

## BE PATIENT & PREPARED ~ 1 PETER 4:12-17, 5:6-11

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<sup>12</sup> Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. <sup>13</sup> But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. <sup>14</sup> If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. <sup>15</sup> If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. <sup>16</sup> However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. <sup>17</sup> For it is time for judgment to begin with God's household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? <sup>6</sup> Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. <sup>7</sup> Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. <sup>8</sup> Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. <sup>9</sup> Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. <sup>10</sup> And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. <sup>11</sup> To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.



This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it,

Many of you have probably heard the story of the ant and the grasshopper. The two main characters, the ant and the grasshopper, couldn't be more opposite each other. The ant was hardworking and thought about the future, while the grasshopper was not as hardworking and thought only about today. In fact, the grasshopper made fun of the ant for working so hard, "Take a break once in a while, you don't have to be storing up all that food for winter, it's still so far away." The grasshopper made fun of the ant and continued to delay and delay, thinking he had plenty of time to store enough food, while the ant continued storing food away for the winter.

Spring gave way to summer, summer gave way to fall, and the weather began changing. Before long, the first snow flurries began to dot the skies and the grasshopper was caught completely unaware. He couldn't find any food, and no matter how much he tried dancing, he could not stay warm. Then he remembered the ant and knocked on the door. This is where the story can take one of two endings. The official ending has the ant refusing to let the grasshopper in, while the more kid-friendly version has the ant graciously letting the grasshopper in after scolding him. The lesson behind this fable is to teach the value of hard work and the perils of not thinking ahead. Be like the ant, not like the grasshopper. The Bible book of Proverbs even has a proverb about the hardworking ant. You might say the moral of these fables is to BE PATIENT AND PREPARED.

It certainly is easy for us to know the lesson behind the fable, that we should be patient, and we should prepare ourselves as best we can for the future. But it is so much more difficult to apply it in our daily life – whether it's saving for retirement or just getting your to-do list done. And since it is difficult

for us to BE PATIENT AND PREPARED when it comes to the day to day activities in our life, it is even more difficult to BE PATIENT AND PREPARED for the day to day activities in our spiritual life. And yet it is vitally important for us to BE PATIENT AND PREPARED as we wait for Jesus to return. Peter records for us in his letter how we can BE PATIENT AND PREPARED.

1. Knowing the danger
2. Knowing the defense

(1)

Peter is writing from experience. He could recall back to the time when Jesus ascended into heaven and told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem. And they waited...for ten long days in Jerusalem. We know they were not just sitting down and twiddling their thumbs, but they still had to wait, they had to BE PATIENT AND PREPARED. God did not immediately send the Holy Spirit upon them, just like he did not immediately establish his kingdom. And so the disciples' ten days of waiting was a microcosm of a believer's life, to BE PATIENT AND PREPARED for heaven.

We can see this play out in the book of Acts, the record of the Early Christian Church. The believers patiently waited as they were scattered first from Jerusalem and then from Rome. Paul waited patiently on his missionary journeys and certainly during his time in prison. And now we have Peter imparting the knowledge that he has learnt to the recipients of this letter – the churches in Asia Minor, now modern day Turkey. He is telling them to BE PATIENT AND PREPARED.

He tells them this because of the tendency, especially of new Christians, to think that once we believe in Jesus we don't need anything else. And that is true, all we need is Jesus, but that doesn't mean that we can jump to the end of life, the end of the game and step immediately into heaven. It doesn't work that way. We still have to endure the toil and turbulence of this life. We have God's promise that Christ has defeated the devil, he has **"broken his power."** But we also know that Satan is still active today and is a formidable opponent. And Peter is telling us to BE PATIENT AND PREPARED because otherwise we could be in danger of losing what Christ has won for us.

It begins with knowing the danger. We know from the Bible and our own experiences that we are in a war, a spiritual war for our souls. Peter records for us, **"Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."** How different this is than the picture that many people have of the devil with a cute grin, horns and a pitchfork. The book of Revelation pictures him as a dragon, powerful enough to convince a number of angels to his side before he was utterly defeated and thrown out of heaven. This is who we are up against, this is knowing the danger.

