



“Rejoice with Joy Unspeakable and Full of Glory”

Show Notes & Transcripts

Podcast General Description:

Follow Him: A *Come, Follow Me* Podcast with Hank Smith & John Bytheway

Do you ever feel that preparing for your weekly *Come, Follow Me* lesson falls short? Join hosts Hank Smith and John Bytheway as they interview experts to make your study for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ *Come, Follow Me* course not only enjoyable but original and educational. If you are looking for resources to make your study fresh, faithful, and fun--no matter your age--then join us every Wednesday.

Podcast Episode Descriptions:

Part 1:

How do we find joy amidst trials? Dr. Andrew Skinner explores the admonitions Peter shares with the Ancient Saints that apply to modern-day Latter-day Saints to help prepare for lives as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Part 2:

Dr. Andrew Skinner examines the stepladder of faith, virtue, temperance, and charity through 2 Peter and the transformative power in living the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Timecodes:

Part 1

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- 03:52 Introduction of Dr. Andrew Skinner
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- 07:47 Peter the man
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- 18:40 Peter and Jesus lifting our brothers and sisters
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- 1:01:45 End of Part 1–Dr. Andrew Skinner

Part 2

- 00:00 Part II– Dr. Andrew Skinner
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- 04:08 2 Peter introduction
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- 38:56 The Second Coming of Jesus
- 43:18 What manner of men and women ought we to be?
- 45:23 Endure to the end in joy
- 48:18 End of Part II– Dr. Andrew Skinner

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Biographical Information:



Andrew C. Skinner was a professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University when this was written. Born and raised in Colorado, he earned his BA degree in history from the University of Colorado. He then earned an MA degree from the Iliff School of Theology in Jewish studies and a ThM degree from Harvard in biblical Hebrew. He did graduate work at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He earned a PhD from the University of Denver in Near Eastern and European history specializing in Judaism.

Skinner taught for four years at Ricks College and has filled three assignments at the BYU Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies, where he served as a faculty member and taught Near Eastern studies. He has served as director of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, dean of Religious Education, and chair of the Department of Ancient Scripture. He is the author or coauthor of over one hundred publications, including *Jerusalem: The Eternal City*; *New Testament Apostles Testify of Christ*; *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert: The Unidentified Fragments from Qumran Cave 4* (an analysis of all the unidentified Hebrew and Aramaic Dead Sea Scroll texts); *Scriptural Parables for the Latter Days*; and *Gethsemane*.

He served a full time mission for the LDS Church from 1970 to 1972 in the California Central Mission and served as branch president at the Missionary Training Center in Provo. He has also served as a bishop in Colorado and Utah and as a member of the Correlation Evaluation Committee of the Church.

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Hank Smith:	00:00:01	Hello, my friends. Welcome to another episode of followHIM. My name is Hank Smith. I'm your host. I'm here with who I'll describe as my co-host without guile, John Bytheway. John, you are without guile my friend.
John Bytheway:	00:00:19	I can go get it. It's in the car, I just forgot. Press pause.
Hank Smith:	00:00:22	You can go get the guile that you are without today. John, today we're going to have a flashback of someone we haven't talked about in a while. The apostle prophet Peter. We're looking at 1 and 2 Peter today. What are you looking forward to, John?
John Bytheway:	00:00:39	I've been thinking about how different this Peter sounds than 30 years ago Peter from the Gospels and how there's a lot of beauty in this text. I've been reading, as you have, preparing to talk about sublime the way that he's describing things, so I'm looking forward to seeing how has Peter changed in the decades since we read about him walking on water and at the Mount of Transfiguration and so forth.
Hank Smith:	00:01:03	Yeah, that's excellent. Excellent, John. I was reading it, it seems the people who he is writing to are facing some difficult, difficult circumstances, so I'm interested to see what his advice is. John, we are joined by someone who you and I both love, maybe one of the best scriptionians in the history of the church, incredible research and teaching over decades. His name is Dr. Andrew Skinner. Andy, what are we looking forward to today in 1 and 2 Peter?
Dr. Andrew Skinner:	00:01:33	First of all, let me say thank you for allowing me the privilege of testifying of things and people that I truly love. Peter is one of the great men of the kingdom of all time. I love to study the life and teachings of Peter. 1 and 2 Peter, I have to say, in all honesty, if there were ever two books written anciently that are of invaluable service to members of the church and to really all Christians everywhere in our day, it has to be 1 and 2 Peter. One of the major themes, in fact, the theme, I think, of 1 Peter is Peter's desire to provide some principles, some counsel, some encouragement on how to persevere when we bump up against

hard times. Trials and tribulations come to all of us. Peter is trying to help the ancient saints, but in so doing helps the modern saints to see how we can not just endure our trials and tribulations but spiritually prosper in them, and then ministering to the theme of 2 Peter is the idea of becoming God-like in every sense of the word, and one actually follows the other.

00:02:57 We learn about how to persevere in our trials and all of that is to bring us to the point where we can actually have our calling and election made sure, and that is a major point that Peter talks about in 2 Peter. I think we're all familiar with the statement that was made by the prophet Joseph Smith, where he said that Peter had penned the most sublime language of any of the apostles. That's pretty high praise coming from the prophet of the Restoration. Buckle our seat belts, we're in for some really exciting things, some spiritually uplifting things. Yes, it was in the first instance written to the ancient saints, but wow, the lessons that we can learn that apply in our lives in modern times are just invaluable.

Hank Smith: 00:03:52 Wonderful. I am looking forward to this today. John, I said that we've got one of the best in the history of the church here. I don't think that's overstating it.

Dr. Andrew Skinner: 00:04:01 Can I just say it is way overstating it.

Hank Smith: 00:04:06 We don't mind a little modesty on here. John and I could learn from your humility, Andy, John especially is a difficult time. John, the bio here could be our first episode, so we're going to have to probably shrink it down, but tell our listeners about Dr. Andrew Skinner.

John Bytheway: 00:04:26 Andrew C. Skinner, former Dean of Religious Education at Brigham Young University, a former executive director, professor of ancient scripture, member of the International Editorial Group translating the Dead Sea Scrolls. He's the author of the acclaimed three volume series. I have it right over there, Gethsemane, Golgotha and the Garden Tomb, and I love those three G words. He holds Master's degrees from the Iliff School of Theology and Harvard University in Hebrew Bible and Theology and a PhD in History from the University of Denver. He pursued graduate studies at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, later served on the faculty of the BYU Jerusalem Center. He served as a member of the Correlation Evaluation Committee and the General Sunday School Committee of the church. He is currently in a branch presidency at the Missionary Training Center. He's married to Janet Corbridge Skinner. They're the

parents of six children, and you'll have to update us on grandchildren.

- Dr. Andrew Skinner: 00:05:31 10 grandchildren.
- John Bytheway: 00:05:32 Wonderful. What a wonderful background and what a wonderful scholar to learn from today, grateful to have you. And you were with us in, was it Exodus in the Old Testament?
- Dr. Andrew Skinner: 00:05:42 Yes.
- Hank Smith: 00:05:43 I've talked about this a couple of times this year. followHIM has produced a book called Finding Jesus Christ in the Old Testament, excerpts from our Old Testament episodes. Let me share it from Andy last year. We were talking about Exodus and he said, "This is our family history. We can't forget we are talking about us here. We are part of this family. We ourselves are part of the Israelite community, this is our story." That actually ties into what Peter is going to say a couple of times today, we are part of the Israelite community.
- Dr. Andrew Skinner: 00:06:15 We are indeed. We come to appreciate by reading 1 and 2 Peter. What the gospel is intended to do is to link us to the family of Israel, whether we're the ancient audience of Peter or the modern audience of Peter, we're all one group of people and my Jewish friends are right in reminding me that when we talk about the chosen people, it's not a chosenness of privilege or elitism. It's a chosenness of responsibility to help each other and to guide those who may not be so spiritually inclined back to their father in heaven and heavenly Father's family.
- 00:06:57 I thank you for that laudatory introduction, probably written years ago by my mother and somehow slipped into the dust jacket. We have a saying in our family that really helps with people's perspective and the saying is, "Thanks for all you do and all you think you do." I wonder if it would be helpful to talk a little bit about what we know regarding Peter in the context of coming to his own testimony. I think it helps us to appreciate the magnitude of the man that we're talking about, one of the great people of the kingdom.
- Hank Smith: 00:07:39 Absolutely. We see Peter going from fishermen to this seer. It's a pretty incredible story.
- Dr. Andrew Skinner: 00:07:47 And that's precisely the point because in a way, all of us are Peter. Peter was a fisherman, he's sometimes referred to as the big fisherman. He owned a fishing business along with his

brother Andrew, and he had partners, James and John. Luke 5 helps us to appreciate that. While Peter may not have been rich, he wasn't poor either. He was well off by the standards of the day. Keep in mind that this is what he left to follow Jesus, and I don't think there was any question in his mind that when you find the Messiah, you drop everything and you follow him. We know that Peter lived in two different locations. Bethsaida, which is two Hebrew words put together meaning house or place of fish or house or place of fishers, and then he lived in Capernaum. We know that Capernaum was a major village that ringed the shore of the Sea of Galilee, the freshwater lake, which by the way is about the same size as Utah Lake.

