

# The Refiner's Fire

November 19 – 1 Peter 4:1-19

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 322 – 43 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

Peter continued his theme of suffering for the faith (see 3:13-17). Clearly, his readers were facing a difficult choice — either to continue their worldly lifestyle, blend in, and avoid persecution, or to stand out from the world, identify with Christ, and endure the consequences. His challenge, of course, was to stand with Christ and “suffer for the sake of righteousness” (3:14, 17; 4:12-14).

Thus, Peter pointed out one of the benefits of persecution — “he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin” (4:1). Of course, he was not suggesting that Christians can become completely sinless in this life on earth. That will not happen until we are with Christ. **Peter's point was that persecution has a refining aspect to it. Those who suffer for Christ's sake tend to abandon “the lusts of the flesh,” or the temptations of this world, to follow “the will of God” (v.2, 15).**

The Jews had already wasted enough time living like the Gentiles (world), Peter said (v.3). By leaving this lifestyle, their worldly “friends” would be surprised, of course, and would slander them (v.4), but that's okay. Someday, those living in the world will have to give an account to God for their actions (v.5). Even if the Jews were to die for taking a stand with Christ, they would live with the Lord for eternity in heaven (v.6, 13, 14, 17-19).

Besides, Peter wrote, “The end of all things is near” (v.7). He may have been referring to the destruction of Jerusalem (70 AD) or the imminent return of Christ. **Either way, life is short, and there is little time for Christians to waste on foolish, worldly pleasures.** He challenged them, instead, to “be of sound judgment” (make good decisions) and to be “sober in spirit for the purpose of prayer” (v.7).

“Above all,” Peter wrote, “keep fervent in your love for one another,” for love forgets the past

and “covers a multitude of sins” (v.8). Love, of course, was (and is), one of Christ's commands, an expected characteristic of His followers (*Jn. 13:34, 35*).

One way to demonstrate love is to “be hospitable to others without complaint” (*1 Pet. 4:9*). If persecution was a natural result of boldly identifying with Christ, then there was probably a great need for Christians to live in proximity or community with each other, to stick together. They would need to learn to live together despite their differences.

Finally, because there is so little time, Peter exhorted his readers (and us) to be good stewards of their spiritual gift and use it to serve one another (v.10). The outcome should always be to edify (or build up) others and to glorify God (v.11). We serve others to bring attention to Him and not ourselves.

## Daily Reflection

Making a choice to live for Christ in this world is not easy. The world has so many distractions that keep us from the purposes of God. If we choose to pursue Christlikeness, then we will have to abandon those worldly distractions. **In other words, we cannot pursue both worldliness and godliness. It must be one or the other, and that's not a decision that we make only once in our life. It's a choice we make every day.**

Which one have you chosen — worldliness or godliness? Why can't you pursue both?

---

---

---

---

**We have so little time. What's the best way to use it? Pursue it and leave the results to God.**

# Sovereignty Over Suffering

November 20 – 1 Peter 5:1-14

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 323 – 42 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

We completed Peter's first letter to those Christians who were scattered abroad and suffering under Roman persecution. Amid their suffering, Peter comforted and challenged them with his parting words. He spoke first to the leaders, then to church members, and finally to all of them together. Let's look a little more closely at each of these elements.

First, Peter closed with an exhortation (encouragement, challenge) to the elders, those appointed as overseers of local churches (v.1-4). He charged them to do their duty during this difficult time. Notice that their position is a voluntary call of God, not forced, and their motivation is not gain, but eagerness to serve (v.2). Their responsibilities include shepherding (or pastoring) the flock, exercising oversight, and exemplifying the Christian life (v.2, 3). Furthermore, elders are to execute their responsibilities without "lording over those allotted to their charge" (v.3). Elders are not to be insufferable tyrants, but selfless servants who lay down their lives for the sheep. For their reward, Christ — the Chief Shepherd — shall grant "the unfading crown of glory" (v.4).

Then, Peter charged church members to "clothe themselves with humility" toward one another and to church leadership (v.5). Pride is not of God, but of His enemy, the devil. Therefore, "God is opposed to the proud. Instead, He gives grace to the humble" (v.6). Like the devil, it is in our pride that we assume God's role and act like we have all the answers, and we deserve all the glory. However, that sinful, arrogant attitude minimizes God and elevates self.

