in vss 10-12 –

1 Tim. 2:2 in vss 1-3 –

1 Tim. 11, 12-15 --

1 Pet. 3:4

1 Pet 3:6 alludes to **Genesis 18:12 – look that up**. It is very interesting to see Peter so familiar with the Old Testament that he could allude to Gen 18:12.

3. Peter doesn’t neglect the husband, however. 1 Peter 3:7 is a very challenging and rich. What stands out most to you in 1 Pet 3:7? \_\_\_\_\_  
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**For your Meditation and Prayer:** Read WCF 20.4 (chapter 20, the 4<sup>th</sup> numbered paragraph. It has to do with the matters we treated yesterday and today in 1 Peter, and is very important in a day that is overly individualistic and often resentful of authority. - 12 -

Read 1 Peter 3:8-22 carefully.

1 Pet 3:8-9 seems to first address how the followers of Christ are to act towards one another, and then towards those most likely outside.

1. Compare vs 8 with Ephesians 4:1-3. How high – on a scale of 1-low to 10-high – do you consider these items to be of utmost importance? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. 1 Pet 3:9 seems to address interactions with non-believers most likely. Think carefully about vs 9 in light of 10-12. What do you think vs 9 means by: “bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing”? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. 1 Pet 3:10-12 are a quotation from Psalm 34:12-16a regarding how we are to pursue God’s blessing. What does it say for us to do, or not do – in your own words? \_\_\_\_\_

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How is that contrary to doing what vs 9 tells us not to do? \_\_\_\_\_

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Perhaps most often, the person who does good, doesn’t suffer for it. But Peter says: “Even if you should suffer for righteousness sake, you will be blessed.” He may be remembering Jesus’ words recorded in Matthew 5:10-12. He quotes Isaiah 8:12f in 1 Pet 3:14b-15a. In Isaiah’s day the nation is being threatened by other nations, and the people, and particularly Israel’s king, Ahaz, are living in fear and trying to figure ways to protect against those nations, all the while failing to trust the Lord. Isaiah is told to “not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. But the Lord of hosts, him shall you honor. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.” And then Isaiah is told of the Lord that the Lord of hosts will be “a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling” to Israel, because they would not trust him, but rather turn to all sorts of other helps.

Here in 1 Peter, Peter tells the believers that if they do suffer for righteousness, they are to “have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy” (1 Pet 3:14f). When I read that, in my mind I think of the basic meaning of “holy,” to set apart, and think of setting Jesus apart as Lord, the one who is to have preeminence over every area of our lives, to hold that unique place as Lord of our lives. But remember, Isaiah 8:14 had spoke of the Lord of hosts, Yahweh of hosts, being “a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling” to Israel. They would not entrust themselves to the Lord and walk in his ways. Instead, they chose to walk in their own ways, and put their trust in

things of their own making.

4. What was the point at which they stumbled? What was it that they did not want to do? What would they not relinquish? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Looking at 1 Peter 3:14-17 in context, and in light of the context of Isaiah 8, what is Peter calling upon us to do in our hearts even if we find ourselves in a situation hostile to the gospel? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. If we choose to trust the Lord and walk in righteousness, can we be assured that he will keep us safe from harm? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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7. 1 Peter 3:18ff is one of those passages that has received various interpretations from good Biblical scholars. We don't have time to explore that, neither you nor I, at the moment. But what do you think is the main purpose of this paragraph from vs 18 through 22? \_\_\_\_\_

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***For your Meditation and Prayer:*** Reflect back over this entire passage which we have read. What is it that Peter is especially wanting to get across to those to whom he wrote, and to us who follow behind. What can you take away from this particular passage to help you live in this fallen world. Pray about that. Pray for understanding, and that the Lord will so implant the truths found here in your own life as to prepare you to face whatever comes your way.

