

We are beginning a new series on living in the Last Days. We should understand that on the day of Pentecost Peter made it very clear that the Last Days had begun. He told those who miraculously heard his message in their own language that Pentecost was a fulfillment of the words of the prophet Joel. <sup>17</sup> *And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams;* Acts 2:17 (ESV)

If a thousand years is as a day to the Lord, we've been in the Last Days for two days. (2Peter 3:8) The church has always expected the return of the Lord at any time. That is a spiritually healthy attitude. It keeps our focus on eternity and makes us think twice before getting lackadaisical.

We may have more reason than ever to think that the Lord's return is near. Israel has returned to the Promised Land as the prophets had predicted. (Isaiah 37:31) There is preparation for the rebuilding of the Temple. The Middle-East is in turmoil. The good news of the Gospel has been preached in most of the world. (Matthew 24:14) Jews are recognizing that Jesus is their Messiah in greater numbers than any previous time in history. (Romans 11:26) All that is left from my understanding of prophecy is the revealing of the Antichrist. (2Thessalonians 2:3) I'm aware of the fact that this attitude has been prevalent for most of church history. As I said, that is a good thing. Whether Jesus returns in our lifetime or a thousand years from now, we are still living in the Last Days and the admonitions for those living in the end times apply to us.

In the letters we will be reading over the months to come, we'll see the warnings the Spirit gave through these authors. We'll also see the directions for godly living in these evil days. There are very specific instructions as to how we are to go about our Christian lives. When set against the dangers that accompany the Last Days, these instructions carry a sense of urgent importance. My prayer is that we take them to heart and apply them.

We'll begin with the letter of 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter and go on to Jude and the first 5 chapters of Revelation. <sup>1</sup> *Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:* There is a progression of humility that is evident as the writers of the New Testament grow older. Peter's first letter introduced him only as Peter, an Apostle. (1Peter 1:1) In this letter he reminds everyone that he is a servant as well. He goes on

**Commented [notes1]:** 2 Peter 3:8 (ESV)

<sup>8</sup> But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

**Commented [notes2]:** Isaiah 37:31 (ESV)

<sup>31</sup> And the surviving remnant of the house of Judah shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward.

**Commented [notes3]:** Matthew 24:14-15 (ESV)

<sup>14</sup> And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

<sup>15</sup> "So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place ( let the reader understand),

**Commented [notes4]:** Romans 11:26 (ESV)

<sup>26</sup> And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob"

**Commented [notes5]:** 2 Thessalonians 2:3 (ESV)

<sup>3</sup> Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

**Commented [notes6]:** 1 Peter 1:1 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,

to say that they have obtained a faith of equal standing. Though the Lord Jesus personally assigned him to care for and feed the sheep (John 21:16), he did not let it go to his head. He knew he had failed Jesus, denying Him three times. He knew his self-confidence was denounced by Jesus. He had become a dependent servant.

I think of the redeemed as trophies of grace. By that I mean, God took something that you wouldn't think had any possible value at all, and then reworked us into something He could use. It reminds me of some verses we saw in Ephesians. *<sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ -by grace you have been saved- <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.* Ephesians 2:4-7 (ESV)

I have a friend who bought for their daughter a very well trained horse and gave her the best riding lessons one could afford. She won or placed in nearly every show they entered. Her room was lined all the way around with ribbons. I imagine **heaven as a place that is filled with God's trophies of grace.** The trophy is all the more special when you realize what was done to win. In our case, God didn't start with great material. He took us hopeless sinners that weren't even looking for Him. Some of us were even promoting the devil's kingdom and transformed them into servants of righteousness. (Ephesians 2:1-2) When we hear the individual stories we'll see the immeasurable riches of God's grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:7) Every story will reveal the greatness of His grace.

Peter had gone from asking Jesus to go away from him because he was a sinner (Luke 5:8), to swearing he would stand by Jesus no matter what (Mark 14:29), to denying Christ three times, to a humble three fold restoration. But it didn't end there. God gave him the revelation to take the gospel to the gentiles (Acts 10:34-35), but Paul had to rebuke him for compromising with the legalists and leading others astray. (Galatians 2:11)

Now near the end of his earthly life, he declares that he is just like the rest of us. The only thing that made him special is the same thing that makes you special. He had received a precious faith. He did nothing to earn it. He simply received it!

I wonder how people get by without the precious faith we possess, don't you? We become so dependent on the Lord that we can't imagine how the world endures the trials of life without Jesus.

