

PATTERSON FAMILY PRAYER LETTER (Sept. 1, 2017)

Dear Friends in Christ, *at Sterling Bazaar,*

Greeting in the grace and peace of our Lord! Once again, thank you for taking time to read my Prayer Letter and to join me in praise and prayer to our faithful Lord for what he is doing in my ministry. Here are some things that I would ask you to praise God for and pray with me concerning:

- Recently the 20+ men that I have been leading through the "Living by the Book" class on principles and methods of Bible study finished that course. I gave them a month to finish the homework, some of which I gave them and some of which came with the course. The course has 3 "levels" of homework. I only required them to do at least "level one" to "pass". I strongly encouraged them to go deeper and do more. They are now, a few each week, turning in their completed folders. I wish you could see the amazing work of some of these men! They are doing all three levels and all I gave them with clarity, accuracy, thoroughness and neatness! Some of them are "keeping on" with the text book and further study even after they've turned in their excellent work and received their certificate. It has been a great joy and blessing to work with this group of men! Praise the Lord!
- Two more "favorite" students in my minimum security weekly Bible study have just been released. Tyler and Tim have both been a joy to teach and work with! Please pray for the difficult "transition period" of their journey to full usefulness, joy and fruitfulness on the outside!
- The medium security weekly Bible study continues to go well. On this medium side, we will soon begin a new season of Bible Quizzing. We will be Quizzing chapter by chapter through 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John. The men seem eager and enthused. Praise God for this ministry "tool" which will get His Word into more hearts and minds! Pray for another good year with the Bible Quizzing ministry in the prison!
- We are also starting a new Bible Quizzing season with students from the surrounding area on the outside of the prison. Pray with us for another great year in this Bible Quizzing season as well!
- In my weekly preaching and teaching ministry both at the Fairfield church and at the prison, I am continuing to lead us through the Gospel of John, verse by verse. We are now in John 18. In a way that is powerfully fresh to my own mind and heart, the Lord is teaching me precious truths from the hard and heart-breaking experience of Peter on the evening prior to our Lord's crucifixion. For your own encouragement and edification, consider a few lessons that greatly instruct and encourage me. I believe they will do the same for men in the prison and for you as well:
 1. Pride sets us up for a fall. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all record Peter's arrogant boasting!
 2. Instead of watching and praying against coming temptation, Peter slept with "self" and its carnal confidence still "unbroken"! Jesus' warnings and Words still did not grip him and govern him!
 3. Grace flows to the humble but not to the self-confident. Peter talked when he should have listened. He fought with a sword when he should have scattered and fled at Jesus Word. (The way that to temperament, emotion and circumstance "seems right" most often isn't right!)

4. Peter, "in the flesh", boldly attacked the soldiers! Then he caved in to fear and denied the Lord (whom he had boasted he would go to prison and death for!) He did so shamefully before some servant girls and onlookers! Three times - the last even with swearing and curses!
 5. But Jesus, Who had forewarned of this and had assured Peter of His prayers, loved him still! From a bloodied and buffeted Face, He gave Peter the Look of wounded but unforgettable grace!
 6. At that same time, Peter heard the predicted crowing of the cock! His heart broke! He ran! His tears spoke his contrition! His soul poured out its cries of confession! Alone in the darkness, he fully repented. By the Lord's promised intercession and grace, He was fully forgiven!
 7. The Lord restored him to full fellowship and service! As a properly broken-of-pride and humbled man, he was never the same again! See him in his courageous service and trials in the book of Acts! Read his marvelous letters to the church! "Failure", for him, was his "doorway" to success! By amazing grace he was teachable and humble and was made stronger in faith!
 8. We also can be "successful failures"! The faith our Lord gives may falter; but it cannot really fail for He is its author! And He will keep us by grace and will nourish our faith, by His Word especially, and by trials that He sends or allows to come our way!
 9. Each time we stumble and falter, His Spirit prompts us to remember; and to repent and return; and to humble ourselves and relearn! More deeply than ever His Spirit leads us to surrender, and to cleave to our Lord, our great and loving Savior!
 10. Our Lord only "levels" us that He may lovingly "lift" us! He brings us to fuller growth on higher ground! Let us therefore not despise His chastening or the fiery trials that are all an essential part of His plan!
- * So much more could be said, but space forbids. God bless you as you ponder and learn from Peter's experience!
- And thank you so much for reading my letter and for your prayers and encouragement and support! God bless and keep you and yours!

With you in the "schoolroom" (with its "tests"!) and the service of our Savior and Lord,

Dean

Dean Patterson and family, I Pet. 1:3-8; 4:7,12-13