*Read 1 Peter 4:1-19, and note throughout the emphasis on suffering for Christ.*

1. Glancing back over the passage, note below the references to suffering precisely because one is a follower of Christ? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. Do you remember 1 Pet 1:11? Although that verse is referring to Christ, is it not becoming more and more evident that the pattern of his life is also the pattern of that of his followers? Would you agree, or not? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. 1 Pet 4:1-2 seems to speak of the major transition that has taken place in the life of genuine believers, and make the point that if they are willing to suffer for the Gospel, then it is because they have broken with their lives in the past, and now will live for the Lord. But what is the reaction of others? \_\_\_\_\_  
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Vs 5 brings to my mind the fact that in our day in America, we have so purged God from education and public life, that many have little conscience about killing others and then themselves as we have seen repeatedly in recent years. The fact that people will be judged and have to give an account to God is why the gospel was preached to those who have already died in the Lord (vs 6). They die like other men, but the do so with the promise of life to come.

4. Vs 7 doesn't mean that Peter was mistaken about the time of the return of Christ. We have entered the last days, and the return of Christ could come at virtually any time now. How are we to live in that light? \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. How are spiritual gifts to be used? For what reason? And to what ends? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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6. How are we to respond if because of our faith we face ridicule or mistreatment of some sort? \_\_\_\_\_  
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*For your Meditation and Prayer:* Why do we not suffer significantly for Christ?

**Read 1 Peter 5:1-14.**

1. Once again one sees sufferings that are to lead to glory. Peter speaks first to the elders. What is their duty? What are they responsible to do, and in what spirit are they to do it? And if they do, what can they expect? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. How does vs 5 square with the spirit of our time in America? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What do you think “humility” is? Keep in mind while you answer that, that Jesus was humble (Matthew 11:29), so it is not just being aware of our sinfulness, although that certainly should play a part in us? And why is it so important? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. What do you think vss 6-7 have in mind? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. 1 Peter 5:6-11 – What specifically does Peter seem to have in view with regard to what our “adversary the devil” is do as he seeks to devour, and what limits are placed on what he *can* do? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. How do vss 10 and 5-7 relate to one another? \_\_\_\_\_

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**For your Meditation and Prayer:** Reflect and meditate on what it might mean to humble oneself under the mighty hand of God (vs 6). What might that entail, and attitude might it reflect? Pray over these matters.







**Read 2 Peter 1:1-15.**

Note two things about the opening verses before we get to the main body of the letter in vss 3ff. First, Peter designates himself as a “servant” – or, perhaps better – “slave” and apostle of Jesus Christ. Peter submits himself to Jesus as his own Lord and Master. Secondly, Peter speaks of “the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ,” and the particular Greek construction is not distinguishing between the Father and the Son, but is calling Jesus God and Savior, testifying to the deity of Jesus.

1. How does grace and peace come to a believer? (vs 2) \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Verses 3-4 are packed! What is it that Christ has called us to according to these verses, and what is necessary for us to get there? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Vss 5-11 are not for “spiritual sissies”! Peter is strongly urging us on in our spiritual lives, stirring us to be diligent in the pursuit of those things he lists, and making clear the importance of the undertaking in vss 8 and 10-11 – what are the motivations he offers? \_\_\_\_\_

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Thomas Schreiner, a modern day commentator and theologian comments about Christ’s calling us to his own glory and excellence (or virtue): “In other words, when Christ calls people to himself, they perceived the beauty and loveliness of his moral character. His character becomes exceedingly attractive to them, and they trust God for their salvation.” (from The New American Commentary on 1,2 Peter, Jude, p 293). “To become partakers of the divine nature” does not mean the very essence of Godhead; it pertains to the moral character of God, into whose likeness we were created, and are being transformed into again.

4. It is debatable whether there is an intended progression in the list of vss 5-7, but there may be. Can you see any possible progression, not as though one moves from one to the next, as though one were finished and perfected so one could move on to another area. It certainly is not like that. However, there may be something of a progression – what do you think? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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*continued on the next page*

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IF there is a progression, might it be something like this?

