



2 PETER 3:8-15

**W H I L E
W E W A I T**

REV. SIMON PARK

Scripture Passage

2 Peter 3:8-15

But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed. Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without

spot or blemish; and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him.

Sermon

While We Wait

Promise and waiting. From the very beginning, these two things have been at the center of the faith journey. God gave Abraham a promise to bless him, and that through him and his descendants, God would bless the world. The only thing was, Abraham had no children. So he had to wait. He and his wife Sarah waited many, many years before that promise was fulfilled through the birth of their son, Isaac. Waiting for a promise has been at the core of Jewish and Christian faith.

The Promise

The earliest followers of Jesus were waiting for a promise given to them: that Jesus would come back to establish God's righteous reign over the earth. That he would make all things right. This is the promise Peter talks about in today's passage: ***"But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home."*** (2 ***Peter 3:13***). They believed that Jesus would come again to take away all evil, injustice and suffering, and that there would be a new world where love, justice and



righteousness prevailed.

This was the promise that the earliest followers staked their lives on and died for. They built the church on this promise. There was a fervency and a clear sense of mission to get ready for this promise. There was a joy that came with it. They waited expectantly for this promise to come.

But a generation passed and that promise hadn't come. In fact, the world seemed to have gotten worse. Life became harder and they faced more persecution. They were scattered after Rome came and destroyed Jerusalem.

Waiting for the Promise

Many of the followers began to give up on that promise. This is the central issue in this letter that Peter writes today. Many people had begun to say this: ***"Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since our ancestors died, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation!" (2 Peter 3:4)***. They said "since God isn't coming, what's the point?" and began living however they wanted. They indulged in the "anything goes" mentality that everyone else around



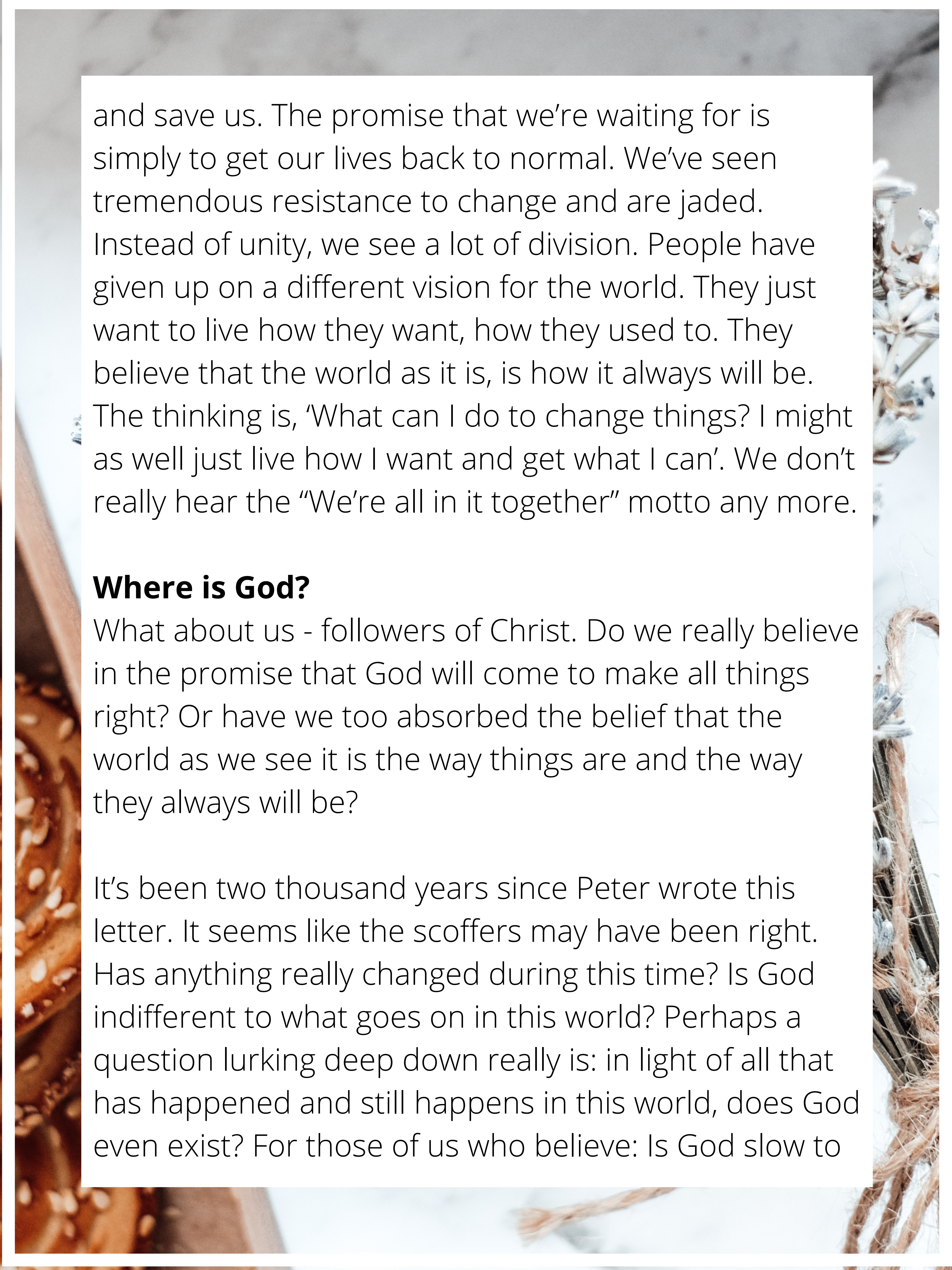
them was living. They were tired of waiting.