00:08:58 Another fascinating thing, he was constantly with the Savior all of the time after he became a full-time disciple. The thing that I think about often is the fact that Peter was chastened, rebuked, corrected many times by the Savior, but he did not take offense. Rather, it seems that he learned from what Jesus was teaching him and that ministered to what eventually became the great apostle, the chief apostle. What a fabulous lesson for each of us. Peter's calling or his responsibility as the chief apostle and then later on as president of the church. And a couple of noteworthy insights from the four gospels, I think, are meaningful in helping us to appreciate how Peter is viewed in the four gospels. He was a bilingual Jew who thereby had some providential preparation, we might say, for his later missionary preaching, his missionary ministry because he goes out into the Hellenistic world, the Greek culture of the world that was his mission field.

00:10:19 He's not just some dumb fishermen. He was well acquainted with two or three different cultures. All four gospels unite in reporting that Peter became a disciple of Jesus in the very early days of Jesus's ministry. So, Peter was living with his teacher, he was living with his master. Of course, the word disciple is different. It has a different meaning than the word apostle. The disciple is a pupil, is a learner. It implies more than just classroom instruction. It's this continual personal association with the Savior that makes up this learning process.

John Bytheway: 00:11:04 Here's Peter learning from the Savior as they walked and talked. I'm glad you brought that up. We're getting this fraction and maybe that's why we see such a dramatic change in the sound of Peter from the gospels. I think we see that growth in how differently Peter is talking here with the sublime language as Joseph Smith put it.

Dr. Andrew Skinner: 00:11:24 Yeah. My experience has been that some don't appreciate the fact that Peter had unspeakable experiences with the Savior while he was being groomed to fully take up his apostolic responsibilities. But Peter, while he was with Jesus was in the presence of Elohim on the Mount of Transfiguration, presence of Elijah, the presence of Moses. We have church leaders who have said that they believe that it was on the Mount of Transfiguration that Peter and the other apostles received the holy endowment, which we treasure in our own experience. We have those experiences in the house of the Lord in the temples today. As we know, various leaders have said, "Well, the mountaintops were the Lord's first temples." Not only that, but Peter lets us know that they were sealed up to eternal life.

00:12:23 They received the guarantee of exaltation while they were on the Mount of Transfiguration or the holy mountain that's mentioned in 2 Peter 1. I think it's important to remember that Peter being with the Savior so much saw the mighty miracles of the Savior over and over again. We know that there are three episodes of Jesus raising the dead back to life, and Peter witnessed all three of those, the widow woman's son at Nain recorded in Luke 7, and then the raising of Lazarus which comes towards, I guess, the end of the three-year ministry of the Savior, but also the most tender, and that is the raising of the little girl recorded in Mark 5.

00:13:18 We not only get a chance to see how Jesus singled out the three chief apostles, Peter, James and John, and brings them into the home as he performs this miracle, but we get a chance to see the tenderness of Jesus and actually have preserved for us in Mark's gospel of the actual Aramaic language that Jesus used, "Talitha cumi. I say unto thee arise." One of my favorite things to point out is that the King James language, as it's recording the raising of the little girl from death back to life has Jesus saying, "I say unto thee damsel arise," but actually if you look at the Aramaic language, Talitha is, I think, a nickname or a diminutive, "My little curly one," something like that.

Hank Smith: 00:14:08 It's like a term of endearment.

Dr. Andrew Skinner: 00:14:10 Absolutely, a term of endearment. We learn a lot just by looking at some of the words, the actual language, the Aramaic phrasing that Jesus used, and Peter was there and he saw that, and you can imagine the effect it must have had on him as he saw that tenderness.

Hank Smith: 00:14:27 Andy, let me quote one of our friends, Brent Top. Brother Top says, "Peter's faithfulness overcomes his fallen foolish,

impetuous speaking without thinking nature. He did what he said he would, he did lay down his life for the Savior's cause. Will my faith be greater than my foibles? Will I allow my mortal selfishness to be consumed by charity, service and sacrifice as Peter did? To me," Brent says, "this is a scriptural story of triumph and transformation more than failures or lack of faith. The focus should not be on Simon sinking, but on Jesus' lifting him, not on Peter's fallibility, but on Christ's divine ability."

00:15:11 This is from an article you wrote, Peter-the Chief Apostle, and you can find this on the RSC website, rsc.byu.edu. Right here in the very last paragraph, "Few men in history had the experiences that Peter had. Fewer still refine their understanding of the things of God and honed their spiritual sensitivity as did Peter, even fewer serve the Savior and the kingdom from start to finish with unflagging courage and selfless dedication. Only a handful of prophets have been commissioned to teach the gospel in more than one dispensation. Peter continues to be our model missionary in giving instruction to the elders of the church. In this dispensation, the Lord commanded them to do as Peter of old, preached faith, repentance, baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost, but Peter also made it clear that Christ-like love is the ultimate measure of spiritual progression." Just in what you wrote there, I can feel your love for Peter in this transformation he goes through and he allows the Lord to take him from where he is to where the Lord knows he can become. And it does take our willingness, doesn't it?

Dr. Andrew Skinner: 00:16:20 I think that you've said it very, very well. It would be a tragedy if the first thing or even the only thing that we thought of Peter was his denial of the Savior. That's not really Peter. He gave his life to the Savior. He was willing to have his personality changed from, as you say, this impetuous person that could have gotten the church leadership in trouble with the Romans to one who did what the Savior wanted him to do.

00:16:52 And that's not to say that Peter did not continue to be bold, but there's a difference, I think, between impetuosity and boldness. We read in the Book of Acts, Acts chapters four and five. Peter is preaching Christ and him crucified. And he's not only preaching Christ crucified, but he's saying, you guys did it to the Jewish leadership. They arrest him, they put him in jail and he gets released. Miraculous things happen to Peter. He and John are hauled back in before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Senate. We told you not to preach this doctrine and you're filling the country with these ideas. And Peter's response is, you know what? We cannot but help do this. That's what we're

commissioned to do. And that's a central theme of the Book of Acts is the apostles serve as eyewitnesses to Jesus's suffering, his crucifixion and his resurrection. You've said it very, very well.

John Bytheway: 00:17:56 Thank you for reminding us of that because I love that Peter doesn't say we cannot but speak of the things which we have felt and feeling is part of testimony, but he said the things we have seen and heard. We've seen these miracles, we've seen Him resurrect, we have heard His teachings. All of those things help us with our testimony. What have I felt? Yes, but what have I seen in the lives of others? What have I heard taught that has got me fired up inside. And all of those parts work together. I love when Peter said things like that. We're telling what we have seen and heard and nobody can take that from you. It is really fun to read, Acts.

00:18:40 And one more thing I love, when a beggar puts forth his hand and Peter says, "Silver and gold have I none," which is what the guy wanted, which is sometimes what we think we want, but such as I have, which sounds like, oh sorry, but such as I have, it's just so much better and here's us seeking after silver and gold, but what Jesus offers is so much better, but such as I have give I today in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk. That Peter is just so fun to read about and now we get to see what he's going to write.

Hank Smith: 00:19:13 John, I'm glad you brought up that story in Acts chapter three. I like to make the connection with the Savior lifting Peter out of the water and then here we have in the Book of Acts, Peter doing the lifting, reaching down to that lame man at the temple and lifting him up. Look how Peter went from the one being lifted to the one doing the lifting and the transformation. That's a beautiful little symbol of Peter's transformation. One more witness of this transformation, this is Elder Uchtdorf, a powerful testimony of the living Christ transformed Peter into a witness who literally changed the world. A testimony of the living Christ has the potential and power to do the same for every servant of the Lord. Wonderful, wonderful introduction we've done of Peter here, Andy. With that introduction, Andy, I think we're ready to jump into these epistles of Peter. How do you want to go about this? How do you want to start?

Dr. Andrew Skinner: 00:20:13 We don't know exactly when Peter wrote the first epistle, First Peter. We know that he left Jerusalem sometime after the Jerusalem Council, recorded in Acts chapter 15. And that is about 52 AD where Peter leaves Jerusalem and then he goes to Antioch where he labors with Paul. He seems to have worked in north and central Turkey because he addresses his epistle to the

saints in that area. In fact, to quote First Peter, chapter one, verse one, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bethynia." So this is this central Turkey area. Peter eventually goes to Italy, where he labors for a few years. He seems to have arrived sometime before the Emperor Nero began his great planned persecution against the Christians, which began in 64 AD. Seems the best date for Peter's arrival in Rome is in the midyear of 63. That's, I think, our best guess.

00:21:31 Two points suggest that First Peter was written in Rome. Number one, Peter writes salutations from the branch in Babylon, according to First Peter chapter five, verse 13, which we know is none other than Rome. John the Apostle identifies Rome with Babylon in Revelation chapter 17. We're on pretty safe ground there. And then the way that his first epistle, Peter's first epistle, orders the greetings, suggests that one is sailing from the west landing in Pontus and then making a great sweep through much of Turkey in order to return to the starting point.

00:22:16 Peter then writes the first epistle before the great outbreak of persecution against the Christians. Peter's letter, this first letter, reveals what sparked his desire to write to the saints, and that is the increasingly unfavorable conditions that were arising, the persecutions that would be unleashed against the Christians along with the other trials and tribulations.

Hank Smith: 00:22:45 That's a nice way to put it, Andy. The increasing unfavorable conditions. When I think of that, I think the Diet Coke has run out. These are increasingly unfavorable conditions. But for these people I think it's a little more serious.

Dr. Andrew Skinner: 00:23:00 Well, I suppose that running out of Coke wouldn't present a threat to your life, but Nero's persecutions against the Christians did exactly that. They were threatened with their very lives and you can kind of tell the mettle of a person, what they're really made of when they're faced with those life and death situations. Oh, you're quite right. The first letter of Peter does reveal an era of persecutions, of vile slander, charges of disloyalty to the state. And Peter is giving us his inspired guidance to help us through these perilous times. You can take his advice and plop it down in this modern era and the principles that Peter presents to us are still important and valid and helpful.