**Commented [notes7]: John 21:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" EHe said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you. EHe said to him, "Tend my sheep."

**Commented [notes8]: Ephesians 2:1-2 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> And you were dead in the trespasses and sins  
<sup>2</sup> in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience-

**Commented [notes9]: Ephesians 2:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

**Commented [notes10]: Luke 5:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

**Commented [notes11]: Mark 14:29 (ESV)**

<sup>29</sup> Peter said to him, "Even though they all fall away, I will not."

**Commented [notes12]: Acts 10:34-35 (ESV)**

<sup>34</sup> So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality,  
<sup>35</sup> but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.

**Commented [notes13]: Galatians 2:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.

What a precious faith we possess! The lover of our soul who is transforming us has promised to love us to the end. He will never leave us or forsake us. (Hebrews 13:5) He promises to finish the work He started in us and bring us safely into his eternal kingdom. (Philippian 1:6) He promises that He will work all things for our good if we love Him and are called according to His purposes. (Romans 8:28) What a faith!

Peter explains that this faith we have received came by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. Notice that Peter is calling Jesus God. Jesus is our God and Savior. We didn't earn faith. We weren't even seeking God on our own. The Holy Spirit drew us and convicted us and helped us decide to end our rebellion and receive faith and then offer ourselves as living sacrifices. (John 6:44) Though Peter was an Apostle and appointed by Jesus to feed the flock of God, he recognized that was all of God. All believers have the same gracious gift of faith and the same Lord who provided it in the righteous manner of paying our full sin penalty for us on the torturous cross. (Ephesians 2:16)

Peter continues with the same greeting as his first letter, but adds some definition. <sup>2</sup> *May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.* We've seen before that this was the combination of Greek and Jewish greetings, grace and peace. But the Christians put them together with a wonderful new meaning. This was not just grace as in beautiful things, but the most beautiful thing of all, the grace of God being applied to their life. This was not just shalom of health and prosperity, but of peace with God, the absence of the fear of judgment, the freedom to commune with our Creator. (Romans 5:1)

In this letter Paul adds how this abundant grace and peace come our way. It is through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. If you want abundant grace and peace, know God and His only Son, Jesus. **If you are lacking peace, it is because you are lacking the knowledge of Him.** He is the source of grace and peace. I hope one day soon to repeat the sermon series on the character of God, but I'm waiting on the Lord's direction. If we know the nature of God, that He is love (1John 4:8), that His arms are open to the repentant (Isaiah 1:18), that Jesus demonstrated perfectly God's nature (John 14:9), then we can rest in the grace and peace that comes from that knowledge. Know our God and Savior Jesus Christ, and you will know and experience abundant grace and peace.

<sup>3</sup> *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,* In the letter to the Romans, Paul reasoned that if God would not withhold His only Son for our salvation, is there any good thing that He would withhold from us? (Romans 8:32) Peter is telling us

**Commented [notes14]: Hebrews 13:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

**Commented [notes15]: Philippians 1:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

**Commented [notes16]: Romans 8:28 (ESV)**

<sup>28</sup> And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

**Commented [notes17]: John 6:44 (ESV)**

<sup>44</sup> No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.

**Commented [notes18]: Ephesians 2:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

**Commented [notes19]: Romans 5:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Commented [notes20]: 1 John 4:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

**Commented [notes21]: Isaiah 1:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> "Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.

**Commented [notes22]: John 14:9 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

**Commented [notes23]: Romans 8:32 (ESV)**

<sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

that God's power gives us *everything* we need in this life and for godliness. We have no excuses. We can't say that God didn't provide some power we needed. We can never say God failed to give us what we needed to carry out His will. We might say, like the Children of Israel did in the wilderness (Exodus 14:11-12), that God has called us to serve Him but then not provided, but we would be murmuring, ungrateful liars like they were. This verse says "all things"!

Now I want you to notice carefully from where all these things come. They come from the knowledge of Him who called us. Just like grace and peace come from the knowledge of Him, so too, everything we need pertaining to life and godliness come through that same knowledge. **Do you get the feeling that Peter thinks we need to fix our eyes on Jesus?** (Hebrews 11:2) Know Him. Know Him in His word. Know Him in prayer. Know Him in life experiences. Grace and peace and everything we need for life and godliness come from knowing Him. No wonder we keep saying that it isn't a religion; it's a relationship. Do you know Him?

