

Take-Home • Session Seven

The Fiery Ordeal • 1 Peter 4:1-19

What We Found

The fire planted in week one arrived in person, and Peter's counsel was to stop being surprised by it: the ordeal is the assayer's furnace on schedule, proving rather than punishing. We found the community's survival kit: unfailing love that covers a multitude of sins, ungrudging hospitality, and gifts held as stewards of God's varied grace rather than owners. Suffering for the Name is participation in Christ's own sufferings, with the Spirit of glory resting on the reproached. And Ezekiel 9 stood behind the hardest verse: there the judgment was commanded to begin at the sanctuary, with those nearest God answering first. Peter takes up that pattern, and for the household of God the present ordeal is a refining judgment, severe but merciful, before the far worse reckoning that awaits those who reject the gospel. The chapter's last word: do right, and entrust your soul to a faithful Creator.

Voices of the Church

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St. Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258), *Letters from the Persecution*

Writing to a Church under imperial edict, St. Cyprian exhorts his people that the soldier of Christ trained in Christ's camp should not fear the battle but recognize in it his hour of glory, for the Lord watches the contest and crowns the perseverance he himself has strengthened. Bishop of a persecuted flock and finally a martyr himself, he reads suffering exactly as 1 Peter 4 does: expected, proving, and crowned.

Voices of the Church

St. Basil the Great (d. 379), *Homily on the Words of Luke, "I Will Pull Down My Barns"*

St. Basil preaches that what you have received beyond your need has been entrusted to you for others: the bread you store belongs to the hungry, the cloak in your closet to the naked. It is the sternest patristic statement of 1 Peter 4:10's principle: you are a steward of God's varied grace, not its owner, and gifts hoarded are gifts embezzled.

Voices of the Church

St. Thérèse of Lisieux (1873-1897), *Story of a Soul*

The Little Flower teaches that great trials rarely come, but little ones come daily, and that love proves itself in bearing pinpricks with joy: the cold remark, the thankless task, the small humiliation offered to God become fuel for love. She is the Doctor of 4:12-13 for people whose fiery ordeal arrives not as an

arena but as a Tuesday.

Live It This Week

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This week: (1) Memorize 1 Peter 4:12-13. (2) Each morning, offer the day's smallest suffering, the cold remark, the thankless task, aloud to God, St. Thérèse's little way of 4:13. (3) Cover one offense: choose a small personal slight, forgive it fully, and tell no one. (Love covers minor offenses; forgiveness never means concealing abuse, crime, or danger, and it never replaces necessary reporting or healthy boundaries.) (4) Deploy one stored gift for someone in this group before we meet again.

Scripture Memory

"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you to prove you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice in so far as you share Christ's sufferings" (1 Peter 4:12-13, RSV2CE)

Before next session: Read 1 Peter 5:1-14 before Session Eight.

Go deeper in the Catechism: CCC 951; 1521; 1808