00:23:52 One of the things that is interesting, the Saints begin to recognize immediately the value of First Peter is that 50 years

don't go by, but the first epistle of Peter is being quoted as an authoritative source for divine help by two of the early bishops in this region. Names that people might not be completely familiar with, but Polycarp of Smyrna and Papias of Heliopolis are early bishops that actually provide some history for us. Recorded by Eusebius, the author of the History of the Church in the third, fourth century AD. We know that pretty quickly Peter's first letter makes a powerful impression on people because they are in, some of them at least, are in dire straits. If we start looking at First Peter, we can take as maybe our guide Peter's principles for persevering persecution, but also prospering spiritually.

- Hank Smith: 00:24:58 We like alliteration on FollowHIM.
- Dr. Andrew Skinner: 00:25:02 I think that that's a helpful model, a helpful pattern to view first Peter and to really get at the powerful doctrinal points that Peter is making. I read something by another Latter-day Saint who said, "First Peter doesn't contain very much doctrine," and I thought, what? Are we reading the same letter? My belief and my experience says that First Peter is full of powerful and important doctrine.
- 00:25:35 With that in mind, most of these Pauline epistles begin with the salutation. First Peter one, verse one, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." As we will see a little later on, the concept of being strangers is in the context of being strangers to this worldliness in which we live. It's not strangers in terms of gospel principles.
- 00:26:09 Verse two, Peter is describing to the saints who they are. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Grace unto you and peace be multiplied." I love that salutation, because aren't these two things that we all hope for and cherish, if an apostle would say to us, "Grace, be unto you." In other words, may the enabling power of Jesus Christ increase in your lives, and of course live your life in peace. That is to say the cessation of all contention.
- 00:26:54 If there's one lesson I have learned in these decades of the interaction with the world and with the world of the gospel, I've come to understand that the Savior can tolerate many things. In fact, he says that he's there to help us through these different challenges, but the one thing that he can't tolerate, and that one thing is contention. The doctrine of Christ develops and blossoms in an environment of unity and an environment of

love. Who wouldn't want to have the blessings of grace and peace in their lives? That surely must have meant something to the saints there.

00:27:39 And then Peter goes on to talk about how we can persevere in times of persecution but also prosper spiritually when we have trials and tribulations. The first of these principles that I like to talk about or point out, the principle of remembering who you are. That will give you strength, that will help you, it will give you insight into facing life's challenges. And that is part of his salutation in verse two of chapter one. "You are the elect according to the foreknowledge of God." Titus helps us immeasurably to understand that heavenly Father promised eternal life to all of his children in our premortal life. I love Peter for pointing out to us a truth about the eternity, the continuity of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It's Revelation 13, Moses chapter seven, "Jesus is the lamb slain before the foundation of the world, his atonement operated."

John Bytheway: 00:28:45 Our friend and colleague, Brad Wilcox, I love the way he put it, that the atonement was plan A, not plan B. It wasn't something that God put in place to fix the mess Adam and Eve made of the world. I'm paraphrasing, but it was from the foundation of the world, and that's what we get in verse 20. So, I love that you're saying the gospel is here, the whole plan is here, a lot of it right in chapter one.

Dr. Andrew Skinner: 00:29:10 I'll go out on a limb and I'll say that the gospel of Jesus Christ equals the doctrine of Christ equals the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Our last scripture where Peter is saying, "Remember who you are." This is in chapter two verses nine through 11, and this is a very famous verse. I noticed as I've reviewed who liked to use these particular set of verses, President Hinckley was really keen on Second Peter chapter nine. I think whenever he saw a group of young priesthood holders, this verse came to mind. First Peter, chapter two, verse nine, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood and holy nation, a peculiar people that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light, which in time passed were not a people but are now the people of God, which had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul."

00:30:22 This is a perfect summary to our identity. We may not be much before we joined the church or committed our lives to Christ, but we are everything with Christ. We are a chosen generation.

We are this royal priesthood. We are a peculiar people. The word peculiar, as you can see, comes from the Latin peculium actually, and it really means purchased or private property, even. The Hebrew word segulah, valued property, unique treasure. Those are ways to translate the Hebrew word segulah or the Latin word peculium. We mean everything to heavenly Father. We're not everything unless we commit to the Lord Jesus Christ and then with him we are everything.

Hank Smith: 00:31:12 Is this one of those moments, First Peter 2:9 where Peter is trying to connect them to the ancient Israelites. Exodus 19, "You will be a peculiar treasure." So, reminding them of their family history.

Dr. Andrew Skinner: 00:31:26 Exactly. And what's really interesting about that passage in Exodus 19 is that the Lord makes no bones about his intentions for the family of Israel. I want to make you a holy nation. I want to make you a kingdom of priests and priestesses, kings and queens, as it says there. What we come to appreciate is the fact that the Lord isn't talking about Aaronic priests, because the Aaronic priesthood hasn't been established yet

Dr. Andrew Skinner: 00:32:00 or hasn't been split off from the Melchizedek priesthood, he's talking about Melchizedek priests, Melchizedek priesthood kings and Melchizedek priesthood queens. That's a temple verse right there. That's temple theology. When Peter mentions that again in 1 Peter 2:9, he is pointing to sacred doctrines that are received in holy places. This is what Peter is reminding them of. Remember what the Lord intended for the early members of the family. He wanted to make them a kingdom of kings and queens, priests and priestesses. That's exactly what we're taught in the temple. This is a continuation of that. I'm really fixated on this phrase, "I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims." In fact, all of the prophets that we know of confessed that they were pilgrims and strangers on this earth. We are eternal beings having a brief mortal experience. We are strangers and pilgrims in this fallen environment, and I'm so grateful that Peter mentions that to us because that's true for our day in modern times.

00:33:15 Remember who you are, and that goes a long way in helping you to persevere persecution, to understand the nature of trials and tribulations, with the Lord's help, work through them and in the process prosper spiritually. It's these experiences that test us and try us that move us closer to our Father in heaven and to the very reason that we're here on this earth to learn to serve the Lord at every hazard, to learn to serve the Lord at all costs. Then Peter's going to say in his second letter, "This is the reason

why I want you to be able to endure trials and tribulations and prosper spiritually because the reward is nothing less than a guarantee of eternal life." You have the encouragement here in the first letter and then you have the reward described by Peter in the second letter.

- Hank Smith: 00:34:18 I like what you said there. If you remember who you are, you can endure some of these great difficulties. Isn't that something that President Nelson's been focused on lately, identifying who you are?
- John Bytheway: 00:34:32 He talked about these three labels, identities that are the most important, that if anything displaces or replaces these you're in trouble. But that was you're a child of God, a child of the covenant and a disciple of Christ. You talked about being a disciple is a learner telling us who we are and then calling us like it says in Verse 9, "Out of darkness into his marvelous light." In Verse 12, I was noticing this sounds so much like the Sermon on the Mount, "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas, they speak against you as evildoers, that they may by your good works which they shall behold glorify God in the day of visitation."
- Dr. Andrew Skinner: 00:35:13 I grouped this particular passage under another one of Peter's principles to help endure trials and tribulations, and that is by living righteous lives, you invite others to change their behavior by your godly word and deeds. If you flip the page over to Chapter 3:15-16 this goes along with Verse 12 of Chapter 2 that you just read because you really do change other people's lives by your example. Verse 15, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear, having a good conscience that whereas they speak evil of you as evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ."
- 00:36:16 By your actions, you're causing the conscience that we're all born with to well up in them and for some, they'll realize that you're actually living the way that God wants you to live. So, you'll be an instrument by enduring your trials well, in patience, you're actually going to be an instrument to help others change. You can see that what we've done here or what we're doing is we're pulling out the verses that speak to the various reasons why Peter wants people to live the gospel even in trying times with the end in mind that they'll be blessed for it and blessed eternally for it. Another principle is remember the value of adversity. I'm going to read Chapter 1 of 1 Peter Verses 6-9, but

I want to read the New International Version because I think it says it in such an understandable and uplifting way.

00:37:21 This is what it says, "In this you greatly rejoice though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire, may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 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." The NIV is still faithful to the original Greek text, but it is put in 21st century English. One of the principles that Peter articulates is remember the value in adversity because you are moving towards that ultimate goal, which is the salvation of your souls, and you're being refined. You're proving that your conversion to Christ is genuine.

Hank Smith: 00:38:40 Andy, I don't want to hear that there's value and adversity and-

Dr. Andrew Skinner: 00:38:44 Well, I know. I'm still taken aback when I hear people say that they pray for challenges.

Hank Smith: 00:38:52 Oh, man.

Dr. Andrew Skinner: 00:38:53 Really? Didn't Jesus say every day brings enough trouble on its own? You don't need to pray for it.

John Bytheway: 00:38:59 Yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:39:00 Peter's right, isn't he? You're purified. You learn things about yourself.

Dr. Andrew Skinner: 00:39:05 The cool thing is, as we've been saying, is that Peter has personal experience. This is one of my favorite quotes that goes along with this principle of remembering the value of adversity. This is Orson F. Whitney, quote, "No pain that we suffer, no trial that we experience is wasted. It ministers to our education, to the development of such qualities as patience, faith, fortitude, and humility. All that we suffer and all that we endure, especially when we endure it patiently, builds up our characters, purifies our hearts, expands our souls and makes us more tender and charitable, more worthy to be called the children of God. It is through sorrow and suffering, toil and tribulation that we gain the education that we came here to acquire and which will make us more like our father and mother

in heaven," unquote. One of the great didactic or teaching quotations of all time by Orson F. Whitney, and that's basically what Peter is talking about. We have a modern apostle that's encapsulating what an ancient apostle is trying to teach.