Faith stimulates the development of virtue (a general overarching term for moral excellence), but it doesn't stop with the initial transformation a person experiences

One must then add growing knowledge of what constitutes virtue,

And to knowledge one must add self-control that enables one to pursue such virtue with discipline,

And to such self-control one must add "steadfastness" so that one doesn't give up mid-stream, but perseveres in one's growth

And to steadfastness one must add godliness, that is, a God-focused life, where everything is to take on the character of our God,

And to godliness one must add brotherly affection for other believers, so that a God-focused life becomes an other-focused life of service,

And finally, "brotherly affection" should lead to "love" – a deeply gracious love that one shows towards others

5. Why does Peter feel these things warrant his reminding them over and over?

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6. Why is it important that Peter's readers "be all the more diligent to confirm [their] calling and election (1:10)? See WCF 3.8 (where "effectual vocation" means "effectual calling) \_\_\_\_\_

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7. Peter speaks of his "putting off of [his] body ... soon," and of his "departure." Read WCF 32.1 and WLC 85,86. In light of the latter references to thee WCF and WLC, what will happen when Peter dies? \_\_\_\_\_

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***For you Meditation and Prayer:*** Reflect back over 1:3-7, and make those a matter of prayer as you seek the Lord's help in growing in each of those areas.

**Read 2 Peter 1:16-21, and then Matthew 17:1-9.**

Notice in Matthew 16, just before the account of the Transfiguration that you should have just read in Matthew 17, Jesus had said: “For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.” It is only 6 days afterwards that Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James, and John, and for a brief time they beheld the glory of the Son. But they were not to tell of it until after the resurrection of Jesus. The Transfiguration was an anticipation of the coming of Jesus, when he would return in glory with his angels to bring judgment on the world, and to take his own to their eternal dwelling place.

1. Now Peter is able to speak of it freely, and in vs 16 he alludes to the “power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,” for which they eagerly waited. Why does he share this experienced at this time? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. Peter urges upon the readers that the prophetic word of the Old Testament, has only been more fully confirmed by the Transfiguration experience Peter, James, and John had had. He then urges them to pay close attention to that OT prophetic word. On what basis does he do so? What does “no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation” mean, and why is that significant? \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. Vs 21 begins with “For ...” signifying that vs 21 is going to support verse 20. If that is the case, what does verse 21 have to do with verse 20? How does 21 explain vs 20? \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. What do these verses teach us about the nature of the Scripture? \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. **Read WCF 1.4.** How does this reflect what is taught here in 1 Pet 1:20-21? Note that this paragraph footnotes 1 Peter 1:19-20.

**For your Meditation and Prayer:** God worked through human authors, each of which leaves his stamp upon the Scriptures in terms of his vocabulary and perhaps personality to some degree. But 1:20 indicates that what each wrote was not their own opinion. Rather, the Holy Spirit so “carried” them along that what they wrote communicated the very Word of God.

In contrast to the prophets who labored under the supervision of the Holy Spirit, Peter warns of false prophets who will teach destructive heresies in their midst. Paul had warned in 2 Corinthians 11:13 *For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.* <sup>14</sup> *And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.* <sup>15</sup> *So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.*

**Read 2 Peter 2:1-22.**

1. List characteristics of false prophets as set forth here: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. How does the teaching about false prophets point to the importance of having something like the Westminster Confessional Standards? It is important to realize the deep commitment the framers of the Confession had to the authority of Scripture. \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. If you compare Peter, and what you have read from him in his first letter, and in chapter 1 of this 2<sup>nd</sup> letter, with his description of false prophets in 2 Pet 2, what is most obvious to you about the difference in the focus of their teaching? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. What do you learn about God in this chapter? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. What do you learn about man in this chapter? \_\_\_\_\_  
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For your Meditation and Prayer: The description in 2 Pet 2:17-22 is sobering. It gives a picture that sounds very similar to what I have heard of Rob Bell, who apparently appeared an evangelical minister, and turned from the Word to proclaim a god of love (small “g” intentional on my part, because not the God of the Scripture). Take Peter seriously in his warnings, and pray against the false teaching that permeates so many churches in our nation.

Read 1 Peter 3:1-10.