This strange year has been a year of waiting. For life as we knew it to return. To see our friends and family like we used to. To celebrate life events like birthdays and weddings.

We have been waiting to end the isolation and loneliness we feel. In the beginning of the pandemic, there was hope that this pause in life could be a real opportunity for meaningful changes, for us to become better people and a new world to emerge from the aftermath of this pandemic. But as time has gone on, people have simply gotten tired of waiting. People have major COVID fatigue. We don't want to remain holed up in our homes anymore.

As we see the unrelenting toll of the second wave, we feel helpless and discouraged. We see a dark and lonely winter ahead, with no festive Christmas celebrations to get us through. Even in our church planning, by now we'd be busily planning for our Christmas service but there is none of that this year.

The whole world is now waiting for a vaccine to come



and save us. The promise that we're waiting for is simply to get our lives back to normal. We've seen tremendous resistance to change and are jaded. Instead of unity, we see a lot of division. People have given up on a different vision for the world. They just want to live how they want, how they used to. They believe that the world as it is, is how it always will be. The thinking is, 'What can I do to change things? I might as well just live how I want and get what I can'. We don't really hear the "We're all in it together" motto any more.

Where is God?

What about us - followers of Christ. Do we really believe in the promise that God will come to make all things right? Or have we too absorbed the belief that the world as we see it is the way things are and the way they always will be?