John Bytheway: 00:40:24

I've always loved that Orson F. Whitney statement and sometimes he comes up in class. My students say, "Why does life have to be so hard?" I don't know if the Lord approves of this answer, but I like to say, "Well, maybe the Lord loves you too much to let your life be easy."

Dr. Andrew Skinner: 00:40:39

Exactly. That's a great way to phrase that since you were just in Hebrews, Hebrews 5:8-9 comes to mind, "Though He were a son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered and He became the author of eternal salvation because he understood perfectly how to remain faithful in the face of adversity." Here I remember as you do a talk by President Boyd K. Packer, The Play and the Plan. I think it's in that talk, I think it might be way back in 1985 or '86. It was given a while back where he says, "The two purposes of earth life are to gain a body, number one, and number two to be tested. The testing can usually be grouped under three categories. Those three categories are trials and tribulations, temptations and tragedies." To be honest with you, I had never thought of tragedies as being part of the way that we're tested, but I have come to know over the last few years that that is one of the things that tragedies do for us is that they test us.

00:42:03

In the words of the New International Version, they help us to show that our faith is genuine. Unfortunately, that's the hard part for me, cultivating that meekness and patience all of the time. When I think about enduring trials and tragedies as part of the test of mortality, I reflect back on my own experiences as a young man, a 14-year-old. I was very, very close to my father. He was a gospel scholar in his own right. One of my fondest memories of him is peeking in his room, the bedroom at night as I was trundling off to bed and seeing him sitting in a chair in his room reading the scriptures. That happened every single night that I can remember. Truth be told, that was something of a motivator to me to make the study of the scriptures a profession. When I was 14, he passed away unexpectedly. He had laid down and within just a matter of minutes had, we assume, a fatal heart attack and was gone. Those were dark days for me, and I'm sure for my sister as well.

00:43:26

Our mother was a good provider. She had skills that she could go out and go to work, but it affected her deeply. I think she was a changed person from that point on. It just destroyed her

life. I can remember her saying on one occasion shortly after that happened that God took her husband and that she would never have her arms around him again. Being 14, that's pretty heavy stuff to listen to. Over the years, I had some amazing youth leaders. In fact, my Scoutmaster, who was one of the first people that came over after he got word that my father had passed away, came over and just gave me a big hug. That's all he needed to do to let me know that people cared. But over the years, because they were interested in me, took enough time to mentor me, to correct me when I needed correction, but also to just love me when I needed to be loved, and I'm at times may not have been very lovable.

00:44:41 That Scoutmaster went on to become my bishop and my stake president. He was the stake president at the time that I got married, and more than just an interview, he pulled me into his office and we had some wonderful conversations. Now as I read Peter, I realize that what that did is it mentored me, it ministered to my education and helped me to understand what the gospel truly could bring to us in times of trial and tragedy and also ultimately, what the great reward was for enduring patiently our trials. I know the value of trials and adversity, but I could not have known those without experiencing them. It's like Jesus, Jesus knew how to create worlds without number and He knew what sin was from, if we may use the term an academic point of view, but He did not know from His own experience what that was like. When He has that mortal experience, it developed a side of Him that completed His perfect qualities. That's true for all of us.

Hank Smith: 00:45:58 I want to read something from Elder Renlund. This is General Conference just a couple of years ago, April of '21. He said, "Some unfairness cannot be explained. Inexplicable unfairness is infuriating. Unfairness comes from living with bodies that are imperfect, injured or diseased. Mortal life is inherently unfair. Some people are born in affluence, others are not. Some have loving parents, others do not. Some live many years, others few, and on and on and on. Some individuals make injurious mistakes even when they're trying to do good. Some choose not to alleviate unfairness when they could and distressingly, some individuals use their God-given agency to hurt others when they never should."

00:46:44 Then he gives this wonderful advice, "When faced with unfairness, we can push ourselves away from God or we can be drawn toward Him for help and support. Do not let unfairness harden you or corrode your faith in God. Instead, ask God for help. Increase your appreciation for and reliance on the Savior.

Rather than becoming bitter, let Him help you become better. Allow Him to help you persevere, to let your afflictions be swallowed up in the joy of Christ." It's a tough thing to do, but you're right, Andy. There is value in our trials, tribulations, difficulties.

- Dr. Andrew Skinner: 00:47:25 The goal is to reach the point where in any circumstance we can say, "Heavenly Father, I don't care what I want. I only care what you want," and that's part of enduring trials and tragedies. At least for me, that connection is in my mind.
- Hank Smith: 00:47:43 1 Peter 1:13, he says, "Have hope to the end," this enduring hope.
- Dr. Andrew Skinner: 00:47:52 Look at Chapter 1:24-25 where Peter is teaching the saints that they need to remember that mortality is temporary but God's promises are eternal. As you were reading that quote from Elder Renlund, I was thinking of people that I know personally, our daughter, for example, whose husband passed away. She has a very good friend whose husband also passed away about the same time from brain cancer, and now her little boy has a brain tumor. That hardly seems fair. Life just is not fair, and I think that's one of the reasons why we have the Atonement, because Heavenly Father knew that life wouldn't be fair and yet this atoning sacrifice would be not just for our sins, but for our sorrows, our sufferings, for the unfairness of life. And yet the Atonement will overturn, in our eternal existence, it will overturn the unfairness. That is mercy and love.
- Hank Smith: 00:49:00 That doctrine mitigates the pain. It doesn't take the pain away, but it definitely mitigates the pain. It enables you to think celestial.
- Dr. Andrew Skinner: 00:49:08 Thank you for that. Ultimately, Peter talks about one of the ways to persevere in persecution, to work, to be spiritually prosperous in the midst of trials is strengthening the family. And in Chapter 3, verses 1-7, we get Peter's counsel to husbands and wives that they should honor each other and that they should live by gospel standards. It really is such a cool passage. "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands that if any obey not the word, they also may without word be won over to the gospel," I would say, "by the conversations of the wives." Verse seven, "Likewise, husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge giving honor unto the wife as unto a weaker vessel." I don't think he means spiritually. I think he's just referring to the physiology of males and females. "As being heirs together of the grace of life that your prayers be not hindered. Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one

of another. Love the brethren, be pitiful," or be tenderhearted is the Greek. Be courteous and so forth, not rendering evil for evil.

00:50:32 I love First Peter. It is helpful, it is uplifting. It's like having an ancient apostle sitting down with you and counseling with you on how to be prosperous in this immortal sphere.

Hank Smith: 00:50:47 There's a great - what do you call those, John - sermon in a sentence from Elder Holland. He said, "How could we believe it should be easy for us when it was never ever easy for him?" So Peter invokes the Lord's life. When we go through trials and persecution and difficulty, he's saying you can channel his example and know what to do when the storm hits, which, oh, that's difficult to do, but Peter would know that. He saw him through this.

Dr. Andrew Skinner: 00:51:19 There's one other passage that we really ought to touch on. It's a unique contribution to our scriptural treasury and that is First Peter Chapter Three, verses 18 through 21, and First Peter Four, verse six. These two sections are the springboard to one of the most magnificent sections of our Doctrine & Covenants, which is Section 138, and Joseph F. Smith's vision of the Savior's visit to the world of spirits. I'm not sure it is possible to overstate the greatness and the importance of this unique revelation. I was just reading Section 138 the other day, and it covers so many questions, and it springs from Joseph F. Smith's sitting down with these passages and pondering them and thinking about them. Verse 6:4, "For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the Spirit."

00:52:27 The plan of salvation covers every contingency, every aspect of mortality and life beyond mortality. There's a great general conference talk by Elder Christofferson about our work for the dead being an immense measurement of our faith in Jesus Christ and our love for Heavenly Father's plan. Maybe he didn't say it in those exact words, but that's what I took away from it. To read some of President Smith's reflections on the loss of his son, he says that he was inconsolable, which doesn't sound very much like a prophet because we have these idealized conceptions in our mind, and yet life pounded on him. It hammered him down. It was this revelation which wasn't yet Section 138, but this amazing experience that he had, which I think brought great comfort to him. That whole story about how he received this and what he was experiencing is in a way comforting to me because I know that it is okay to feel such

tremendous sorrow, such tremendous sadness, and that even a prophet of God had to work through that.