1. **Go back and read Matthew 7:13-20.** When I read those words, it brings to my mind what is said about the false prophets of the Old Testament. In contrast to Jesus strong teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), and his statement in 7:13-14, what characterized the false prophets of Jeremiah’s day (and of ours)? Read Jeremiah 6:14-19 and 8:4-12 and reflect on what these passages are teaching about false prophets and the impact they had upon the people of Israel. What characterized the message of the false prophets in contrast to Jesus, and Peter? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Returning to 2 Peter 3, Peter reminds his readers that they have been warned that false teachers and scoffers will come. Note vs 5 and compare it to Romans 1:18. What similarity do you see? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. One characteristic of scoffers is often that they pick and choose those things they wish to mock and ignore much else that is said in the Scriptures. Here Peter points out that the scoffers deliberately ignore the teaching of God’s Word about the earth prior to the flood, and the flood itself, while they ridicule the promise of Christ’s coming. Peter alludes back to Psalm 90:4 in vs 8 and gives an altogether different perspective on the passage of time. Why the delay, if I may put it that way? There is no delay in God’s appointed time. Why does he wait before sending Jesus back? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. What will be different between Jesus’ first and second coming? \_\_\_\_\_

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In some past issues of our Bible Reading Plan I have described how the true Old Testament Prophets were given a glimpse of the future, but only a glimpse. There was much they did not understand. Even John the Baptist did not fully understand how the Kingdom would come. He, like the Old Testament prophets (of which he was the last in a sense), understood that the Kingdom would bring both salvation to God’s people, and judgment upon the rest. What neither he nor the earlier prophets were privileged to see, however, was that the two would not happen immediately. They saw as though looking at a mountain range from a long distance away. One can see the peaks, but cannot tell the distance between

the peaks in the front and those behind. Sometimes there are many, many miles between. John the Baptist expected that Jesus would bring salvation and judgment because those were the two peaks he was privileged to see. That was why when he was imprisoned, he sent to Jesus to say: “*Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?*” (Matthew 11:3)

Shortly after that Jesus told the parables of the Kingdom recorded in Matthew 13. The parable of the Sower explained that the Kingdom Jesus had brought in was in the manner of the sowing of the seed of the Word. Other parables spoke of sowing to be followed some time later by the harvest, at which time the good would be saved and the bad burned up (which, by the way, did not mean annihilated, but judged and consigned to Hell).

All of which to say, we are in the period of the sowing of the seed, the preaching of the gospel, the calling men and women and children to repentance and to faith in Jesus Christ. Thus the wait prior to the return of Christ which he promised. This is the time when Christ is gathering all of his people, all whom the Father gives him and for whom he died. When he returns for the harvest, all of his people will be gathered out in preparation for the new heaven and earth, which Peter mentions in vs 13 (just beyond today’s reading), and the rest will be consigned to that place where Jesus says there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, and where the worm does not die (a not very inviting picture!).

5. Finally, will there be any warning prior to his return? Answer from the text, and explain your answer: \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

***For your Meditation and Prayer:*** Do you reckon that when the rain began in the days of Noah, the people were caught off guard? See Matthew 24:36-44 and reflect on those verses, and then pray in light of them.

**Read 2 Peter 3:11-18.**

Verses 11-13 were really the conclusion of what we read yesterday, except that I stopped you short on purpose. The scoffers Peter had mentioned in 3:3ff deliberately *overlooked* part of the teaching of the Scriptures regarding the flood. Peter had replied to his readers: “But *do not overlook* this one fact,” and had proceeded to explain the purpose of God’s “delay” in Christ’s return.

1. So, what should be the response of those who take God’s Word seriously?

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Our knowledge of the future as God has revealed it, may be somewhat like that of the Old Testament believers. We are given images and pictures, but interpreting those precisely may have to await their coming, much like the nature of the Kingdom Christ brought in with his first coming. Paul’s description of the renewal of the earth in Romans 8:18-25 sounds different from Peter’s here, but Peter may be using imagery for purification by fire, which may not imply absolute destruction in the way we think of it. Both, however, and Revelation 21-22, speak of God’s people dwelling on a new earth, not some sort of cloud-like existence.

