



Kay Wilson

Peter was personally familiar with what it was like to live between two worlds: the Roman Empire and the kingdom of God. Peter was no stranger to suffering and persecution, so it is no wonder he wrote to encourage “God’s elect, strangers in the world.” Peter reassured these early Christians that the suffering they experienced was temporary, because this world was not their home. In fact, Peter actually urges them to embrace their suffering, “so the genuineness of your faith—more valuable than gold, which perishes though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:7). Peter also offered some very sound advice on how to stand firm in their faith: follow Jesus’ example.

Peter’s message is as relevant for us today as it was for the first-century church. This world is not our home, but in the in-between time, we are called to a life of holiness and love. We are called to glorify God in our everyday lives as we imitate Christ.

I live in Monrovia, California, and have the pleasure of copastoring with my husband, Gerry, in Arcadia where we have served for almost thirty years. I love my job and I find great joy in the faith community where I serve. I also take great joy in being with my kids and grandkids, traveling, reading, taking long walks, and watching sunsets and sunrises. I have a passion for prayer, Scripture, and growing in Christlikeness.

BIBLE READING: 1 Peter 1:3-5

It is essential for us to understand the extreme joy that Peter's words "he has given us new birth into a living hope" must have brought to his readers. Peter aptly identifies them as strangers—or exiles. He does so, not just because these believers were scattered outside of Palestine, but also because they were not to consider themselves as permanent residents of this earth. They had been given eternal citizenship in heaven through their salvation in Jesus Christ. They had been born into a living hope, an inheritance that could never be taken away.

Their "living hope" was to be the anchor which would make it possible for them to endure persecution and suffering at the hands of the unrighteous because they were living lives of holiness and doing what is good and right. Paul's words were spoken in hope of encouraging those suffering for righteousness to remain faithful and to cling to the knowledge that their suffering would surely lead to a future glory.

Paul's exhortation applies to us today. In America, we may not be experiencing the extreme persecution, torture, and horrendous suffering that our brothers and sisters living in other countries are suffering, but if we are living holy lives and doing what is right, persecution will surely come.

When it does, will we be able to remain faithful? Will we be so anchored in Christ Jesus that we faithfully cling to our "living hope" with the certainty that our suffering, which is temporary, will lead to an eternity of life in the kingdom of heaven?

SONG: Because He Lives

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord anchor me to the living hope that what I suffer today is temporary. Help me remember where my citizenship is found.

—Kay Wilson

BIBLE READING: 1 Peter 1:13-14

Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, “Nothing in the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity.” When you read Peter’s instructions to those called out of the old life into new life in Christ Jesus, it is safe to say that Peter would agree.

Ignorance of the truth and intentional foolishness will inevitably bring destruction. Peter was concerned that believers not remain ignorant because of the damaging consequences that result from walking in darkness rather than in the light.

But he also understood the reality that it is impossible to learn to walk in the true knowledge of God’s glorious grace if we choose to be ignorant of the truth. This is why Peter urges believers to prepare their minds for action and gives excellent advice on how to accomplish the task of being fully prepared. It is the same advice Peter would give us today.

We must be self-controlled and place our hope completely on the glorious grace that comes through the revelation of Jesus Christ. Adequate preparation requires obedience and a conscious effort to move from our old way of living into a life of holiness. We must exercise spiritual discipline. We are called to be holy. We are called to be disciples who do more than merely give intellectual assent to the message that Jesus is the Son of God. We are called to know (have direct and personal knowledge of) God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent (John 17:3).

SONG: ‘Tis So Sweet To Trust in Jesus

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Father, make me hungry for the truth. Lead me into a disciplined life of holy living and stir up your Holy Spirit within me.

—Kay Wilson

BIBLE READING: 1 Peter 1:15-16

Peter's call for holiness may seem intimidating to us today. It can also be a bit perplexing because we do not regularly see the holiness of God in the people of God. So what does it actually mean to be holy? Peter knew because he experienced God's holiness firsthand in the life of Jesus Christ. And it drew him to Jesus like a moth to a flame. What a beautiful place to be.

Believers are still called to genuine holiness, to "be holy in all you do" today. Why? We are called to holiness because Jesus' intention was for us to become just like him. As John says, "that the world may know" (John 17:23). It should be our greatest desire to learn how to be holy.

I find it fascinating and a bit of a challenge, that Jesus never had to devise a program, hold a contest, or corral anyone to come to him. It seems people flocked to him, so much so that he needed to get away from the crowds and rest from time to time. Can the same be said of Jesus' followers today? Why is it that too often the church repels rather than compels people to come to Christ?

Is it possible that for the church today, the best way to reach the lost is to offer the same message that Jesus offered when he walked the earth; a message that combines both the truth of God's Word and his call to live a holy life—fully committed to God.

SONG: Pure and Holy

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Father, draw me into your holiness that I, too, may be holy as you are holy.