- 00:53:45 This idea of moving on was given voice by a conference this last April at BYU. It was the Life After Loss Conference. That was the title of it. And the point that I wanted to make was Janet and I, my wife and I, immediately we walked into the building on that first day before even any of the sessions or presentations had been offered and you could feel the spirit of the Lord there. It was palpable. The thoughts that came to my mind was that the Lord dwells among the downtrodden and the sorrowful. His presence is with those that are suffering. Also, the healing that was taking place as the spirit of the Lord moved in to fill those places of sorrow with feelings of light and peace and comfort.
- John Bytheway: 00:54:47 I think a beautiful part of that is so many others are feeling what you're feeling or have experienced a loss like that. Sometimes the Lord puts us in places where we can help somebody who has a trial because we've had the same one.
- Hank Smith: 00:55:03 My sister, Jennifer Johnson, is on the executive team of the Life After Loss Conference. They're going to hold it again in 2024, March of 2024, over at BYU.
- John Bytheway: 00:55:14 I want to read to you what he said about those verses that you pointed out to us, Andy. This is what Elder McConkie said. "If Peter had never recorded a syllable of scripture except in those verses which tell of the salvation for the dead, his name would've been enshrined forever with the greatest of the prophets. And how appropriate it is that such a glorious doctrine should come to us from the mouth of the chief apostle, the chief under-shepherd, the one upon whose shoulders the son of God had laid the burden of his kingdom in the dispensation of persecution and martyrdom." Is it Elder Wirthlin who talks about the Saturday, if Jesus was crucified on a Friday, and how that Saturday must have been so difficult and confusing for the Apostles...
- Hank Smith: 00:56:03 Sunday will come.
- John Bytheway: 00:56:05 ... of what just happened and this doesn't make any sense. And where was he on that Saturday? Well, that's fun to think about. He was still doing his redemptive work.
- Dr. Andrew Skinner: 00:56:17 We need to keep in mind, as we wonder about our own trials and tribulations, that we may begin to think of them in terms of sacrifice, sacrifice that we have made immortality for our Savior,

for the Lord Jesus Christ in our Father in heaven, because this is what President Smith says in verse 11 through 13. "As I pondered over these things which are written, the eyes of my understanding were open and the spirit of the Lord rested upon me, and I saw the hosts of the dead, both small and great. And there were gathered together in one place an innumerable company of the spirits of the just who had been faithful in the testimony of Jesus while they lived in mortality and who had offered sacrifice in the similitude of the great sacrifice of the Son of God, and had suffered tribulation in their redeemer's name. All these had departed mortal life firm in the hope of a glorious resurrection through the grace of God, the Father, and his only-begotten son, Jesus Christ."

00:57:28 The word sacrifice, two Latin words, sacre and facere, literally means to make sacred. And there is a wonderful quote by Elder Maxwell who always has something cool to say just about everything. He said that because of your sacrifice and enduring through the deaths of your loved ones, spirits that associated with those who have passed on will come to you someday and say, "Thank you for letting that person go, for letting that person come to the spirit world and to teach and preach and be a steady and leveling influence in the world of spirits." It's one thing to suffer on account of the challenges of mortality, and it's another thing to suffer the same challenges in the name of the Redeemer, to deal with the challenges of life with faith and devotion in Jesus Christ and his eternal mission.

Hank Smith: 00:58:28 I had a great conversation with a student the other day. She was facing some really difficult circumstances and she said, "I just don't see why the Lord would let this happen." And I said, "Well, let's look at the scriptures and see what the expectation might be." And she said, "I know, Abinadi and Nephi and Job." And she said, "I know." And then I said, "Well, what does that tell you?" And she said that, "Yes, if you live the gospel, things might get hard." And then she said something that just made me laugh. She said, "I know it's supposed to be hard, but not this hard." And sometimes we just don't want to accept the whole pill that, yes, it's going to be hard, and yes, it's going to be this hard.

John Bytheway: 00:59:13 And there seems to be an expectation among some that if I'm having a trial or a problem, well, somebody is not doing their job out there, or this plan is not unfolding right. The word trial, I hope we see that. And I think when you read the NIV, Andy, you used the word prove. It's a test, a trial. So I like that Peter uses, "We're tried and we're proved and we're going to see." One of my favorite verses to just give me perspective when I need it, is that Abraham 3 is it 23? "I will prove them now herewith to see

if they will do whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them." And I want to add, even when it doesn't make sense. Let's see what they do when things just don't make sense or when they're not what they expect. And here's Peter saying, "Oh, don't think it's some strange thing. We all go through these fiery trials."

- Dr. Andrew Skinner: 01:00:05 Yeah, I think that's right. There's an element of this, it's good news because you know that if you're going through trials, even if you're being persecuted, that God thinks enough of you that you can come off conquerer, that you can endure and be just like the great heroes of scripture. The other side of it is that if you're being bombarded with temptations and seems like the adversary is working overtime on you, that's also good news because Satan doesn't kick a dead horse. He knows the great contribution that you are to the kingdom, and he doesn't want you to be that. He wants you to fail.
- Hank Smith: 01:00:47 Who told President Eyring that if you're on the right path, it's almost always uphill? I love the perspective so far. I had never put this together in First Peter that you've shown us, Andy, is they're going through serious difficulty in persecution, and by talking about the spirit world, he's giving them a new perspective, that this life isn't all there is. And he's saying, "Look, the gospel message continues long after this life." And when you have that perspective, it does mitigate the pain of trials, knowing that your loved ones have continued and they're continuing their work in the next life, and that you will one day join them and continue your work in the next life. So I've never put that together before, why these two topics would be in the same epistle, but it seems to make sense.
- John Bytheway: 01:01:42 Please join us for part two of this podcast.



Dr. Andrew Skinner: 00:07

The Second Epistle in my mind is a description of the capstone reward for living in a faithful way in the midst of trials and tribulations. What is in store for the faithful? If you'll live the way that the Lord wants you to, there is an exceeding great reward. And that's the Second Epistle of Peter along with Peter's discussion of false teachers in chapter two and then chapter three is a brief discussion of the Lord's glorious return, the second coming. This is apparently written by Peter also from Rome as death approaches. He mentions in 2 Peter 1:14, quote, "Knowing that shortly, I must put off this my tabernacle even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me," unquote. But you get the impression that Peter knows that the end is approaching and maybe even has the inkling that it's approaching because of the persecutions enacted by Emperor Nero.

01:18

We know, for example, that Peter is with Paul in Rome as the end occurs, and we know that Peter asks to die in the same way that his Lord and Savior died except in a much more humiliated way. And I'll just read these two passages from the church historian Eusebius Bishop of Caesarea, who is really our best secular source. Not a scripture source, but our secular source of the history of the early church. In fact, some people would say, well, he's really the only source, but this is his comment in his history of the church, quote, study records, there you will find that Nero, the emperor was the first to persecute this teaching, meaning the first to persecute Christianity when after subjugating the entire east in Rome especially, he treated everyone with savagery. That such a man was author of our chastisement fills us with pride. For anyone who knows Nero can understand that anything not supremely good would never have been condemned by Nero.

02:41

So it came about that this man, the first to be heralded as a conspicuous fighter against God was led on to murder the apostles. It is recorded that in his reign Paul was beheaded in Rome itself and that Peter likewise was crucified. Just a couple of pages later in his history, Eusebius says, quote, finally he came to Rome where he was crucified head downwards at his own request. For all of his preaching and encouragement, Peter

still has to suffer more trial and more tribulation at the hands of this wicked man, Nero. Historians in recent times have made an attempt to rehabilitate the memory of Emperor Nero, but I'm one of those that thinks that we can trust Eusebius and that these two great apostles, one to the Gentiles, his primary mission to the Gentiles, that was Paul. And then Peter, the president of the church, who sort of took the Jewish arm of the church under his wing are both executed in Rome because of this Neronian persecutions.

Hank Smith: 04:01

Andy, if I heard that right, they're saying, look how true and good our cause is because look who hates it.

Dr. Andrew Skinner: 04:08

Exactly. And because Christianity is so good, then he's going to use his best efforts to try to destroy it. Again, Peter starts out with the salutation and introduction, Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ to them that hath obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ. What he is really saying is that I'm writing to those who through righteousness have strengthened their faith that has become as strong as our faith. So Peter is paying them a supreme compliment. And then of course verse two, grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord. I just need to stop here and this is a bracketed comment. How many times have we read in these epistles that God, who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, are treated as two separate and distinct beings?

Hank Smith: 05:20

Over and over and over.

Dr. Andrew Skinner: 05:23

And over again. In the Pauline epistles, in the General epistles and those that say, "Well, that's not what the New Testament teaches" don't even realize at this point that they're interpreting or they're reading the New Testament through the lens of the church councils, the first seven councils of the Christian Church. Ultimately the Council of Nicaea, where they craft this definition of the Godhead and don't realize that that's not what the New Testament is saying. And I mentioned that because, had an interesting exchange with someone a while back who says, Paul talks of himself as an apostle, but is there any record of his ordination as an apostle? And the answer is no. There's no explicit mention of Paul's apostolic ordination, but there's that amazing story from the writings of President Harold B. Lee who says two missionaries came to him with a perplexing problem. They had encountered a Christian minister.

06:33

The missionaries had said the true church of Jesus Christ is founded on apostles and prophets and we have them in the

church today. And the minister laughed at them and said, "If you only understood what the requirements were to be an apostle back in Acts chapter one, it has to be somebody who accompanied with us throughout the ministry of Jesus Christ. It was a personal eyewitness and if you understood that, you would see how ridiculous your statement is."

07:00 So they wanted President Lee's view on how they might approach that and President Lee says, "Well, go back to your minister and ask him two questions. Does he believe that Paul was an apostle? Because it says that in the New Testament and if he says yes, then ask him how did Paul gain the knowledge and experience that he needed to be an apostle? And the second question is, how does this minister know that the apostles today don't also have that same witness that qualifies them to be apostolic servants of the Lord Jesus Christ." I just love that.

07:38 All right, we've now dived into Second Peter, in verse three, he begins to build a stepladder where you build on faith and these other attributes of virtue and temperance until you reach the ultimate goal. The reason for it is stated in verse four, whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. What Peter is going to present then is building to the point where we are sufficiently righteous that we can actually partake in the divine nature.

08:31 Said bluntly, we can become exactly like our heavenly parents. We can become like the Lord Jesus Christ or use a phrase that some people don't like, we can become as the gods to use a phrase from section 132 of the Doctrine & Covenants, but I really think that that's what Peter is talking about. You can become exactly like your heavenly parents. You can become like Jesus Christ. In so doing you inherit or you are able to possess all that the father has. Section 84 and I think that the word all means exactly what it says.