He called us by His own glory and excellence. We didn't one day decide to be holy. (Titus 3:5) It was because of the glorious nature of God, because of His excellent character, that He took you and me and poured out grace on our lives, and called us to a high and holy calling. He had mercy in such abundance that the angels stand in awe. **He turns messes into masterpieces.** He turns rebels into soldiers that lay down their lives. If you want to exhibit some of His glory and excellence, have the same grace and mercy on those who offend you. He has exemplified the meaning by laying down His life for us. (John 13:14)

*<sup>4</sup> by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.* God's grace and excellence also granted to us his precious and very great promises. Not only did He mercifully save us, but He gave us promises we can cling to. I've already gone over some of them. The Scriptures are full of them. We have one right here in the previous verse that He will give us everything we need for life and godliness.

He goes on to say that it is through these precious and very great promises we can become partakers of the divine nature. Those very things we come to know about God can be true in our own lives. Just as we learn of the steadfast love of God, our lives can demonstrate that same love to others. That is partaking in the divine nature. Just as we learn that God's nature is always at peace for He alone is all-powerful and all-knowing, so we can demonstrate that same peace.

**Commented [notes24]: Exodus 14:11-12 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> They said to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt?"

<sup>12</sup> Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians' For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."

**Commented [notes25]: Hebrews 12:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

**Commented [notes26]: Titus 3:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,

**Commented [notes27]: John 13:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

Theologians call this communicable attributes. It's just a fancy way of saying what Peter is saying here, partaking in God's nature. Of course we will never be eternal, or all-knowing, or all-present, or all-powerful, but the nature that results from those abilities can be experienced. (1Peter 1:16) Know Jesus. Realize His precious and very great promises.

**Commented [notes28]: 1 Peter 1:16 (ESV)**  
<sup>16</sup> since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

In Christ, we escape the corruption of the world because of sinful desires. We crucified those desires on the cross with Christ. (Galatians 5:24) We surrendered them to Him when He revealed to us how destructive and deadly they were. We came to realize they were a lie and never really deliver all they promise. We were once enslaved to those passions, but by being a partaker in the divine nature, we see them for what they really are. (Romans 6:6) They have been unmasked and the beautiful façade has melted away to reveal the skull and cross bones underneath. We are free!

**Commented [notes29]: Galatians 5:24 (ESV)**  
<sup>24</sup> And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

What an opening to Peter's letter! What does this have to do with the Last Days? Peter will emphasize the Last Days later in the letter, but it is surely on his mind from the beginning. The Last Days are a time when the world falls headlong into ungodly passions. Lawlessness will prevail. (2Peter 3:17)

**Commented [notes30]: Romans 6:6 (ESV)**  
<sup>6</sup> We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

Someone recently told me one of our local judges said in court that it was no big deal if teenagers drink and smoke pot! Immorality will be sanctioned as normal. Right will be called wrong and wrong will be labeled right. We increasingly see it in the labels the world puts on things. The battle lines are being clearly drawn.

**Commented [notes31]: 2 Peter 3:17 (ESV)**  
<sup>17</sup> You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.

In such a world we need to know the source of grace and peace. It isn't in the world's conditions. It isn't in the success of the church organization. Grace and peace are found in your personal knowledge of your God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Where do we find what we need for life and godliness? His divine nature has given us all that we need for both in the knowledge of Him. How will you be able to take a stand when surrounded by a decaying culture that tempts you at every turn? It's by partaking in the divine nature. And just how do you do that? His glory and goodness have given us precious and very great promises to which we cling. (Psalm 119:11)

**Commented [notes32]: Psalm 119:11 (ESV)**  
<sup>11</sup> I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

These are the things we need to face the Last Days. People are preparing for trouble in all kinds of ways, but **this is God's way to prepare. Know Jesus.** Know Him more today than yesterday. Know His promises. See His grace and excellence that gave the precious and great promises to you, and you'll know Him better. You can spend a fortune preparing physically, but Peter is telling us the only way to really be ready is to ready your heart through your relationship with the Jesus Christ.

Questions

- 1 When did the Last Days begin?
- 2 What are we going to learn in the coming months?
- 3 Are you a trophy of grace?
- 4 How did Peter's greeting change?
- 5 What are some of the precious promises we have received?
- 6 How are grace and peace multiplied to us?
- 7 How do we receive all things pertaining to life and godliness?
- 8 How did we escape from slavery to sin?
- 9 What are the last days like?
- 10 How do we prepare for the last days?