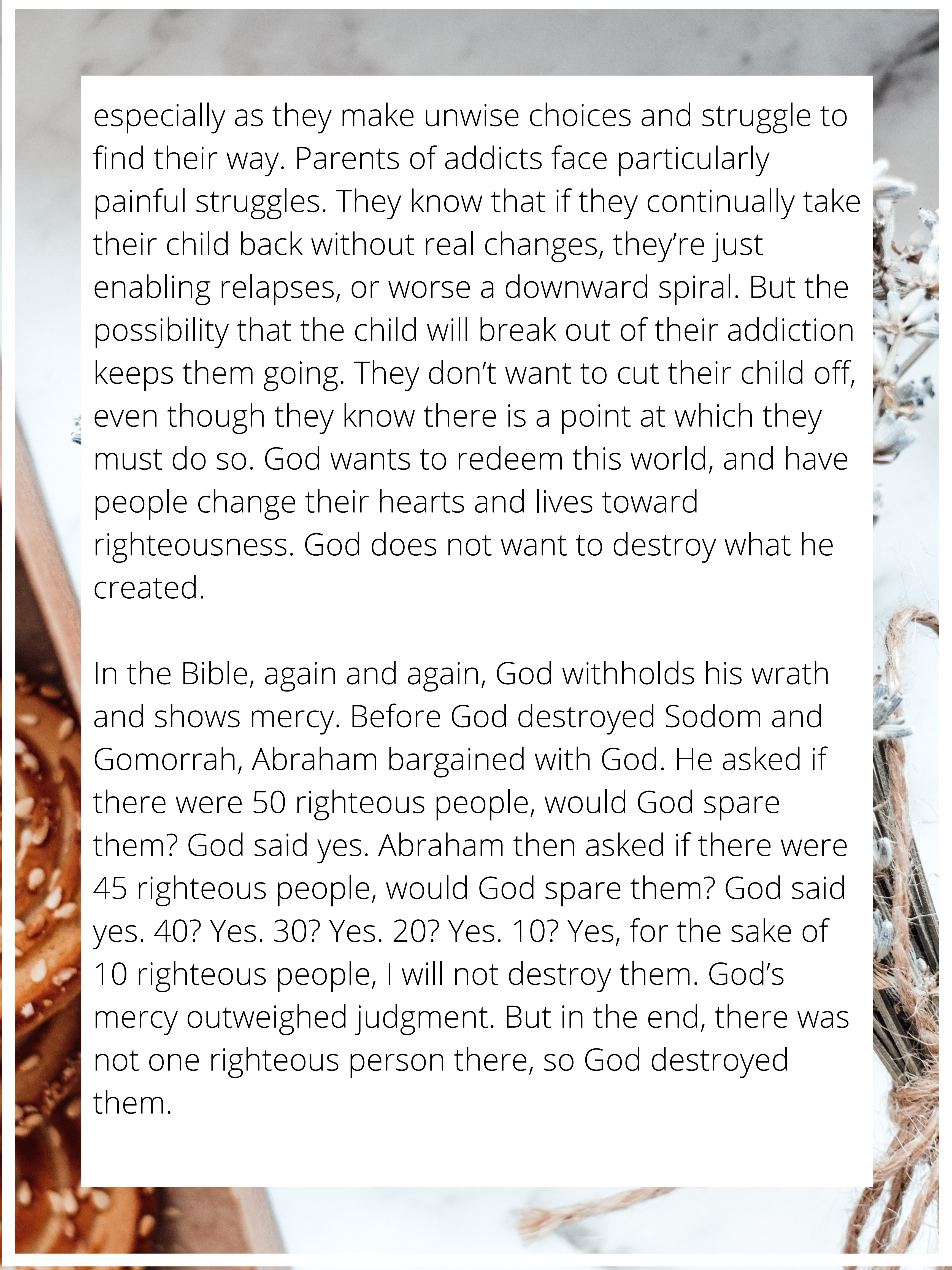
It's been two thousand years since Peter wrote this letter. It seems like the scoffers may have been right. Has anything really changed during this time? Is God indifferent to what goes on in this world? Perhaps a question lurking deep down really is: in light of all that has happened and still happens in this world, does God even exist? For those of us who believe: Is God slow to

act on his promise to make the world right?

God is Patient

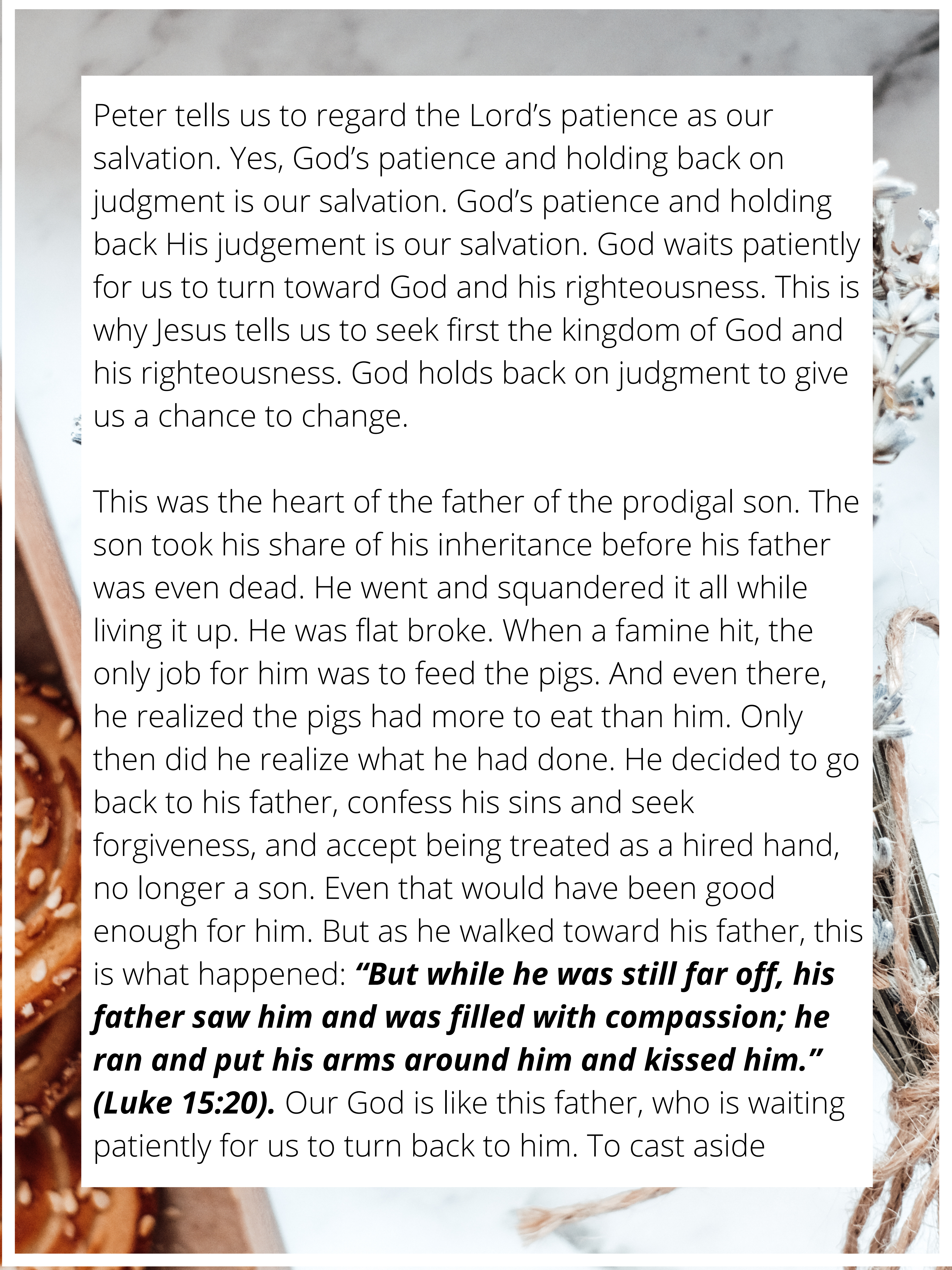
Peter responds in this way: ***“The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9)***. What an insight! It's not that God is slow to make things right, but that God is patient in exercising judgment so that more people may see the light, turn to God and be saved from condemnation. Yes, God's heart breaks at the suffering that is inflicted in the meantime. Scriptures are clear that God will enact judgment when it comes time for it. There will be a reckoning for the lives we've lived and what we've done.