Hank Smith: 09:18 It's a pretty high percentage word.

Dr. Andrew Skinner: 09:20 You are blessed with all that the Father has, all that he is if you'll follow Peter's counsel here. And verse five, giving all diligence or maybe we would say making every effort to add to your faith virtue. And virtue is one of those loaded words that means many things. It can mean goodness, but it can also mean power. You remember the episode where the woman touched the hem of his garment and he says virtue went out of him. Well, in that

case the Latin word *virtus* means power. I think this is what Peter is getting at. You add to your faith power and power comes by righteous living. To virtue you add knowledge and to knowledge temperance or self-control and to self-control, patience or in this case the Greek indicates perseverance and to perseverance godliness and to godliness brotherly love and to brotherly kindness charity.

10:26 Now notice charity is the apex. It's the ultimate attribute of these virtues that we are trying to cultivate. One is reminded of the writings of Elder Holland where he says in his view, true charity, pure charity has only been manifest one time in the history of the world and that's the Atonement of Jesus Christ. And you think, well, that doesn't sound very good, but then you think about, well, what is charity? Charity is the pure love of Christ. There's really only one person that has pure 110% love and that's Jesus Christ. The Lord says, strive for that, the ultimate attribute, I should say, verse eight, for if these things be in you and abound or maybe a better phrase would be increase in measure, they make you that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful. Or in other words, you'll be neither unprofitable nor unproductive in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

11:36 But he that lacks these things is blind and is nearsighted. Can't see afar off and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins or his old ways. And then the kicker, verse 10, wherefore the rather brethren give diligence or make every effort to make your calling and election sure for if you do these things, ye shall never fall. The question then becomes what is calling and election made sure? This is the prophet Joseph Smith's definition. Quote, after a person has faith in Christ, repent of his sins and is baptized for the remission of his sins and receives the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, which is the first comforter, then let him continue to humble himself before God hungering and thirsting after righteousness and living by every word of God. And the Lord will soon say to him, "Son, thou shalt be exalted."

12:48 When the Lord has thoroughly proved him and finds that the man or we could say woman, is determined to serve him, the Lord at all hazards, then the man or the woman will find his calling and his election made sure. Then it will be his privilege to receive the other comforter which the Lord hath promised the saints as is recorded in the testimony of St. John in the 14th chapter from the 12th to the 27th verses. Now what is this other comforter? It is no more nor less than the Lord Jesus Christ himself and this is the sum and substance of the whole

matter. That when any man obtains this last comforter, he will have the personage of Jesus Christ to attend him or to appear unto him from time to time.

13:45 And even he will manifest the father unto him and they will take up their abode with him and the visions of the heavens will be opened unto him and the Lord will teach him face-to-face and he may have a perfect knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of God. And this is the state and place the ancient saints arrived at when they had such glorious visions. Isaiah, Ezekiel, John upon the Isle of Patmos, St. Paul in the three heavens and all the saints who held communion with the general assembly and church of the firstborn. What Peter is encouraging that the ancient saints as well as the modern saints is to cultivate all of those attributes that the Savior himself has to demonstrate that his faith is genuine, to use the language of the New International Version and to serve the Lord at all hazards. That no matter what comes his or her way, they will remain true and faithful to the Lord.

14:54 It's the guarantee of exaltation. It is like having the day of judgment advanced so that you know here in mortality or even in the next life, that you are an heir of exaltation. That is an amazing promise. Section 50:5 whether in life or in death the promise of exaltation is ours. The prophet Joseph Smith mentioned the Church of the Firstborn and that's an interesting phrase that we don't hear talked about much. It's mentioned in the Doctrine and Covenants, the Church of the Firstborn is parallel to the church of Jesus Christ in mortality. So the Lord's Church in mortality is the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

15:49 Entrance into the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is through the ordinance of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Church of the Firstborn is the Lord's Church, the Savior's church in the eternities. Its membership is composed only of those who are exalted beings and the ordinances that are required for entrance into the church of the firstborn are of course those ordinances that we partake of in the temple of the Lord. We have one who knows whereof he speaks is encouraging the saints to follow through on those principles and those doctrines that he's articulated in the First Epistle and if they do that, then their exaltation will be made sure.

16:46 I have thought about why we don't speak more of the doctrine of making your calling and election sure. And maybe it's a matter of producing in mortals an unhealthy zeal, an attempt to be righter than right and truer than true rather than just

continue to do the right thing for the right reason. Paying your tithing, attending church, serving others, trying your best to be the kind of a person the Lord wants rather than becoming so zealous that yeah, you missed the mark. And we do see that I think in the church on occasion and that may be the reason why we don't talk about it as much as the ancients talked about it. And I think as much as the prophet Joseph Smith talked about it is we live in kind of a different age and different psychological and emotional pressures on people cause them to possess excessive zeal.

Hank Smith: 17:44

Yeah, you don't hear that as much as you would've in the 1830 church.

Dr. Andrew Skinner: 17:49

Peter goes on to say that the teachings that he has given to the saints, the gospel of Jesus Christ is not fairytales. When we made note unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. That's the role of an apostolic witness is to testify from their own knowledge that Jesus is the Messiah, that Jesus lives, that Jesus is with the Father, these are flesh and bone beings and that he witnessed the glorious nature of our Father in heaven.

18:30

So the voice of God the father said to all of those on the Mount of Transfiguration, "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased," unquote and those on the Mount of Transfiguration heard that for themselves. They were eyewitnesses of the Saviors being transfigured. They were eyewitnesses of Moses and Elijah who as translated beings came and ministered to the transfigured beings on the Mount of Transfiguration. In other words, he's saying, "We witnessed this ourselves and this voice which came from heaven, we heard when we were with these beings on the Holy Mount." The Holy Mount being the Mount of Transfiguration.

19:24

And then he makes this interesting statement in verse 19, which is another way of saying calling and election made sure, quote, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto you do well that you take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place until the day dawn and the day star arise in your hearts." To understand what that phrase more sure word of prophecy means in this context, we need to go to section 131 of the Doctrine and Covenants verse five says that the more sure word of prophecy is the revelation that comes to a person whereby they know that they will receive exaltation. Another aspect of the doctrine of calling and election made sure is the ordinance that's associated with calling and election.

- 20:21 My understanding is it comes only through leaders of the church, apostles and prophets and that component could be administered in this life or even in the life to come or at least in the millennial reign of Christ. The upshot of all of this is that Peter is saying, if you'll be faithful in the midst of your trials, which he talked about in his first epistle, and you'll continue to grow your faith and add to your faith different attributes that God himself possesses, the ultimate one being charity, which is the pure love of Christ that the day will come when the Lord will say you will be exalted. The premortal election that we all experienced to eternal life will be made sure and certain.
- 21:17 I can imagine the great happiness that was felt by the ancient saints to know that their perseverance in the face of tremendous persecution would have the ultimate happy ending. They would be guaranteed life with our Father in heaven. All that that entails including the continuation of the family unit. Chapter one ends with Peter saying something about the nature of prophecy and prophets knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation where a prophecy is given, a prophet has to be there to give us the meaning of that prophecy. Or certainly the Holy Ghost has to operate in a person's life in order for a true understanding of prophecy to register.
- 22:15 And then he talks about how prophecy operated in ancient times, not by the will of man but holy men of God as we could even say holy women of God because we know there were prophetesses in the Old and New Testament times. Spake as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost. I like the summary statement of what Paul is saying, that revelation comes through holiness and through closeness to the Holy Ghost. The pencil of revelation cannot write on a disobedient mind with consistency. We have evidence of that. That's the ultimate goal that Peter wants people to understand for their faithfulness, they receive a guarantee of exaltation. And that's true for us today. And when you think about how many members of the church there are in the world today, they can't get around to every member of the church who's worthy of that blessing, but you can have the spirit with you.
- 23:22 It's like earnest money. You know that this is in your future because the Holy Ghost will testify to you that that is so. The actual ordinance, section 50 says it doesn't matter whether it's in this life or in the life to come this guarantee the exaltation will be yours, but we can feel the Holy Ghost, the harbinger of exaltation saying, "You're doing what the Lord wants you to do, the path that you're pursuing is pleasing unto the Lord. This will

be your eventual reward." My understanding is that the only thing that can prevent that from happening is for a person to once having been enlightened and to having known the goodness of the Lord and the spirit of the Lord to then turn away completely from that.

- John Bytheway: 24:13 And that's coming up, 2 Peter 2:21.
- Dr. Andrew Skinner: 24:17 It is.
- John Bytheway: 24:18 I love that Peter starts that summary at the end of chapter one with that phrase, we have not followed cunningly devised, but we were there. We were eyewitnesses. And I have a really beautiful statement of Elder Jeffrey R. Holland taking off on this verse. I wish I could read it with his power and passion, but this is what Elder Holland said. "I want you to know that I have not given my life to a fairytale. This work is not a joke we are trying to play on someone. As the apostle Peter said, for we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. This gospel is not cunningly devised fable as some accuse it of being. That idea offends me.
- 25:09 It is an insult to me. I was not born yesterday. During the course of my life, I have read several books. I've been to two or three good schools. I've even had the privilege of presiding over a good school. Along the way I have met kings and queens, princes and prime ministers. So this is not my first rodeo as they say, I'm not foolish enough to go off on some wild goose chase. Rather than racing around the world at my age, I could be home doing whatever it is that people do when they are octogenarians. So why am I not home? It is because this is the very church and kingdom of God on earth. I will say that until I have no breath left in my lungs or words upon my lips to say it, this is not a cunningly devised fable. It is God's very truth. I am not deluded and neither are you. Now, you may not be as strong in the faith as you need to be, but you can become stronger. The truth has a way to make you strong and this is God's truth."
- Dr. Andrew Skinner: 26:09 That is a very powerful statement. That's from his most recent book, isn't it, on the New Testament?
- John Bytheway: 26:14 Yeah, the way that verse 19 ends is until the day dawn and the day star arise in your hearts, and this book is called Our Day Star Rising. Elder Holland over the years has made so many comments on New Testament texts and stories that they just

kind of put them all in a book. These apostles that are not released until they actually die. Wow, what a service.