**Part of resisting pride is to let go of whatever it is that we are trying to control and, instead, cast those cares on God, who cares for us** (v.7). Trying to control what is not ours to manage causes us fear, anxiety, and stress, while giving those things to God to handle allows us to experience his peace (*Phil. 4:6, 7*).

## Daily Reflection

While suffering for Christ can be difficult and discouraging — "for the enemy prowls about like a lion, seeking someone to devour" (*1 Pet. 5:8*) — Peter ended with four encouragements. First, he encouraged us to be "firm in our faith and resist him" (v.9). **While the lion can be terrifying, Christ defanged him at the cross.** He is a created being, under the authority of God, and the power that is in us (the Spirit of God) is greater than what the lion wields (*1 Jn. 4:4*).

Second, **though the devil wants us to believe that we are alone in our struggle, we are not.** "The same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by Christians around the world" (*1 Pet. 5:9*). We belong to the church of God, His "called out ones," and the enemy will not prevail against us (*Matt. 16:18*).

Third, **though the enemy may cause us to suffer, it is allowed by the sovereign hand of God, who will use it for our good.** He utilizes our suffering to "perfect us, confirm us, strengthen us, and establish us" (*1 Pet. 5:10; Rom. 5:3-5; Jas. 1:2, 3*). Fourth, Peter encouraged us to "stand firm in the true grace of God" (*1 Pet. 5:12*). **The gospel is invincible. It is solid ground. Let us remain on that rock, come what may. Our enemy will not prevail against us.**

In the last few verses, Peter mentioned three people to note — Silvanus, Mark, and the lady in Babylon (v.12, 13). Silvanus is another name for Silas, the faithful partner of the Apostle Paul, who helped Peter pen this letter. Mark could be Peter's actual son, but it was more likely John Mark, who was Peter's assistant. This is the same Mark who wrote the gospel of *Mark*. Since Mark was not one of Jesus' twelve disciples, his account was probably Peter's recollection. Finally, Peter referred to a lady in Babylon (v.13). Rome was often called Babylon, comparing it to the place of exile. The lady is probably the church there, as he described her as "those chosen together with you" (v.13).

# A Lamp in a Dark Place

November 21 – 2 Peter 1:1-21

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 324 – 41 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

We transitioned to Peter’s second letter, which was written near the end of his life, somewhere between 67-68 AD (v.14). Tradition places Peter in Rome around this time, as he was crucified upside-down by Nero on the Appian Way (road). Although Peter’s target audience is unclear, his message is not. The purpose of this letter was to protect churches from false teachers and their destructive heresies (2:1).

To combat these false teachers, Peter opened his letter by reassuring his readers of their faith, its fruit, and its origin. Let’s consider these three elements a little more closely.

First, Peter addressed his letter to “those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours...” (1:1). False teachers were trying to convince followers of Christ that they had more knowledge or insight about the Christian faith, making them feel like “second-class Christians.” But Peter, who was one of Jesus’ closest friends and disciples, confirmed that their salvation was the same as his — faith alone in the righteousness of Christ. Notice that Peter referred to Jesus as God and Savior (v.1), a reiteration of his confession to Jesus Himself of His divinity and role as Messiah (Matt. 16:16).

Peter’s point was that there are no “second-class Christians.” We are all saved by Christ in the same way, whether a Disciple, an Apostle, or a church member. The Lord has provided for us everything we need “pertaining to life and godliness” (v.3). We aren’t missing anything, as the false teachers made early Christians believe. As followers of Christ, we are all sons of God, heirs to His great promises, and partakers of His divine nature or Spirit (v.4). Knowing these truths was important to Peter, who will repeat the word *knowledge* throughout his letter (v.2, 3, 5, 8, 12, 20).

Second, Peter pointed out the fruit that a genuine Christian will exhibit because of the

work of the Spirit in their lives (v.5-7). These characteristics are not required to be a Christian, but rather they are evidence that one is truly saved or born again (v.8-11).

Third, Peter wanted his readers to know the origin of their faith (v.13-21). He and other apostles had not concocted, followed, or communicated “cleverly devised tales” (v.16). Rather they were eyewitnesses of the life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Christ. For example, they were there with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration when God the Father said, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased” (v.17, 18; Matt. 17:1-8).