The Apostles' Creed sums up this belief: “He will come to judge the living and the dead.” (Apostles' Creed). Yes, God's judgment is and will be real when he makes the world right. But even still, God's mercy triumphs over judgment. God does not want to destroy the world he so lovingly created. A parent brings their child into this world with so much love. We've been blessed with 7 babies this year. There is so much love. But as the child grows, there are many pains a parent goes through,



especially as they make unwise choices and struggle to find their way. Parents of addicts face particularly painful struggles. They know that if they continually take their child back without real changes, they're just enabling relapses, or worse a downward spiral. But the possibility that the child will break out of their addiction keeps them going. They don't want to cut their child off, even though they know there is a point at which they must do so. God wants to redeem this world, and have people change their hearts and lives toward righteousness. God does not want to destroy what he created.

In the Bible, again and again, God withholds his wrath and shows mercy. Before God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham bargained with God. He asked if there were 50 righteous people, would God spare them? God said yes. Abraham then asked if there were 45 righteous people, would God spare them? God said yes. 40? Yes. 30? Yes. 20? Yes. 10? Yes, for the sake of 10 righteous people, I will not destroy them. God's mercy outweighed judgment. But in the end, there was not one righteous person there, so God destroyed them.



Peter tells us to regard the Lord's patience as our salvation. Yes, God's patience and holding back on judgment is our salvation. God's patience and holding back His judgement is our salvation. God waits patiently for us to turn toward God and his righteousness. This is why Jesus tells us to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. God holds back on judgment to give us a chance to change.

This was the heart of the father of the prodigal son. The son took his share of his inheritance before his father was even dead. He went and squandered it all while living it up. He was flat broke. When a famine hit, the only job for him was to feed the pigs. And even there, he realized the pigs had more to eat than him. Only then did he realize what he had done. He decided to go back to his father, confess his sins and seek forgiveness, and accept being treated as a hired hand, no longer a son. Even that would have been good enough for him. But as he walked toward his father, this is what happened: ***"But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him."*** (Luke 15:20). Our God is like this father, who is waiting patiently for us to turn back to him. To cast aside