- Hank Smith: 26:40 Maybe not even then, right?
- John Bytheway: 26:42 Yeah, and then who knows what's next?
- Hank Smith: 26:45 Well, here's Peter coming towards the end of his life knowing that shortly, I must put off this my tabernacle knowing that maybe things are about to end. He's like, "Listen, this isn't fiction. I was there."
- John Bytheway: 26:58 Yeah, you can't take that from me.
- Hank Smith: 27:01 Yeah, some of you might hear these stories and think, oh, there's no way that's true. And he's saying, "I was there. I watched the whole thing play out." And then Andy, it's fascinating, the one thing he decides to focus in on is the Mount of Transfiguration. There's so many other things he could say. "I saw him resurrected. I saw him walk on water. I saw him feed 5,000 with just a little bit of food." But he says, "I remember the voice of God on that mountain."
- Dr. Andrew Skinner: 27:28 I think the reason that he emphasizes the Mount of Transfiguration is because he was a partaker of this whole idea of being told that you'll be exalted because of your faithfulness as Elder McConkie and his father-in-law, Joseph Fielding Smith said this was a place of endowment, but it was also the place where they heard the voice of the Father and they knew that they would be exalted. That's fresh in his memory as it would be I think for anybody. If you had encountered the mighty Elohim along with his son Jesus, and you had been transfigured along with Peter, James, and John and knew that because of your faithfulness and your sacrifices, you were going to be with the Lord forever in the highest kingdom, the highest degree of the celestial kingdom. You could not but help write about that as you're encouraging the saints to acquire those attributes.
- 28:28 The other thing that occurs to me too is that these attributes which go together, the cultivation of these characteristics that the Lord himself possesses are restated to us in section four of the Doctrine & Covenants in slightly different order. But section four seems to have specific application to full-time missionaries to full-time disciples, those that are fully converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ so that through a modern prophet Joseph Smith, we have the recounting of the same attributes that go into this and it's open to everybody. Anybody who wants to

become a true disciple and will cultivate those attributes will receive the same reward as the ancients.

29:19 I love the fact that section four is particularly addressed to full-time missionaries so that they can get started on the right path. They can be fully engaged, fully immersed the minute they hit the mission field because that's really what the Lord needs them to do in these latter days. And I'm happy to report that we have missionaries like that, some powerful, powerful missionaries. You can tell they were taught from their mother's knee at a very young age to be the kind of disciples that the Lord needs to have in the world to counter the increasing wickedness. Satan's ramping up his program, but as President Benson taught, the Lord is increasing the power and the strength of his kingdom as well. And it's through these wonderful missionaries. I'm tickled to be associated with them.

John Bytheway: 30:15 I like how you said that to have him fully engaged, this is a little trivia for you, but there's one word that appears only in section four out of the entire standard works, it's only in section four and the word is embark. Oh ye that embark in the service of God. That was a youth theme a few years ago, so I did some research on it. When I looked it up, it says to board a ship or an aircraft for a journey, and it made me laugh because I thought, you can't sort of get on an airplane. You have to fully get on the airplane. If you sort of get on and the airplane leaves, it causes some great physical discomfort. You have to fully get on board and when you use the word fully engaged, these missionaries, I thought, yeah, if you're going to embark, then embark. Get both feet in. That's the invitation and the promise it comes from section four. If you're going to embark, get both feet in and let's go.

Dr. Andrew Skinner: 31:08 That's right, yeah. Jump in with both feet. That's the phrase that we hear repeated again and again and again. Peter is I think, aware that in the midst of trials and tribulations and persecutions, saints of the ancient days are going to encounter teachers, even prophets that don't have heavenly Father's children's best interest in mind.

Hank Smith: 31:33 Yeah, this is kind of a rebuking chapter of false teachers.

John Bytheway: 31:39 Sounds a little like Paul too.

Dr. Andrew Skinner: 31:41 Exactly. Exactly. Starts out in verse one by saying false teachers introduce heresies. Those heresies even deny the teachings of the Lord in subtle ways. You need to be watching out for that, that they don't harm your testimony of sacred things and then

eventually deteriorate to the point where verse 21, you once knew things of righteousness, but you followed the false teachers and you're now delivered to the adversary. Verse two, false teachers have many followers. They speak evil of the truth. You can tell a false teacher by how they speak of the truth. That reminds us, doesn't it, of priestcrafts. False teachers engage in priestcraft by using pleasing or flattering or made up words.

- Hank Smith: 32:37 Making merchandise of you.
- Dr. Andrew Skinner: 32:39 Making merchandise of you, exploiting you for their own selfish purposes. It's like we learned about Sherem and why his way of teaching was so out of harmony with the Lord is because he used flatter, used pleasing words, but to manipulate people for his own ends. Implied in this is that false teachers are interested in getting gain.
- Hank Smith: 33:07 He says they're arrogant, self-willed, not afraid to speak evil. He calls them wells without water. He calls them things that I can't even say, a donkey speaking with a man's voice.
- Dr. Andrew Skinner: 33:22 How true, how true. Verse 10 false teachers walk after the flesh or in other words, they have corrupt desires, they despise government or better said, they despise constituted authority. And I've noticed that about some enemies of the church and they pursue their agenda in very subtle ways and one of the first things I've noticed happens is that when they start talking about church leaders, they always drop their titles. They never mention Elder Bednar or President Oaks. It's always Bednar and Oaks, which is an initial way to denigrate not just the person but the office that they hold. It's really not that important.
- 34:15 And I think that that's one of the reasons why our church leaders have trying to emphasize to the new missionaries, the Elders, and the Sisters that you are called of God, that you are his disciple. It's not just a position of importance, it's a position of honor. Therefore, call each other by that honorific title Elder and Sister because that's the way we refer to the apostles, to the Lord's anointed. You are the Lord's anointed. Your name is on the same name badge as Jesus Christ.
- 34:50 It's interesting that after a while you begin to see that there are subtle ways to attack the church and the denigration of sacred things as it says in verse 10. Verse 13, false teachers possess the idea that pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you. That's the NIV translation of that. A lesson, a caution to those of us who have spent our lives in the profession of teaching don't become a

well without water, clouds that are as tempest but no good. And speak swelling words of vanity alluring through the lusts of the flesh. Peter's ultimate warning, as you pointed out in verse 21 really reminds us of the things we've read in the Book of Mormon, Alma chapter 12 and Alma chapter 24, that a person who has been enlightened and has known righteousness, known the things of God and has witnessed this for themselves, when they deny this, their end is worse than their beginning.

35:59 It would be better off that they had never known these things and you see the words of the prophets being fulfilled right before your very eyes. If I could just take somebody and shake them by the shoulders and say, "Don't go down this path." And it typically starts with stopping your reading of the Book of Mormon, stopping your prayers, taking off your temple garments and sort of this situational ethics. Anything goes. Everybody has their own truth. Please, please, please listen to Peter and cultivate those attributes of godliness so that you can be exalted. Whatever the circumstances in life, mortality is fleeting, but God's promises are eternal. That's ultimately the lesson of Peter.

Hank Smith: 36:55 2 Peter 2:19, they promise freedom.

Dr. Andrew Skinner: 36:59 Oh yeah.

Hank Smith: 36:59 That's one of the scariest parts for there's false promises. You see that in the Book of Mormon all the time. Come be our partners. You'll not be our slaves, you'll be our partners.

Dr. Andrew Skinner: 37:12 I have this note in my scriptures beside verse 19, false teachers promise liberty or freedom from constraints yet they themselves are servants of corruption. They end up serving the adversary. You find out how quickly it is foolishness.

Hank Smith: 37:31 Doesn't that remind you of Cain? He kills Abel and he says, "I am free."

Dr. Andrew Skinner: 37:35 "I am free."

Hank Smith: 37:35 "I am free."

Dr. Andrew Skinner: 37:36 And that's the last thing in the world he is. His master, Satan now rules over him. He becomes Mahan, Master Mahan.

John Bytheway: 37:47 I put the word Korihor next to verse 19. He promised liberty. Oh ye that are yoked and bound and foolish and you're doing this,

Alma, so that you can take their rights and privileges. And so he had this idea he was going to liberate them from all of these rules and commandments and then for whom a man is overcome of the same he has brought into bondage and what's the end of Korihor it says he was run upon and trodden down and who was really in bondage there? That is a very common tactic. I need to free you.

Dr. Andrew Skinner: 38:19

This is back in chapter one of Second Peter in verse 12, wherefore, I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things though ye know them and be established in the present truth. In other words, I'm telling you, I'm not going to quit reminding you of the truths of the gospel and the blessings that come because that's my duty. I'm not going to neglect my duty. I'm going to keep harping on these things because I care about you.

Hank Smith: 38:49

It's like when there's an electric fence sign every 10 feet, you think, well, this is getting repetitive, but actually-

Dr. Andrew Skinner: 38:56

Yeah, only if you want to keep from getting shocked. But chapter three is Peter's discussion about events of the last days and ultimately the second coming of Jesus Christ and Peter says in 3:3, knowing this first that there shall come in the last days scoffers walking after their own lusts and saying, where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation. Well, where have we heard that before? It reminds me of what I read in 3rd Nephi chapter one, the Lord delays his coming or he's not coming at all.

