



In today's passage, the Apostle Peter is once again preparing us for progress on our journey of faith. He counsels us to not be caught off guard by suffering and set backs, as though this should be something strange to our experience as followers of Jesus. We should expect and be prepared for struggles, suffering and pain along the way. Then in verse 13, Peter flips the mindset from human to Christ-centered. He unveils the idea that we are to rejoice when our participation provides us a glimpse into the suffering of Jesus so that we can understand more fully and be overjoyed when Jesus' glory is revealed through God's work in the world.

*What do you think Peter meant when he said "the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you"? How do you feel about this blessing?*

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**GPS for Families***GrowPrayStudy.org/family*

God loves us deeply, just as we are. He can reveal his grace to others through our weaknesses. This is important for children to understand. In a world where identity is driven by culture, giving a child a God-based identity can change their lives forever. If we can build into them a knowing of God's love for them that is there regardless of what they do or say, it can give them a very strong foundation.

If you have young children, teach them the *Jesus Loves Me* song. If they already know it, recite the words or sing it together and talk about what it means that "they are weak, but He is strong." With older kids, read 2 Corinthians 12:1-10 and discuss why Paul would "delight" in his weakness. Give an example from your own life where you struggle. Maybe it is a fear of speaking or a weight issue or a tendency to procrastinate. Then explain that though you pray and strive to overcome this weakness, it is an area where you must rely on God's strength. We all try to be more like Jesus, but God loves us even when we fail. His grace is enough.

*Jesus loves me, this I know.**For the Bible tells me so.**Little ones to Him belong.**They are weak, but He is strong.**Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes Jesus loves me. Yes Jesus loves me.**The Bible tells me so.*

MESSAGE "Getting Past the Wall"

SCRIPTURE James 2:26

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What is your wall made of?

What will it take to get past it?

## PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

*Holy and loving God, I want to experience you in my life. I know that you have been pursuing a relationship with me because you love me. Today, Lord, I pray that you would give me eyes to see you at work, ears to hear your invitation to join you and the courage to follow your leading in my life. I am no longer my own, God. I am yours. I offer you this prayer in Jesus' name. AMEN.*

James makes bold statements about faith and deeds. In today’s passage, he points out that the development of our faith is revealed by our deeds. Because he is writing to a Jewish audience of Christians, we would say he is clearly pointing to the kinds of deeds and actions that were modeled by Jesus, which not only included acts of compassion and sacrifice for others but also complete devotion to God.

Martin Luther, the great Reformation theologian, said, “We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone.”

*Reflect on the scripture as well as Luther’s statement, especially “but the faith that saves is never alone.” In what ways do they inspire you to set aside perceived barriers that may have stalled your faith development so that you are more open to join with God in his work in the world?*

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In the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, the writer retells the story of many heroes and saints of the Old Testament who he now sees in chapter 12 surrounding us and cheering us on as we journey toward the goal. That goal is Jesus who knows well our human experiences. He is the one cheering us on more than any other!

The writer challenges us to “throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles” so that we can keep moving forward on our journey toward a life of growing faith and increasing participation with God’s action in the world.

*Take some time to evaluate and list things that are hindering you from moving forward. Ask God to help you change these things, then take time to quietly listen for what God’s Spirit has to say.*

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Have you ever felt as though you have no great talent, ability or story to share in the church so you should just sit back and observe rather than participate or lead? Everyone has felt this way at times. Jesus has provided a reminder in today’s passage of what God will do through anyone who has faith and remains open to the Holy Spirit’s guidance. He invites us to rely on the Holy Spirit, who he sent to unify us to be his Church. Through this communion, God provides power to bless and influence the world. Through faith, we do not depend on our own abilities. Instead, we depend on the Holy Spirit’s abilities.

*How have you limited your participation with God in the world by lacking faith that God will provide the abilities you’ll need to join in what he’s doing?*

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The Apostle Peter not only challenges us today to prepare ourselves for action, he also tells us how to be prepared for it. He encourages us to be self-controlled, to set our hope fully on the grace of Jesus, to be obedient and to resist evil. He sums this up by pointing to God’s call on our lives to “be holy, because I am holy.” We are to strive to live with influence in the physical world and, yet, be set apart from darkness in the spiritual world.

*How have you already been preparing yourself to join with God in his work in the world? How intentional have you been about these things? Take time to reflect and listen to what God’s Spirit has to say, then write down any new steps you sense God is leading you to consider.*

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