The devil is someone who knows all our weaknesses, he knows the exact time and place to prod us to cause the most damage. In addition to the devil, our enemy is also the sinful world in which we live. The sinful world that puts us through a fiery ordeal, the world which insults Christians and demeans them, the sinful world which refuses to acknowledge its creator. But what is just as dangerous as those first two enemies is our own sinful nature that dwells within each and every one of us.

Knowing the danger means recognizing the danger of the sinful nature dwelling within each one of us. It is the sinful nature that helps to convince us that sin isn't so bad and that we can stop anytime we

want. It's my sinful nature that doesn't want to resist the temptations because it figures I'm saved and it doesn't matter what I do. It is the sinful nature that finds pleasure in disobedience, it looks for the easy way out, it's lazy. It's my sinful nature that wants to convince me that I can make it to heaven on my own. It's my sinful nature that says "Thanks God, but I got this." It's my sinful nature that gets angry at God for placing trials in my life instead of more blessings. It's my sinful nature that looks to my own strength for fighting against the spiritual temptations.

These are the dangers that are very real to each one of us, these are the dangers that were very real to those to whom Peter was writing. And it is the danger lurking within each and every one of us that needs to be taken care of before we can BE PATIENT AND PREPARED. This healing takes place outside of us. A patient doesn't go into a hospital to perform his own surgery, he leaves that up to the doctors who have been trained to do it. So we turn to Christ, the only one who can save us. His suffering on this earth had a purpose. Through his unjust suffering, he earned for us eternal life. Now our sufferings on this earth have purpose too. They have the purpose of drawing us closer to him, they connect us to Christ and his sufferings.

## (2)

BEING PATIENT AND PREPARED is all about drawing closer to him. Being patient that this world isn't the way that we want it to be. Being patient that God himself has a plan and he is working that plan. And he is the one who gives us the defense to fight against these dangers. And this defense seem just as counter-intuitive to us as the sufferings and ordeals we go through. This defense is not about what we can do, but about what we let God do.

Peter begins the instructions, "**Humble yourselves under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.**" Humility is something that doesn't come naturally to us, even the most humble of us. We all like to receive credit for what we have done, we all like to think that we are in control, and yet God says to humble ourselves. Place ourselves under God's hand, the God who loves us, the God who saved us, the God who will lift us up.

In the meanwhile Peter gives the second instruction, "**Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.**" Peter, of all people, knew what it was like to have anxiety, knew what it was like to be worried, and he says you don't have to live with worry, instead, place your worries and your cares upon Christ. This means letting go of what is bothering you, letting go of worrying about an uncertain future. Then Peter mentions, "**Be alert and of sober mind.**" A Christian does not go about life unaware of what is going on around him. A Christian is well aware of the spiritual battle raging, and as such will want to be well equipped to defend against it.

He then gives us the encouragement when the devil comes prowling around. "**Resist him, standing firm in the faith.**" When the devil brings his temptations, he wraps them up in a nice little bow, he convinces us they are not so bad, and even for Christians who see them as temptations, we know how empty we feel afterwards. This is why Peter says, "**Resist him!**" The apostle James says to "**resist the devil and he will flee from you.**" Certainly this resisting cannot be done by ourselves, but only when we are standing on the word of God, the foundation of our faith. We know our resisting doesn't earn heaven for us, but our resisting leads us away from the temptations that can damage our faith. And

we see our power to do all these things doesn't even come from us at all, but rather they are gifts from God as we walk through this life.

I recently read an article that used this very section of Scripture as a way to combat burnout: 1) Humble yourself, 2) Cast your cares on him, 3) Realize we're in a war and 4) Trust in the promise. And certainly these are good ways that we can remember to combat burnout. But this section is more than just about combatting burnout on a personal level, this is about combatting burnout on a spiritual level. All of these things that Peter mentions really turns the focus back to God and asks us to BE PATIENT AND PREPARED. God has already won the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ, we know that! We are now waiting for God to call us to be with him in heaven.

The time we find ourselves in now, is similar to the time the disciples were in after Jesus ascended into heaven and before the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost. They played the waiting game, much like we are playing the waiting game also. But playing the waiting game doesn't mean we don't do anything. In addition to BEING PATIENT it also means BEING PREPARED. What did the disciples do before the Holy Spirit came? They worshiped in the temple every day and glorified God. As believers, we don't sit on our hands waiting, we go out and worship God, giving glory to him in everything we do. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.