

Life Group Notes 9/18/2022
Mark Warren Peter's Epistles Week 7

If these notes are useful to you, and you've enjoyed them, or if you have observations or questions feel free send me an email with your comment or observations at tbeachhead@comcast.net.—Pete Mehegan, the Scribe.

(This is written to give you good things to enjoy, because look again at what Paul told Timothy (1 Tim 6:17-18)! I think he was thinking of us at the time: **17 Instruct those who are rich in the present age not to be conceited and not to put their hope in the uncertainty of wealth, but in God, WHO RICHLY PROVIDES ALL THINGS TO ENJOY. 18 Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, and to be generous and ready to share...**)

The following ice breaker is just a starter for your group. The message comes after the bar. Please be obedient and enjoy!

CROWD BREAKER Welcome to Life Group! What strikes you most about GCC? How long have you been coming? What keeps you coming back?

Note: Be good to one another. Be sensitive and kind. Let God heal our hearts...and guide our discussions. **PLEASE PRE-READ THESE NOTES AND CHOOSE THE DIRECTION THAT IS APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR GROUP. The purpose is to unite, not divide; to proclaim fearlessly the freedom the gospel brings. Any part of these notes might be appropriate as a crowd breaker for your own group. The goal is to create memories from Sunday that will serve for a long time. BE COGNIZANT OF YOUR GROUP'S TIME AND BE SENSITIVE! Some groups would like to dwell on a single idea. Let the Spirit be your guide. Never feel obligated to complete this study. This study is also a great devotion, taken slowly through the week.**

Note: I have highlighted suggested discussion questions Pastor Mark has raised this week, 9/18. Let's allow the Holy Spirit to guide all our discussions, using the highlights as trail blazes. **The purpose is to minister to one another.**

Today's topics...

1. Is hell real?
2. Is transgenderism "OK" with God?
3. Is looking at pornography harmless?

Look up Matthew 24 ³While Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age?"

⁴Jesus answered, "See to it that no one deceives you. ⁵For many will come in My name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. **Can you name any? Were many led astray? Why?**

2 Peter 2 Deliverance from False Prophets

(Cross reference: [Jude 1:3-16](#))

1 Now there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. **How many “false prophets among the people” can you name?**

They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. **What was the damage to the people?**

2 Many will follow in their depravity, and because of them the way of truth will be defamed. **3** In their greed, these false teachers will exploit you with deceptive words. **Was that damage contained? Again, compare this “many” with what Jesus foretold. How is the damage contained?**

The longstanding verdict against them remains in force, and their destruction does not sleep. **Why are they allowed? Is there a purpose to these false prophets? What did Jesus forewarn us of? What did Paul forewarn the Ephesian elders of? (Look up Acts 20)”** **28** Keep watch over yourselves and the entire flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood. **29** I know that after my departure, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. **30** Even from your own number, men will rise up and distort the truth to draw away disciples after them. **31** Therefore be alert and remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

32 And now I commit you to God and to the word of His grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all who are sanctified.” **Where were the “wolves?” How did they operate? How are they recognized? Why tears? What is the remedy Paul commits them to? Compare the deceived in the three passages we’ve read. How were they drawn away? Why does Jesus tell us we will be judged by “every idle word we speak?” (Mt 12: 36-37) Why do our words matter so much in these days?**

4 For if God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them deep into hell, (**See scribe’s notes below on the “angels who sinned.”**) Placing them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment; **When did that happen? (See below.)** **5** if He did not spare the ancient world when He brought the flood on its ungodly people, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, among the eight; **When did that happen?** **6** if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction reducing them to ashes as an example of what is coming on the ungodly; **7** and if He rescued Lot, a righteous man distressed by the depraved conduct of the lawless **8** (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard) **When did that happen?**— **9** if all this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment. **Is all of this so? How comforting is it to know that rescue is promised? (Quick recall from last week: Are “the godly” the godly by virtue of their perfection, or by virtue of their growth? Who is getting rescued?)**

10 Such punishment is specially reserved for those who indulge the corrupt desires of the flesh and despise authority. **Look again: Who gets punished? (Scribe’s note: the verbs “indulge” and “despise” are both present participles, indicating ongoing and repetitive**

action. They do not imply a moment or an incident, but a habit.) What are they doing to get punished? What does it mean to “despise authority?” What are these doing instead of submitting and obeying?

Where is hell? What is hell? (See below.) If there is no hell and no judgment, what is the point of salvation through faith in the cross? What is the point of the cross if there is no hell?