2. Compare 2 Peter 3:14 and Hebrews 12:14. In light of the similarity, what does Peter likely mean by “at peace”? \_\_\_\_\_

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Perhaps we should take some comfort in Peter’s admission that some things in Paul’s writings are hard to understand, and be challenged by his comment that “the ignorant and unstable twist [them] to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.”

3. That being the case, what should we do? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. What practical steps can you take to avoid being among those described in vs 17, and instead obeying the exhortation of vs 18? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Read WCF 33.**

**For your Meditation and Prayer:** Spend a few minutes reflecting on the latter part of 2 Peter 3, and pray that the Lord will impress upon us the certainty of those things of which Peter speaks, and so work in you and others of us that we will respond properly to these truths as Peter counsels.



Rather than launching into 1 John, let’s take these next several days leading up to Easter Sunday reading the end of Matthew’s Gospel, recounting the last days of Jesus leading up to the Cross and Resurrection.

**Read Matthew 26:1-16.**

Matthew places the account of this “woman,” whom John identifies as Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus (John 12), next to Judas’s decision to betray Jesus. Matthew says the disciples were indignant at the woman anointing Jesus with such expensive ointment. John says it was especially Judas who objected that the ointment could have been sold and the money given to the poor, and that it was because he had the moneybag and pilfered it.

1. Think of all that Judas had seen and all he had no doubt done in ministry. And notice in vs 21-22 that the other disciples didn’t recognize that it was Judas. How could he be spiritually lost? (see John 6:64-65) \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper during the Passover meal. Matthew includes a little fuller wording about the significance of the wine than Paul does in 1 Cor 11:25. What is the difference? \_\_\_\_\_

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Hebrews 10:11-18 ties the two variations together – “new covenant” and “forgiveness of sins.”

Notice that when they finished the Lord’s Supper, they sang a hymn and then went out to go to the Mount of Olives. Hebrews 2:12 quotes Psalm 22:22 of Jesus singing.

3. Have you ever wondered whether you would stand firm if threatened like those whom ISIS threatened to behead if they didn’t recant? Matthew 26:30-35 is enough to give us all pause. And yet, at the same time, it is encouraging at the same time. Why might it do both? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. **Read WCF 1.9 and Matthew 10:26-33.** How do these, taken together with Matthew 26:30-35, clarify how one is to interpret Matt 10:33? \_\_\_\_\_

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**For your Meditation and Prayer:** The honesty of the Scriptures regarding the failures and weaknesses of God’s servants is not an excuse for similar failings in us, but they are sometimes encouraging to us in our own weaknesses.

Read Matthew 26:36-56.

1. What can we, and ought we, to take away from 26:36-46 with respect to ourselves? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What can we take away from Jesus' example in this 26:36-46? \_\_\_\_\_

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In many ways Jesus' obedience and submission to his Father in Gethsemane was the crowning act of obedience in his life. He obeyed his Father simply because the Father willed that he go to the Cross. It was the ultimate act of obedience. His righteousness was unflawed, and is held out to us as a gift to be conferred upon us when we place our trust in Christ alone.

3. When Judas betrayed Jesus, it was a severe temptation. Have you ever been betrayed by a close friend? It can cut deep! **Read Psalm 55:12-14, and the deep hurt experienced by the Psalmist.** How was Jesus able to deal with this temptation? Read the rest of Psalm 55, vss 16-22 for clues: \_\_\_\_\_

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Although we often think of Peter's weakness and cowardice, it is Peter who steps forward to defend Jesus with a sword against a rather large crowd (see John 18:10). His words in Matt 26:33 were not lightly spoken. But when forbidden to use the sword, Peter fled (Mat 26:56b).