39:44

The most insidious aspect of this is don't worry about having to answer to the Lord because things seem to be happening as they always have and people come and go and so big deal. That's the great danger I think of apostasy from within. Paul says, days are coming from your own number of your own selves. Men will speak perverse things to draw away disciples after them. It reminds one of 1 Nephi 11:35 which to me is one of the scariest verses in all of scripture and all of the standard works because Nephi reminds people of these kind of scoffers that they don't come from the outside world. The greatest threats to following pure doctrine come from the house of Israel.

40:43

It's the house of Israel that fights against the 12 apostles of the lamb. You can circle the wagons and you can take all of the hits and fiery darts from the adversary being shot at you from the outside, but it's when the inside starts to crumble that the

church really pays a dear price for that. It's the house of Israel that lines up to fight against the 12 apostles of the lamb, but Peter says, "Don't be ignorant of the things that you've been taught." And he talks a little bit about time. One day with the Lord is as 1,000 years, but also I think we need to keep in mind that as we're taught in the Book of Mormon, time only is measured unto man and there are different kinds of time according to the Doctrine and Covenants.

41:32 There's God's time, there's angel's time, there is prophet's time, and there's man's time. Time is one of those things that's kind of relative, depends on the planet where you're residing, so be cognizant of that and be faithful knowing that the Lord doesn't give up on his promises. In fact, let me read verse nine. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering us toward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. So I take from that the principle that we ought to be grateful that the Lord's second coming hasn't already arrived because it gives us more time to repent, more time to change our ways.

John Bytheway: 42:21 It's like the probationary state. You're on probation. Here's some time to repent and to prepare.

Dr. Andrew Skinner: 42:27 Maybe this is the ultimate statement with which to draw our discussion to a conclusion is found in verse 11 of 2 Peter 3, seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness. Peter has already brought up this point. This is in 1 Peter 1, where Peter says, basically the Lord wants you to be holy because he is holy. And that is drawing from several passages in the Old Testament, Leviticus, particularly, you be holy because I am holy. And now Peter to conclude his letter, he's saying, what kind of person ought you to be?

43:18 And it's the same question that Jesus asked in third Nephi, what manner of men, what manner of women ought you to be? Well, even as I am. That's the very simplest way to put everything we've been talking about. The Lord simply wants us to be holy because He's holy. We need to live the way that the Lord lived, make his example at the very core of our being. I know, I testify that if we do that, the blessings that Peter promised the ancient saints will be ours. We will receive a guarantee of eternal life. We will have the privilege of being in contact with the Son. We will receive personal revelation that our place with our Father in heaven and his kingdom is secure. And I'm grateful that if there were ever two books that were written in ancient times but

could be applied to our modern circumstances, it's surely first and second Peter.

- Hank Smith: 44:22 Andy, this has been just absolutely wonderful today. Everything in this was so applicable to our day and age. This could be a book that we read over and over and read it with your kids and grandkids and there's so many one-liners. And then the overall message is to stay true. In great difficulty, great trials stay true. In the face of false teachers, in the face of those who want to destroy your faith, stay true and learn about the Lord and he'll come again.
- Dr. Andrew Skinner: 44:56 He will and he'll be with you even before he comes. I'm so glad that you said that because when I teach the second half of the New Testament, and particularly first and second Peter, that's the way I end my class, that my vision is for the students to when they become parents, to gather their children around and to teach them from 1st Peter principles by which they can persevere against persecution and that they can prosper spiritually in the face of great trials because that's what he's all about.
- Hank Smith: 45:34 Yeah, it's a beginning to end these two epistles. Once you've joined the Jesus community, you got to stay true to the Second Coming, despite trials, difficulties, and false teachers.
- Dr. Andrew Skinner: 45:46 We've heard some marvelous things taught at the missionary training center, but the one that maybe made the biggest impression on me is a comment that Elder Richard G. Scott said. He said, if he could just change one thing about the doctrine of Christ, it's faith and repentance and the two baptisms by water and by fire. And then enduring to the end, he said he'd like to add the words endure to the end in joy, and that's what the gospel is all about. It brings happiness in mortality. It brings confidence. It brings peace and security knowing that heavenly Father has mapped this awe. He knows it's the words of Mormon. He says, "The Lord knows not only the beginning of the end, he knows what's going to happen in the future." And so we can have perfect confidence in Heavenly Father's plan because he's foreseen it and he crafted it in a way that we could be happy, and so I hope that we are.
- Hank Smith: 46:53 Thank you, Dr. Skinner. We have loved having you here. This has been so much fun to walk through these two epistles and have them now. I mean, it's unwritten, but it is a lesson. Look what the Lord took. He took this fisherman and you read these two epistles and realize he became a prophet, seer, revelator, theologian, and powerful leader. Thank you for being with us

today. Thanks for taking your time to join us. We want to thank Dr. Andrew Skinner for being with us today. We want to thank our executive producer Shannon Sorensen. We want to thank our sponsors, David and Verla Sorensen, and we always remember our founder Steve Sorensen. We hope you'll join us next week on FollowHim.

47:37

Today's transcript, show notes, and additional references are available on our website, followhim.co. That's followhim.co. You can watch the podcast on YouTube with additional videos on our Facebook and Instagram accounts. All of this is absolutely free and we'd love for you to share it with your family and friends. We'd like to reach more of those who are searching for help with their Come Follow Me study. If you could subscribe to rate, review, and comment on the podcast, that will make us easier to find. Of course, none of this could happen without our incredible production crew, David Perry, Lisa Spice, Jamie Neilson, Will Stoughton, Krystal Roberts, Ariel Cuadra, and Annabelle Sorensen.

President Russell M. Nelson: 48:16

Whatever questions or problems you have, the answer is always found in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Turn to him. Follow him.

HOW CAN WE FIND HOPE & JOY IN
DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES?



- Hank Smith: 00:02 Hello, my friends. Welcome to another followHIM Favorites. My name is Hank Smith. I'm here with the incredible John Bytheway. We are going to take on a question from this week's lesson, which is going to be in First and Second Peter. John, the question comes right out of the manual. What gives you hope that you can find joy in difficult circumstances? Out of these epistles from Peter, First and Second Peter, John, what would you say answers that question?
- John Bytheway: 00:26 This is one of those big picture, eternal perspective-type answers. I love 1 Peter 3:17. It says, "It is better if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing." And it kind of made me laugh because it's like, you're going to suffer either way.
- Hank Smith: 00:41 Either way.
- John Bytheway: 00:44 You're in a fallen world, it's going to be hard. But if it's well-doing, you know God is there, you know he's with you. You know you're going to make it. You know he's going to help you through it. There's an old saying that in life, suffering's mandatory but misery is optional.
- Hank Smith: 00:58 Yeah.
- John Bytheway: 00:58 So, "We don't suffer as those without hope," as Joseph Smith once said.
- Hank Smith: 01:02 Hmm. Beautiful.
- John Bytheway: 01:03 "There's always hope, smiling brightly before us," and that's kind of what that verse says to me. Life is going to be suffering. What's that Princess Bride quote, Hank? "Life is pain, Highness. Anyone who tells you differently is selling something." It's going to be hard, but we know why, we know what's at the end of it, we know there's a wonderful ending to all of this.
- Hank Smith: 01:24 It's a different type of pain when you're suffering for your own really dumb decisions you make over and over and over, or

when you're suffering for doing really well, and yet there's some opposition there. There's just a difference in that type of difficulty. In 1 Peter 4, Peter says, "You are partakers of Christ's sufferings." Verse 14, "If you are reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye."

John Bytheway: 01:48 Yeah.

Hank Smith: 01:48 That sounds like it's right out of the Beatitudes, doesn't it?

John Bytheway: 01:51 In fact, happy and blessed are translated interchangeably in the New Testament. Sometimes the Beatitudes are called the happy attitudes. And speaking of those, aren't those crazy? "Happy are the poor in spirit."

Hank Smith: 02:02 Yeah.

John Bytheway: 02:02 The people must've been going, "What?"

Hank Smith: 02:04 "Happy are the sad."

John Bytheway: 02:05 Yeah. Exactly.

Hank Smith: 02:09 It makes me think, if I am going through very difficult, trying circumstances, that so did the Lord.

John Bytheway: 02:16 Mm-hmm.

Hank Smith: 02:16 He went through very difficult, trying circumstances. So there's something to be said about how that can make me feel, in my difficulty, that I am lining up with Him. That I'm shoulder-to-shoulder with Him. Not in scope, he's going to go through things that are far more difficult and eternal than I am, but still... What did Elder Holland say? "It's not easy for us because it was never easy for Him."

John Bytheway: 02:42 And that means He can help us.

Hank Smith: 02:43 Yep.

John Bytheway: 02:44 He knows what we're going through. He knows how to succor us, as Alma 7:11 and 12 might say.

Hank Smith: 02:50 Yep. This can give us a way, again, not easy. Still going to excavate our souls in difficulty, in suffering. There's a purpose to it. We're moving towards something.

John Bytheway:	03:03	Well put.
Hank Smith:	03:04	We hope you'll join us on our full podcast. It's called followHIM. You can get it wherever you get your podcasts. We're going to be joined by Dr. Andrew Skinner. He's been the dean of religious education at BYU, and he's going to take these two epistles of Peter apart for us. He'll show you things you haven't seen before. And then come back here next week, we're going to do another followHIM Favorites.