Pastor Mark says, “For me, [the principles of] transgenderism [are] such a horrible lie. When somebody says, ‘I am not what God made me to be,’ that is a blasphemy.” **Why do you think he says this so strongly? Can you understand his view? What is being blasphemed? Have you ever been taught that “God makes mistakes, but Science can correct those mistakes?” Who is defining “mistake” in that statement? Does God make mistakes? Does nature get corrupted? Is there a difference? (Please be careful and loving here, and move on or pray for wisdom if pain needs ministry.)**

Pastor Mark says, “The one who is telling you such thinking is ‘OK’ would be a false prophet. Such thinking is not true.” **Do you agree? How do you respond safely?** Bold and self-willed, they are unafraid to slander glorious beings.¹¹ Yet not even angels, though greater in strength and power, dare to bring such slanderous charges against them before the Lord. **What are some characteristics of these who are being judged? What is their source of authority in their claims of right/wrong and good/evil? Where do you see such people operating today? Why is today a good day to be sober-minded? Why is GCC a good place to have struggles?**

Who are “the glorious beings?” Is it safe to blaspheme something you do not know, knowing now that not even angels bring charges against them? What is Peter’s warning here? Why is it a good thing not to speak sometimes?

Look up 1 Corinthians 10:23 “I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but not everything is constructive. Is Paul actually saying “EVERYTHING” is lawful? How do you know he is not? Why does the Law of Love make demands that go beyond the letter? What is the limit to my “rights?” Who comes first?

¹²These men are like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be captured and destroyed. They blaspheme in matters they do not understand, and like such creatures, they too will be destroyed. ¹³The harm they will suffer is the wages of their wickedness. **What physical consequences do these open themselves up to? Are there new diseases added to new corruption?**

They consider it a pleasure to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deception as they feast with you. ¹⁴Their eyes are full of adultery; their desire for sin is never satisfied; they seduce the unstable. They are accursed children with hearts trained in greed. **What is included in this lifestyle? How addictive is this lifestyle? Is there a way out?** Mark points out that we are not wrestling with flesh and blood, but with principalities. **Look up Ephesians 6: 12** For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this world’s darkness, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Now look up 2 Corinthians 10: 4 The weapons of our warfare are not the weapons of the world. Instead, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.
5We tear down arguments and every presumption set up against the knowledge of God; and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.... **Can you name the strongholds, as Peter describes them above? Why are “strongholds” made up of arguments, presumptions, thoughts and imaginations? (What ultimately motivates a person to act, for better or for worse? What inspires thoughts and imaginations?) What destroys thoughts and imagination? Imagine effective weapons against these strongholds. What do they look like?**

15They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness. **16**But he was rebuked for his transgression by a donkey, otherwise without speech, that spoke with a man’s voice and restrained the prophet’s madness. (See notes on Balaam below.)

17These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them. **18**With lofty but empty words, they appeal to the sensual passions of the flesh and entice those who are just escaping from others who live in error.

Mark says, “They promise, ‘You can be what ever you want to be.’ You don’t have to be constrained by that traditional box. The traditional church. You don’t have to fall under the authority of God’s word. How do you really know.” **Have you heard this? Can you make the connection to this warning? How timely is Peter’s warning?** Mark points to Adam and Eve in the garden. “I can be like God, knowing Good and Evil?” **How did they “know” evil the moment they disobeyed? How was satan’s lie in the garden made up of half-truths? How did believing the lie bring bondage to the rest of creation?**

19They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves to depravity. For a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.**20**If indeed they have escaped the corruption of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, only to be entangled and overcome by it again, their final condition is worse than it was at first. **21**It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than to have known it and then to turn away from the holy commandment passed on to them. **22**Of them the proverbs are true: “A dog returns to its vomit,” and, “A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud.” . **What happens to the backslider, once saved, who returns to their addiction? Is there any cause for hope? See notes on freedom below.**

Take a moment and look up how Paul describes these people to the Romans in Romans 1

24Therefore God gave them over in the desires of their hearts to impurity for the dishonoring of their bodies with one another. **25**They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is forever worthy of praise! Amen.

26For this reason God gave them over to dishonorable passions. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. **27**Likewise, the men abandoned natural relations with women and burned with lust for one another. Men committed

indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.

28 Furthermore, since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, He gave them up to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. *29* They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and malice. They are gossips, *30* slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant, and boastful. They invent new forms of evil; they disobey their parents. *31* They are senseless, faithless, heartless, merciless.

32 Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things are worthy of death, they not only continue to do these things, but also approve of those who practice them.