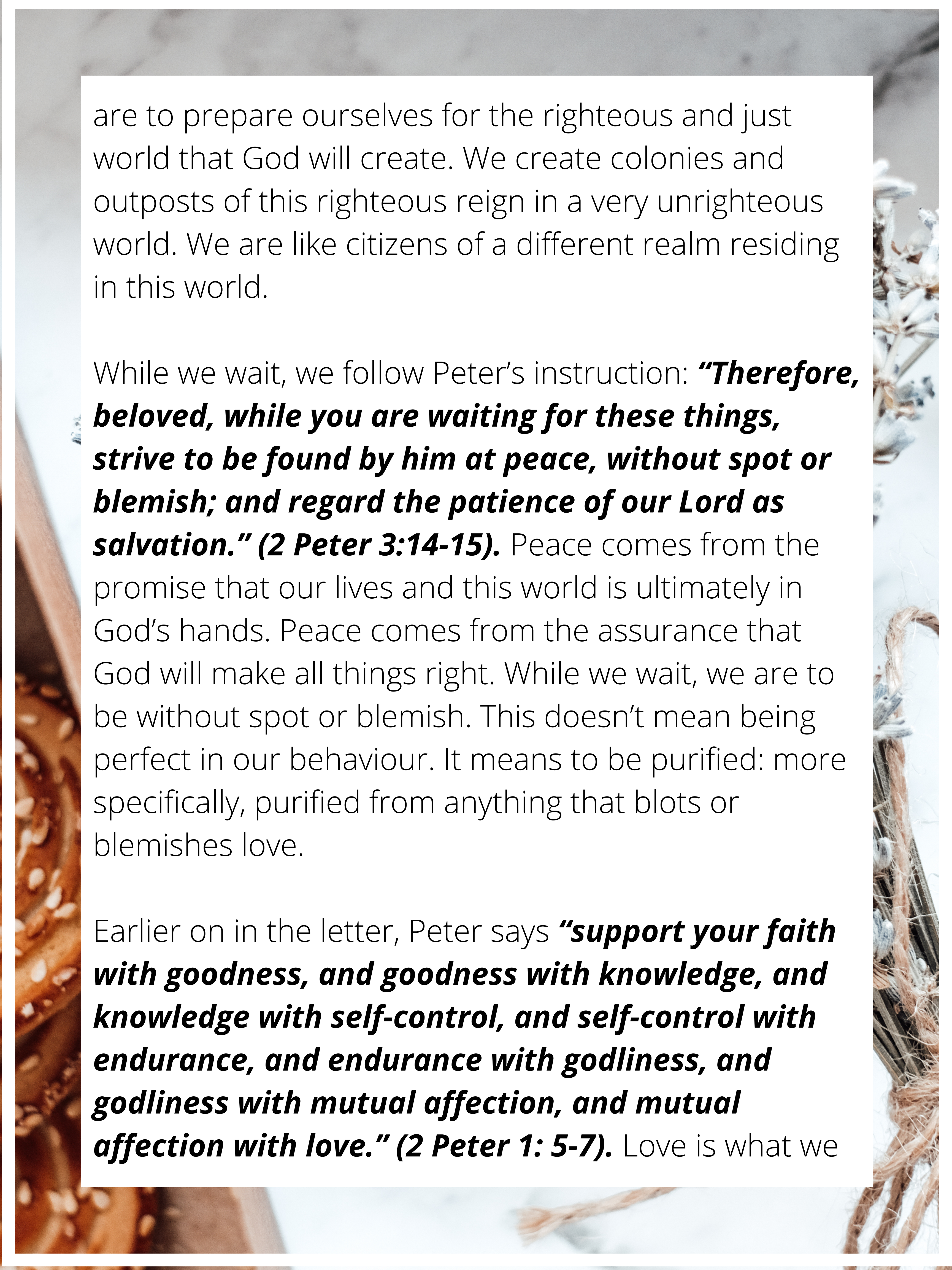
judgment and instead forgive and embrace us.

This heart is the pastoral heart I've discovered too as I go along. In my relationship with the current college students and young adults, during their Hi-C days, we shared many wonderful moments and closeness with God and each other. But now, as adults, I feel like many of them feel so distant from God or any sense of promise. I don't know if they believe in the promise that their lives are in God's hands, or that God will make all things right for them. I don't know if they really believe in God. I feel very powerless and helpless. All I can do is wait and be faithful in loving them, praying nonstop that someday God will not just be a concept but a real presence in their lives that gives them life and a sense of promise and purpose and meaning.

God is not slow about his promise. Just patient. God's promise still stands. God WILL create new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness and justice is at home. We wait for this new heaven and earth that only God can create.

