

20:20 Vision Ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning Week 27 (July 2-8, 2017)

The study of the life and ministry of Simon Peter is taking a long time, but this information is vital to your understanding of the gospel. We will complete the study of the apostle's life and ministry in this week's devotions.

Sunday, July 2 (read Acts 10:44-48)

Then Peter said, "Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." (Acts 10:47)

God has a lot to teach His outspoken apostle, but this is important information for us as well. Not only does the Lord not discriminate between persons, but He also is not limited to doing things the same way every time. In Acts 2:38, Peter has already declared in that one verse the order of the plan of salvation. However, God reverses the order by giving the Gentiles the Holy Spirit prior to baptism (v. 47). The lesson for us is this: God is in management! We are in sales! We often expect that He must do the same thing in the same way for everyone. Since He is God, He can reach the lost world anyway He chooses. The Gentiles replicate the Pentecost experience in every way, including speaking in a language unknown to them. God is awesome!

Monday July 3 (read Acts 11:1-18)

"He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved." (Acts 11:14)

Please take the time to read this entire passage, because it contains some vital lessons. First of all, when you do the will of God, the religious establishment will certainly criticize you (v. 1-3). "We have never done it this way before" will echo through the walls of the church. You always need to be ready to explain your actions as directed by God (v. 4-18; see also 1 Peter 3:15-16). Don't miss the message in the printed verse! Cornelius is a good man who does many good works, but those works do not save him (see Acts 10:1-6). Like you, he needs salvation through his belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ! Finally, don't miss the fact that this offer of new life extends to his family as well. Praise the Lord that His offer of salvation extends to your family (see Acts 16:31).

Tuesday, July 4 (read Acts 12:1-5)

So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him. (Acts 12:5)

King Herod has no room in his life for another King, so he brutally persecutes the young Church. James, the brother of John, becomes the first of the apostles to be martyred (v. 1-2). The others, except for John, will follow suit in days to come. Because their goal is to stop this new movement, the Jews rejoice over the persecutions. Seeing this, Herod arrests Peter and places him under heavy guard (v. 3-4). The printed verse introduces the value of intercessory prayer. The government still wants to put a stop to true Christianity. Instead of throwing bricks and looting stores, we are called to pray, not only for Christians, but also for our government. God has granted us a temporary reprieve from aggressive persecution, but it is only for a limited time. As you celebrate Independence Day, spend time on your knees praying for His will to be done in our country and in our world.

Wednesday, July 5 (read Acts 12:6-11)

Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord sent His angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were anticipating." (Acts 12:11)

Instead of being in a state of panic over the trial facing him tomorrow, Peter is sleeping in his prison cell (v. 6). An angel appears and tells him to get up and follow him out of the cell, but Peter thinks he is dreaming or seeing a vision (v. 7-9). Don't miss the fact that the chains fall off and the prison doors open as the apostle obeys the commands of the angel (v. 7, 10). I love the next part in v. 11! Our country is spinning out of control, so I think it's time that Christians "come to themselves." That's why I chose v. 11 to be today's printed verse. Can you say, "Now I know?" If not, what will it take for you to trust God completely? Do you believe that the Lord can deliver you out of the turmoil that you are encountering? Can He deliver Christians out of the world before the Great Tribulation? That is exactly what He will do when He calls His Church home! Can the rapture be far off?

Thursday, July 6 (read Acts 12:12-19)

"You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel." (Acts 12:15)

Free from his prison chains, Peter goes to the home of John Mark, where the church has gathered to pray. A servant girl goes to answer the knock on the door and recognizes Peter's voice, but she is so excited that she fails to open the door (v. 13-14). These people have gathered specifically to ask for Peter's release, and yet, they are amazed that God has actually answered their prayers (v. 15). Isn't that the same today? We ask God to do something that only He can do, but we are skeptical when it actually happens! They finally allow Peter to enter the house and listen as he testifies about the answer to their prayers. He tells them to tell James, the brother of Jesus, about this miracle before he departs to another place (v. 16-17). Just like today, the government cannot understand the mighty power of God (v. 18-19).

Friday, July 7 (read 1 Peter 1:1-2)

Grace and peace be yours in abundance. (1 Peter 2b)

Let's spend the last two days of our study of the Apostle Peter examining what he has learned from his struggles. In today's text, he clearly identifies the entire Trinity, all of which brought him from the dungeon to the pulpit. The foreknowledge of God means that He has seen every deed you will ever do before you do it and He has heard every word you will say before you say it. Therefore, the Father has chosen you to be saved "through the sanctifying work of the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by His blood" (v. 1-2). Once you believe this, grace and peace will be yours, because nothing will enter your life that He has not already seen and no one can harm you before your time as long as you walk in His presence. History records that Peter follows this truth and allows his enemies to crucify him upside down, not feeling worthy to die as his Lord had died. I pray it will bring boldness to you as well.

Saturday, July 8 (read 1 Peter 1:3-9)

Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (1 Peter 1:8-9)

We will conclude our study of the life and experiences of the Apostle Peter with this beautiful passage of praise. Peter emphasizes the joy of the new birth experience as well as the permanence of it. As I often say, "You are saved and kept by His **promise**, not by your **performance**" (v. 3-5). Nothing will ever enter your life without God's permission. This will continue until He reveals the final part of your salvation (v. 5). You will suffer trials and tribulations while you are waiting for His return, but these will only strengthen your faith (v. 6-7). Just continue to walk by faith, not by sight until He completes the process of sanctification within you when He calls you home. The best is yet to come!