—Kay Wilson

BIBLE READING: 1 Peter 1:22-23

The way Peter describes *love* as the fruit of purity is absolutely brilliant and beautiful. God's love through us is genuine when it comes from a heart that has been purified by obedience to the truth. The true test of knowing when you are expressing genuine love is when you love and live like Jesus.

We are so accustomed to thinking of love as a feeling, we miss the power of God's love to redeem and restore. As Dallas Willard would say, "Love is the will to do good." Genuine love is a conscious choice and a steadfast call to action. We must choose to love as God loves, which is unconditional. And our greatest desire is to be fixed on bringing about the greatest good in everyone and in every situation.

While describing love may seem simple, living it is anything but simple. Genuine love is a quality of Christlike character. It is only possible when we ourselves have been genuinely recreated in Christ, have genuinely experienced God's love, and are solid and secure in the knowledge that God loves us.

Jesus modeled God's love perfectly. It is his love that redeems the lost, mends the brokenhearted, restores sight to the spiritually blind, and sets free those who are held captive by the god of this world.

Genuine love is an amazing love. It is genuine love that successfully defeats the rulers, authorities, powers of this dark world, and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:10-12). Genuine love is a display of the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

SONG: They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Father, teach me to be like Jesus so I can love like Jesus.

—Kay Wilson

BIBLE READING: 1 Peter 2:4-5

While the world rejects the people of God, Peter reminds us that God does not reject us. God not only chooses us, we are actually precious in his sight. This means we are a prized and dearly loved treasure. As Peter puts it, we are a precious stone and valuable possession of the Sovereign Creator. We are not dead and lifeless stones, but living stones built into a living temple as the corporate people of God, the body of Christ, the church. What an amazing truth to live by.

Furthermore, God is continually building us into a spiritual house that we might become a royal priesthood. So, what is a royal priesthood? In Exodus 19:6, God told Israel if they kept his covenant, they would be a chosen people, a royal priesthood, and a holy nation. It was the work of the priest to be deeply and genuinely dedicated to the “holiness” of the people and the land.

Peter reminds us that we who are in Christ Jesus have been chosen to be holy and blameless before him in much the same way he chose Israel. We belong to God and are called to partner with him in accomplishing his purposes here on earth. And while we are neither perfect nor blameless, Christ Jesus was the perfect and blameless sacrifice before God. Our holiness is not something we have earned, but the result of our being “in Christ” through his grace and his work on the cross.

SONG: Take My Life and Let It Be

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Father, help me become who I am called to be in you, and to live as one who has been chosen to be holy and blameless.

—Kay Wilson

BIBLE READING: 1 Peter 2:6-7

God's perfect plan for those who are called out of this world and into his kingdom is to be a chosen people who are acceptable to God. The apostle Paul said it this way: "Present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship" (Romans 12:1 NASB).

"Chosen" or *eklektos* means, "chosen out, select." It can also mean "elect" (*Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, 100). Interestingly, there is a close similarity between the word for "chosen," *eklektos*, and the word for "church," *ekklesia*, which means a calling out of. The church, in other words, is made up of those who are called out of darkness and into God's kingdom of light as his chosen people.

God calls and chooses, but that is only the beginning. As God's chosen people, we have a decision to make. If we accept God's call, we must be faithful to that call and act accordingly. We must be faithful to God's truth, know him intimately, love him completely, and utterly rely on his strength and wisdom.

It isn't enough to be called the chosen people of God; we must be uncompromisingly faithful. We must continue to actively live out our faith in obedience and complete reliance upon God in good and in bad times. It may not be easy, but it is worth it to share in God's glory.

SONG: I Surrender All

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Father, as one of God's chosen people, I offer myself as a living sacrifice. I need you to fill me with the strength to live my life as holy and blameless, that I may prove what the will of God is, that which is acceptable and perfect.

—Kay Wilson

BIBLE READING: 1 Peter 2:11-12

Peter, concerned that God's chosen people remain faithful to their distinctiveness, offered excellent counsel. In this world of sin and darkness, the only way to remain faithful to our calling as an honorable servant of the Lord, is to "abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul." We stumble, Peter reminds us, when we choose the flesh over the Spirit and live in disobedience.

The apostle Paul does a magnificent job helping us fully grasp what Peter was saying. He puts it this way: "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh....They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want" (Galatians 5:16-17).

We are called to live honorably, as holy strangers, knowing we are temporary residents of this present world, so that even those who are hostile toward God might come to glorify his name. This is only possible because, as God's chosen people, we belong to Christ Jesus and have been crucified with him along with our evil passions and desires (Galatians 2:20).

God's intention for us is absolutely astonishing. He wants to fully transform us into a chosen people who will reign with him for eternity. God's call to be holy, honorable servants means a call to resemble Jesus as much as possible. So let's consider this: as we seek to be rooted and grounded in love, to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, so we may be filled up to all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:17-19), we are preparing to reign with Jesus for all eternity.

SONG: All for Jesus

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Father, I am yours—make me like Jesus.

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