4. Jesus refused to use extraordinary means to protect himself (26:53) – why? \_\_\_\_\_

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**For your Meditation and Prayer:** Christians often suffer in one way or another from mistreatment from others, sometimes even very good friends, hurts experienced within the church or without. How are we to handle those kinds of things? We can become bitter, become self-pitying, seek to justify withdrawal from the church and from God, all of which are sad and detrimental to ourselves, and often to others. At times like those, we need to meditate on all that Jesus experienced on our behalf, and realize how he entered our hurt and suffered at our hand.

**Read Matthew 26:57-68.**

There is a sad irony that runs throughout the last days of Jesus prior to his crucifixion, and even on the Cross. One online definition of “irony” is this: “Irony, in its broadest sense, is a rhetorical device, literary technique, or event in which what appears, on the surface, to be the case, differs radically from what is actually the case.” The Jewish leaders, who of all people ought to welcome the Messiah, are intent on killing him, and are seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death. ***The only thing they can find is found in Matt 26:61. Compare that statement with John 2:18-22.*** The leaders will seek to destroy him, and in doing so, will see his saying fulfilled in the way Jesus meant it.

When Jesus remains silent before Caiaphas, the high priest adjures him to answer whether he is the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus replies with an allusion to Daniel 7:13-14. The leaders declare him worthy of death and move to have him put to death, little realizing that it is precisely through that that Dan 7:13-14 will be fulfilled. Read Daniel 7:13-14, Philippians 2:6-11 and Romans 1:1-4.

**Read Matthew 26:69-27:10.**

1. How are Peter and Judas different in what they intend to do, why in the end they did what they did (one to deny, the other to betray), and in their response to the sin each committed? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Read Matthew 27:11-26.**

The irony of the unfolding events is sad in that it reveals the enmity of the natural human heart at virtually every point. It is important to keep in mind that the enmity of the hearts of virtually all of the characters would have remained unexpressed by active hostility if they had not been confronted with Jesus face to face. I noted in a recent sermon that the point in our lives when the enmity of our sinful nature becomes evident is when God’s will and Christ’s Lordship come into conflict with our beliefs or desires and affections, which makes it clear that the enmity often doesn’t surface until Christ’s Lordship calls for the surrender of our “authority to rule our own lives as we wish.” The issue is who is the ultimate “Lord/lord” of our lives, and of all of life. So long as our way is not evidently contrary to Christ’s, the enmity to his Lordship remains hidden and latent. But when he calls for the surrender of our will when our will is contrary to his, that is the point where enmity may become active hostility. That is what is happening all through this passage. It is why Jesus replied to Caiaphas as he did back in 26:64, because Daniel 7:13-14 speaks specifically to Jesus being given all authority in heaven and on earth as the Messiah, the anointed of the Lord.

The early church recognized that this is what was happening in the events that led to Jesus’ crucifixion. It becomes evident in their prayer in Acts 4:24-30,

when they quote Psalm 2:1ff, and see it fulfilled as they say: “for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. (Acts 4:27-28)

2. What was the issue in Psalm 2? Where was the point of conflict?

*Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?*

<sup>2</sup> *The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying,* <sup>3</sup> ***“Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.”***

What did they mean in the portion in bold? \_\_\_\_\_

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[And how did God respond?]

<sup>4</sup> *He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.*

<sup>5</sup> *Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying,*

<sup>6</sup> *“As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.”*

[The exalted King then responds]

<sup>7</sup> *I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me,*

*“You are my Son; today I have begotten you.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.*

<sup>9</sup> *You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.”*

**For your Meditation and Prayer:** Is that not the very issue we face even as Christians, namely, surrendering every area of our lives to the preeminence of Christ, that he might be King and Lord of every area of our lives? Can you think of areas of your life, whether in your desires, actions, thoughts, affections, etc. where you either struggle to submit, or simply ignore the Lordship of Christ? Reflect on that, and you might pray with the Psalmist: *Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!* (Psalm 139:23-24)

**Follow up reflections:** I have commented a lot today, because it is hard to ask questions to lead to some of these matters. I didn't have you try to find the irony scattered through Matt 27:11-26, so let me briefly point to some:

27:11-14 – the “governor” is responsible to see that justice is done with respect to the perfectly innocent and righteous King, who will one day judge the world