Furthermore, Peter wanted his readers to know that nothing they had heard from them, or any Old Testament writer or prophet, had spoken or written messages of their own making. Rather he, the other Disciples or Apostles, and the prophets of old had all spoken or written words given to them by God, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (v.20, 21). In other words, the source or origin of our faith is not human, but divine, not man-made, but God supplied (v.11).

## Daily Reflection

Because these things are true, Peter said, “We would do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place...” (v.19), meaning Christ’s message of salvation is the only hope in this world. There is salvation in no one else or any other way. We can hold these truths with confidence until the day Jesus returns (v.19).

Re-read 2 Peter 1:5-8. Which of these qualities are you exhibiting? Which ones are missing?

---

---

---

---

# Spiritual Terrorists

November 22 – 2 Peter 2:1-22

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 325 – 40 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

Peter revealed the purpose of his second letter — to warn Christians about false teachers in their midst (v.1; see also 3:1). Satan hates the Church. He knows that he cannot destroy it entirely, but that has not stopped him from using every means at his disposal to distract, discourage, and derail it. False teachers are just one of the weapons in his arsenal.

False teachers are false believers, Christians in name only, wolves in sheep's clothing. **Like terrorists who sneak bombs into places full of unsuspecting citizens, false teachers "secretly introduce destructive heresies" to lead people away from Christ (2:1). Although like suicide bombers who bring destruction upon themselves, they also inflict great casualties among God's people.** "Many will follow them, and the truth will be maligned" (v.2).

Why are false teachers bent on doing these things when they know they are doomed? They are not only deceived by the enemy, but they are also greedy for fortune and fame (v.3). They are so blinded by their allegiance to the enemy that they will say and do anything (v.1, 10, 12-15). They are pretenders, who really have no knowledge of the truth. Their hearts are corrupt, and they pursue sinful ways.

While they may exhibit Christian behavior at times, the fruit of a false teacher is ungodly. "Having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, they forsake the right way and, instead, pursue the way of Balaam" (v.14, 15). Balaam was an Old Testament prophet who prophesied for money. He would say whatever was desired by the highest bidder (*Num.* 22-24). In the end, Balaam's madness was rebuked and restrained by a mute donkey (*2 Pet.* 2:16).

False teachers sound so good. They "promise freedom while they themselves are enslaved" (v.19). In time, like a clean pig, they will return to their natural, filthy habitat (v.22).

## Daily Reflection

As Peter described false teachers, he issued a sobering warning and a comforting reminder. His comforting reminder related to the future of false teachers. **God will deal with these spiritual terrorists in His time.** Like the angels who rebelled against God, like the ungodly in Noah's day, and like the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, these false teachers will face judgment and destruction (v.1, 3-6, 9). "Like unreasoning animals, they are born as creatures to be captured and killed" (v.12). Their punishment is certain and severe.

However, while his reminder related to the future, Peter's warning related to the present. **While false teachers will be dealt with in time, they can still do a great deal of damage now; and while the Lord "knows how to rescue the godly," the godly may be taken captive for a time and suffer great loss (v.9).** Those who are most susceptible are "unstable souls," new, untrained, shallow believers (v.14, 18).

In the next chapter, Peter provided remedies and safeguards to protect against false teachers. But for now, what would you suggest as the best means to protect yourself and others from falling victim to their schemes?

---

---

---

---

**If false teachers are like suicide bombers, how can you prevent being damaged in their blast?**

---

---

---

# What Sort of People?

November 23 – 2 Peter 3:1-18

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 326 – 39 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

We finished Peter's second letter (v.1). He closed with words of judgment and destruction and a final warning to the people of God.

With the rise of false teachers (2:1), Peter gave his readers some important reminders and remedies. First, they "should remember the words spoken beforehand by the prophets and apostles" (3:2). The apostles, of course, were tasked with sharing the words of Christ (v.2).

Two of the remedies to combat false teaching is to know God's Word and grow in it (v.2, 17, 18). The better we know the truths of the gospel, then the more readily will we be able to identify the lies. The more we absorb the good words of the Lord, then the more we will grow in maturity, wisdom, and understanding. "We will be on guard, not carried away by the error of unprincipled men" (v.17). Know and grow — these are ways to protect ourselves from those who intend to take us captive (Col. 2:8).