Do you see similarities? What do you see? What are the specific characteristics of last-days rebellion that differ from previous generations? What new forms of evil have been invented?

and to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3: *1* But understand this: In the last days terrible times will come. *2* For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, *3* unloving, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, without love of good, *4* traitorous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, *5* having a form of godliness but denying its power. Turn away from such as these!

6 They are the kind who worm their way into households and captivate vulnerable women who are weighed down with sins and led astray by various passions, *7* who are always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. (See Scribe's notes below on women.)

8 Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose the truth. They are depraved in mind and disqualified from the faith. *9* But they will not advance much further. For just like Jannes and Jambres, their folly will be plain to everyone.

What do you see here? How can we know these are the last days? (Scribe's note: Jannes and Jambres were the names traditionally ascribed to Pharaoh's magicians who opposed Moses before Pharaoh, and reproduced the first miraculous signs that Moses issued when confronting Pharaoh.)

Pastor Mark says, "So often, the reality of the hurting in an individual points to something is crying out for peace in our own lives, and the reality is that this will respond to God's grace, God's goodness...God's forgiveness." Applying this principle to pornography, Mark says it points to the same issues. The church has a tendency to pick certain issues and magnify them over others. They'll intimate pornography is "relatively harmless," but the reality is opposite. Pornography is not harmless at all. It is indicative of a war on the soul, and it is the same struggle as any of those previously mentioned. ***(See the passages above. How does pornography fit in to Romans 1, 1 Timothy and Peter's descriptions of the last days?)***

Pastor Mark says, "Sexual pleasure was intended to be bound to the intimate relationships of a marriage." (**Ask yourselves, "How is the goodness of God revealed in this statement?"**) When you take any one of these issues outside the covenant relationship, the risk is bondage. Mark says, "But let me tell you, the struggle is not the concern. The reality is, we will have ongoing struggles with this for the rest of our lives. The struggle, because we are flesh and blood, begins when the struggle stops. It's when you begin to justify what you do, and accept it as justifiable. And then you look for those false prophets who will tell you what you want to hear, because there are those prophets who will tell you what you want to hear. They will speak blasphemous words against everything holy. They will not acknowledge authority. They will submit to the message of the world and the flesh. You will recognize these voices. Run far and fast, and refuse to listen." **Where does the truth come from? Why be in the Word of God?**

What struck you most in today's message?

Take the time to pray.

Scribe's notes:

On *The Book of Enoch* and "the angels who sinned": Along with the manuscripts of scripture, what are called the Roman Catholic apocrypha and the recopied manuscripts of the New Testament, one of the spiritual "best sellers" of the apostles' day was a book called "*The Book of Enoch*" pseudepigraphically ascribed to Enoch, the fifth in line from Adam, who "walked with God," and was, with Elijah, one of two who did not die but were taken away. The book, being well-known, was also often quoted as it is here in Peter's epistle. It contains a concise account of the sin of "the sons of God" who mated with the daughters of man before the flood (Genesis 6), and the disasters which that sin brought on...as the angelic perpetrators were punished.

More on angels and their judgment in hell:

Tartarus, used only in Peter's letter in the NT, but used three times in the Greek *Septuagint* (The Greek translation of the OT, called the LXX for its seventy translators), is a Greek name for the *under-world*, especially the abode of the *damned* – hence *to cast into hell*" (A-S); to send into the *subterranean abyss* reserved for *demons and the dead*. [2. Words of Hell, Tartarus and Gehenna Answers in Hell](#) [In Greek mythology, Tartarus was a "place of punishment under the earth, to which, for example, the Titans were sent" (Souter).] This abyss is where the "angels that sinned" are held.

It is one of three words translated "hell" in English. *Tartarus*, according to the above article, is "the deep" or "the deepest most part of the underworld" from where the waters were released at Noah's flood. It's that place that has no end to depth, no bottom, hence that feeling of continuous fall. Though it is only found in Peter, the word "*Gehenna*" is found elsewhere in the New Testament. It depicts unending torment and fire, as Isaiah describes in the last chapter of Isaiah, "where the worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched." The name *Gehenna* is Hebrew for the Valley of Hinnom, a usually dry riverbed outside the Gate Beautiful in Jerusalem. This is where Ahaz and Manasseh,

kings of Judah, and descendants of David, brought condemnation on the nation by burning their innocent sons on the altar. Jeremiah also refers to this place as “Tophet,” and it is forever associated with the fires of hell, as it was defiled with garbage and refuse and perpetual burning as an acknowledgement of the sins of Ahaz and Manasseh. The third word that is used in both Old and New Testaments is *Sheol*, a Hebrew word that evokes the place of rest for the soul until the Day of the Lord. Samuel is called from his rest by the witch at En-Dor to speak to Samuel. Jesus describes this place as that where the rich man is in torment on one side of a chasm, while Lazarus is cradled in “Abraham’s bosom.”