27:15-23 – Pilate relinquishes judgment to the hands of the people

The Jewish leaders persuade the people to join them in the most unjust judgment ever rendered

27:24-26 – The people choose a known and despised criminal over a perfectly righteous King and Savior worthy of their honor and love

The people proclaim their own, and their children's, condemnation

The guilty judge (Pilate) declares his own innocence

*Read Matthew 27:27-44.*

This is a passage filled with more of the sad irony we spoke of yesterday, but I'll only refer to it, and encourage you to look for it further. An example is in vs 42 – the mockery “He saved others: he cannot save himself” is oblivious to the fact that it was precisely in not saving himself that he saved others! But the whole passage is full of irony, but sad irony, not funny irony.

In the unfolding of redemptive history and revelation, the Holy Spirit often so worked in David, or another Psalmist, that their experience and expressions anticipating similar events in the life of Christ. One has to realize that the Psalmist is expressing these thing with respect to himself first, and so sometimes confesses his sinfulness that may have brought something upon his own head, sometimes as a discipline from the Lord. That would not be true of Christ, and yet our sins brought many things upon his head. My point is, however, that the Psalm is not always speaking only of Christ as a prediction, but is rather a God-orchestrated event in the life of the Psalmist by which the Holy Spirit intentionally anticipates things that will unfold further in the life of Jesus. A number of these are true in the events of the cross. I will try to list some at the end for you to explore if you have time. But for now let’s deal with some personal applications.

1. First, why did Jesus submit himself to all of the stuff he had to tolerate and suffer throughout his ministry, and especially just before and leading up to and on the Cross? What impact should it have on you? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What difference ought all of these things to make in you if you are mistreated, slandered, mocked, ridiculed, misunderstood, misrepresented to others, betrayed, deserted, etc.? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Christians sometimes get mad at God the Father, or at Christ our Lord, because of things we experience, sometimes even from other believers. Sometimes they get mad at the church, leave it, withdraw within in and become inactive, quit serving, etc. What if Jesus had done that towards us? What if he had said: “I’m not going to put up with all of this for people who don’t love me as I deserve to be loved, don’t follow me as they ought, get irritated at me if I don’t do just want they want, etc. What if he had not gone to the Cross because of the way we disappoint him? Are we more worthy of honor and gratitude than he? Are offenses against our “dignity” greater than offenses against his “Dignity” that we can hold grudges and break off relationships while expecting he ought to not hold our sins against us, or withdraw fellowship from us? **All of which is to**

**say: how ought we to practically use what the Holy Spirit has given us of what happened to Jesus to guide us in how we deal with matters in life, and to keep us from becoming bitter towards the one who bore all he did on our behalf, even on the Cross?** \_\_\_\_\_

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***For your Meditation and Prayer:*** Are there things in your life – relationships, attitudes, improper responses to others or to events, etc. – which you need to confess to the Lord, and perhaps clear up with others as well? What will you plan to do with them? \_\_\_\_\_

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I find reflecting on all Jesus did, and knowing he did it for me and other sinners like me, to be very humbling. It exposes my preoccupation with myself often. Do you find that true of you?

***Read Matthew 27:45-66***

The fact that none other than the Son of God could do what was necessary to deliver us from our sin and reconcile us to his Father very humbling, and yet is a matter that ought to stir our love for him, and also a deep and great gratitude for all he did. It should cause me to be Christ-oriented, rather than me-oriented. It should stir me to say with Paul: “For me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” Paul served Christ whole-heartedly even though he was beat up, mocked, imprisoned, and daily suffered hardships in the service of Christ. He still considered it his highest privilege and passion to know Christ, and to share in his sufferings for Christ’s honor. He finally would die for his commitment to Christ.

If you have time, now or over the coming weekend, you might want to explore:

Matt 27:34 – see Psalm 69:21

27:35 – see Psalm 22:18

27:36 & 57 – see Isaiah 53:9

27:43 – see Psalm 22:8

27:46 – see Psalm 22:1