Much of Peter's closing referred to the last days, of Jesus' return and the subsequent judgment and destruction (v.3-13). In those days (which could be the present time), people will mock Christians for waiting for Jesus to return (v.3, 4). Those who lived then, in the decades following Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension, believed that He would return immediately. So, when He didn't, non-Christians took the opportunity to make fun of them.

While it is true — the Lord's return has not occurred as soon as Christians had hoped — we must remember two things. First, God's promise of the flood was fulfilled. Though it took a while, it did happen, just as the Lord said it would (v.5, 6). Second, the Lord's timing is not our timing. His relationship with time is much different than ours. We view life and the world in the context of time, but God does not. He lives outside of time and space, in eternity. What seems long to us is short to Him (v.8).

God's promise regarding the judgment of this present world is that it will not be destroyed by water, but by fire (v.7, 10, 12). The old, corrupt creation will perish, and it will be replaced with the new heavens and earth, "in which righteousness dwells" (v.13).

While it does seem like the Lord is taking His time to fulfill these promises, they are no less true or eminent. Besides, Peter wrote, "The Lord is not slow, but patient. He does not wish that any would perish, but that all would come to repentance" (v.9). The word *all* here can be confusing. Peter is not referring to all people, but to all the elect, those whom God has chosen. Peter was not advocating for universalism — that all people will be saved — for the ungodly will be destroyed (v.7).

## Daily Reflection

What was Peter's point in reminding his readers of God's promises regarding the last days? He wanted those things to prompt us to ask ourselves a question. "**What sort of people ought we to be?**" (v.11). We are to live in "holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of the Lord" (v.11, 12). Furthermore, "since we look for these things, we must be diligent to live in peace, spotless and blameless" (v.14).

What are we to be doing while we wait for the Lord to return? Peter wrote, "**Regard the patience of our Lord as salvation**" (v.15). In other words, while we are waiting for Christ to return (which is unknown, but eminent), let us use the time we have left to share the gospel with others. What will the Lord find you doing when He returns? How will you be living?

---

---

---

# Our Human Advocate

November 24 – 1 John 1:1-2:2

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 327 – 38 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

We transitioned to the first letter of John, the longest-living disciple of Christ, who was still writing 50-60 years after Jesus' resurrection (up to 90 AD). John confronted a philosophy that was prevalent in his day called Gnosticism. Gnostics (pronounced noss-ticks) believed that they had special revelation or knowledge (*gnosticus*) that superseded the Scriptures. Thus, their false teaching confused Christians.

Gnostics believed that all physical matter was evil and that only the spiritual realm was good. Therefore, Jesus could not have been a human, who lived in the material world, or else He would have been evil. Thus, Gnostics denied Jesus' humanity. They claimed that Jesus was only spirit. His appearance on earth was merely an illusion, a spirit in human form.

Knowing the destructive effects of such heretical teaching, John confronted it with truth — His eye-witness account of Jesus' life (1:1-4). As a disciple of Christ, John's testimony was (and is) authoritative. He confirmed that He saw Jesus with his eyes, spoke with Him face to face, heard Him teach with his ears, and touched Him with his hands. **Simply put, how could Jesus have been an illusion if John experienced Him in such tangible ways? Jesus was human.**

The Gnostics' claims would have disqualified Jesus from being the Messiah. For Jesus to be qualified as the mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5), He had to represent both parties, meaning He had to be both God and man. If He were not human, He would've been ineligible to be the Savior of mankind.

**But Jesus was human. He slept, He ate, He walked and talked, He felt pain, and He cried.** He was also tempted as we are, yet without sin. As God, Jesus was more than a man. He exhibited His power over nature, over the body, over the demonic world, even over death. **Jesus was whom He said He was — God in the flesh.**

Next, the Gnostics denied the existence of sin and man's need for forgiveness. This position opposes Jesus Himself. For this reason, Jesus came into the world, to save men from their sin (1 Tim. 1:15). In Christ, "there is no darkness" (1 Jn. 1:5-8), meaning He is holy, pure, and truthful. To say we have no sin is to walk in darkness and to contradict the teaching of Christ (Matt. 19:25, 26; John 3:3; 8:34).