On the signs in Matthew 24: **6**You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. These things must happen, but the end is still to come. **7**Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. **8**All these are the beginning of birth pains. **9**Then they will deliver you over to be persecuted and killed, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. **10**At that time many will fall away and will betray and hate one another, **11**and many false prophets will arise and mislead many.

12Because of the multiplication of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold. **13**But the one who perseveres to the end will be saved.

14And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. **How many of these signs can you see today?**

On misguided women: : In 2 Timothy 3, Paul speaks specifically of “weak-willed women, easily misguided, who are ever-learning and never coming to a knowledge of the truth.” (the adjectives “ever-learning” and “never-coming” are feminine) In height of the Charismatic movement, it was not unusual to encounter many who claimed to be “led” to do strange and unfruitful things. At one point, pastors were warning of “led poisoning.” **Does this description apply only to women in your experience? Or have you seen this phenomenon in others? In yourself? Care to share a time when you were mis-“led”?**

Notes on Balaam: Numbers 22-24 and 25 Balaam is a prophet of the most-High God, whose prophecies concerning Israel stand as among the most powerful in the Old Testament, and yet he is described in the New Testament as a false prophet. Full details are found in the above chapters, but here are some highlights to ponder.

Balaam is invited by Balak to come curse Israel in the name of God Most High, and Balaam asks God for permission. God says, “No!” to Balaam the first time, so Balaam responds, “No,” to Balak’s messengers. They do not relent, and come to him a second time, and this second time, Balaam is given permission to go, “...and say everything and only what I tell you to say.” Balaam agrees to go, and promises only to speak as he is instructed by God to speak. On the way, God attempts to kill Balaam by the Angel of the Lord (exactly as God tried to kill Moses on his way back to Egypt! His wife protected him.), but his donkey protects him, explaining his

actions in human speech. Then Balaam pronounces his memorable prophecies and goes back home. According to Numbers 25, Balaam comes back, and teaches the Moabites how to entice the Israelites by using Moabite daughters to draw them into sexual immorality and idolatry. **Connect this to the failures Peter describes.**

Notes on freedom and slavery and loss of salvation: . 19b *For a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.* This is a recurring theme throughout scripture, and is not exclusive to Peter.

Jesus begins in John 8:34 "Truly, truly, I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin." Paul, likewise, acknowledges the truth in Romans 6:16 "Do you not know that when you offer yourselves as obedient slaves, you are slaves to the one you obey, whether you are slaves to sin leading to death, or to obedience leading to righteousness?" But with this theme is a recurring hope expressed by Paul, whose own testimony is a shared wealth of the knowledge of ultimate deliverance: To Titus, he says, "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, *and* hating one another." He knew the bondage, which is why his exhortation to the Romans in chapter 6 becomes all the more powerful: "Don't allow sin therefore to reign in your flesh, that you should obey the lusts that come from it..." Paul speaks as if we have the ultimate choice as to whom we obey as slaves: sin unto judgment or righteousness unto freedom.

That's why Peter, in the previous chapter, told us we are to add virtue to our faith before we even gain knowledge. We must acknowledge in our behavior that we are under "new management."

Jesus continued in John 8, and showed us how to apply Peter's methodology to our growth. The whole chapter needs to find room in our hearts and minds, but where freedom, especially, is in focus, the key to freedom is found. Jesus said, 31... "If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." **What is the methodology Jesus suggests? What does it mean to abide/dwell in His Word? Where will your own thoughts rest when you abide in His Word? What do you need to do to fulfill these instructions? Do you have a testimony to share?**

34 Jesus replied, "Truly, truly, I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. **To whom is Jesus referring when He says "...everyone?" Why "a slave?" Does a slave do what he wills, or what another wills?**

35 A slave is not a permanent member of the family, but a son belongs to it forever. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. **How free is "free indeed." What are the outward signs of that kind of freedom? Do you have a testimony? Do you have something to look forward to? What is the next step to your own "free indeed" freedom?**

Now answer these questions: If you were free and became a slave, did you lose your freedom? Can you understand why your own freedom is more important today than your "salvation?" What are the steps to restoring lost freedom? Why is returning to vomit not recommended a step?