Since we are born into sin, our hearts are dark and wicked. We deserve God's judgment. It is our darkened state that disrupts our fellowship with Him who is light (1 Jn. 1:5-8). Fellowship with God is only achieved by the removal of sin through Christ (v.9, 10). He alone can defeat our darkness with the light of salvation.

**But what if we sin after we are saved? Not to worry. Jesus stands as our Advocate (defense lawyer) before God the Father and vouches for our forgiveness (2:1, 2).** His sacrifice removed our offense and satisfied God's wrath. Thus, when God the Father, who is both our Judge and jury, looks at us, He sees Christ and pardons us because of His righteousness.

## Daily Reflection

Did Christ's death cover the sins of the world (2:2), and if so, then why aren't all people saved? Christ's death was more than sufficient to cover the world's sins, but it is only efficient for those who put their trust in Him. It's as if God gave everyone a credit card with which to pay their debts, but the card is only effective if it is activated and used. God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son for its sins, but it is only those who believe in Him that will have eternal life (Jn. 3:16).

Finally, John wrote these things "so that you may not sin" (2:1). He's not suggesting that we are sinless or will never sin; rather he was warning us not to use Christ's forgiveness as a license to sin. Just because we are free from sin does not mean that we are free to sin.

# Growing in Christ

November 25 – 1 John 2:3-14

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 328 – 37 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

In keeping with the theme of his letter — exposing the Gnostics and reassuring Christians of their faith — John included two more tests to help identify those who are truly followers of Christ (v.3-11). Then, he affirmed the faith of three groups at various stages of discipleship (v.12-14). Let's review each of these sections.

First, John said that obedience to Christ is evidence of salvation (v.3-6). Like many people today, Gnostics claimed to be Christian, but they did not exhibit any signs of genuine faith, because they did not obey God's commands. One who claims to be a follower of Christ yet does not live his life as Jesus instructed is deceiving himself and others. **True Christians demonstrate their love for Christ by keeping His commandments and "walking in the same manner as He walked"** (v.6).

The second test of discipleship is love (v.7-11). John reminded his readers that Jesus taught us to love others (*Jn. 13:34, 35*). Clearly, **God loves people**. Paul wrote, "God demonstrated His love for us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (*Rom. 5:8*). **If people are such a high priority to God, then people should be important to us as well. As followers of Christ, we will love people in the same manner that He did.**

But who are we to love exactly, only those who love us? We are to love all people, as Jesus did, even those we would rather not love. The one who is selective with his love does not follow the Lord's example. Love that is conditional is not love at all. Genuine love is free, not earned.

Finally, John addressed three groups that are at various stages of discipleship — children, young men, and fathers (*1 Jn. 2:12-14*). The first mention of *little children* is a general reference to all Christians who are in the family of God (v.12). However, the second reference to children includes those newly born again (v.13).

They have completed step one of the discipleship process — salvation. They "know the Father" (v.13). John reassured them that they were on the right track, even though they had a long way to go to obtain maturity.

To those Christians who are further along in their faith — young men (and women) — John reminded them of three things: the word of God abides in them, they have become strong, and they have overcome the evil one (v.13, 14). While it is during one's childhood years that so much of our Christian foundation is laid, it is during our youth and young adult phases that our foundation is tested. So many big decisions must be made, so many temptations vie for our attention, and so many battles must be fought. Either our faith will flounder, or it will be melded into steel. Living a life grounded on the Bible is the key to godly living (*Ps. 119:9, 11*).

To fathers (and mothers), those Christians who are mature in their faith, John commended them twice (v.13, 14). After enduring years of tests and trials, they are steady and consistent. Their relationship with Christ means more to them than anything else. They cling to that bond in their old age. We are blessed to have men and women like this all around us. They are a testimony of God's goodness and a reminder that a life of faithfulness is possible.

## Daily Reflection

We are all at various stages of spiritual growth. Where are you in this adventure with Christ? Are you progressing in your faith? **We are never finished growing spiritually.** Praise God for the growth you've experienced already, but then press on. Meanwhile, don't forget to help others grow along the way.

**The Christian life is an uphill battle. We are either advancing up the hill, or we are rolling down it. Let us press on towards the prize of the upward call of God, to be all and do all that He expects.**