Be Purified

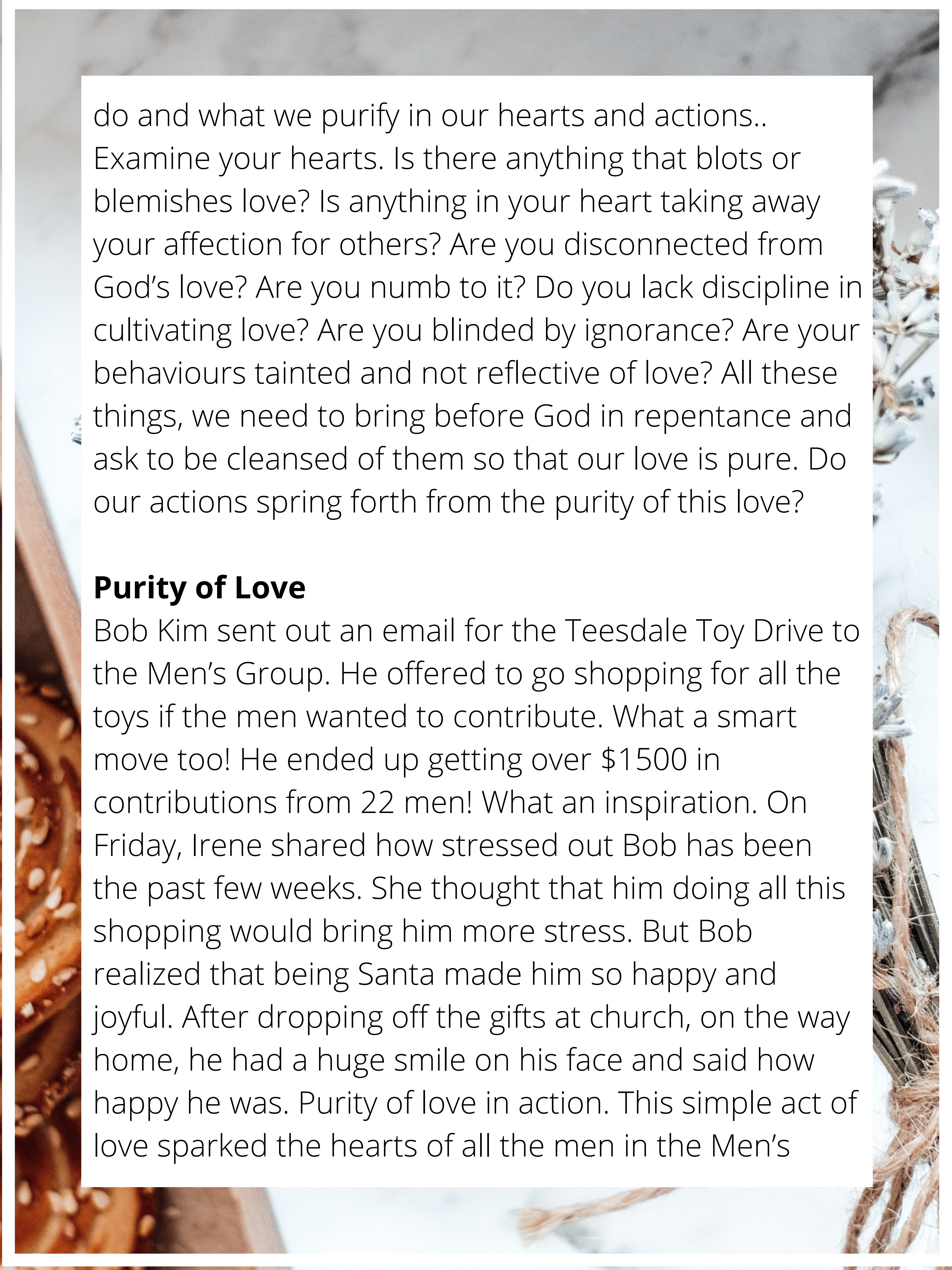
While we wait for this promise, what are we to do? we



are to prepare ourselves for the righteous and just world that God will create. We create colonies and outposts of this righteous reign in a very unrighteous world. We are like citizens of a different realm residing in this world.

While we wait, we follow Peter's instruction: ***"Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation."*** (2 Peter 3:14-15). Peace comes from the promise that our lives and this world is ultimately in God's hands. Peace comes from the assurance that God will make all things right. While we wait, we are to be without spot or blemish. This doesn't mean being perfect in our behaviour. It means to be purified: more specifically, purified from anything that blots or blemishes love.

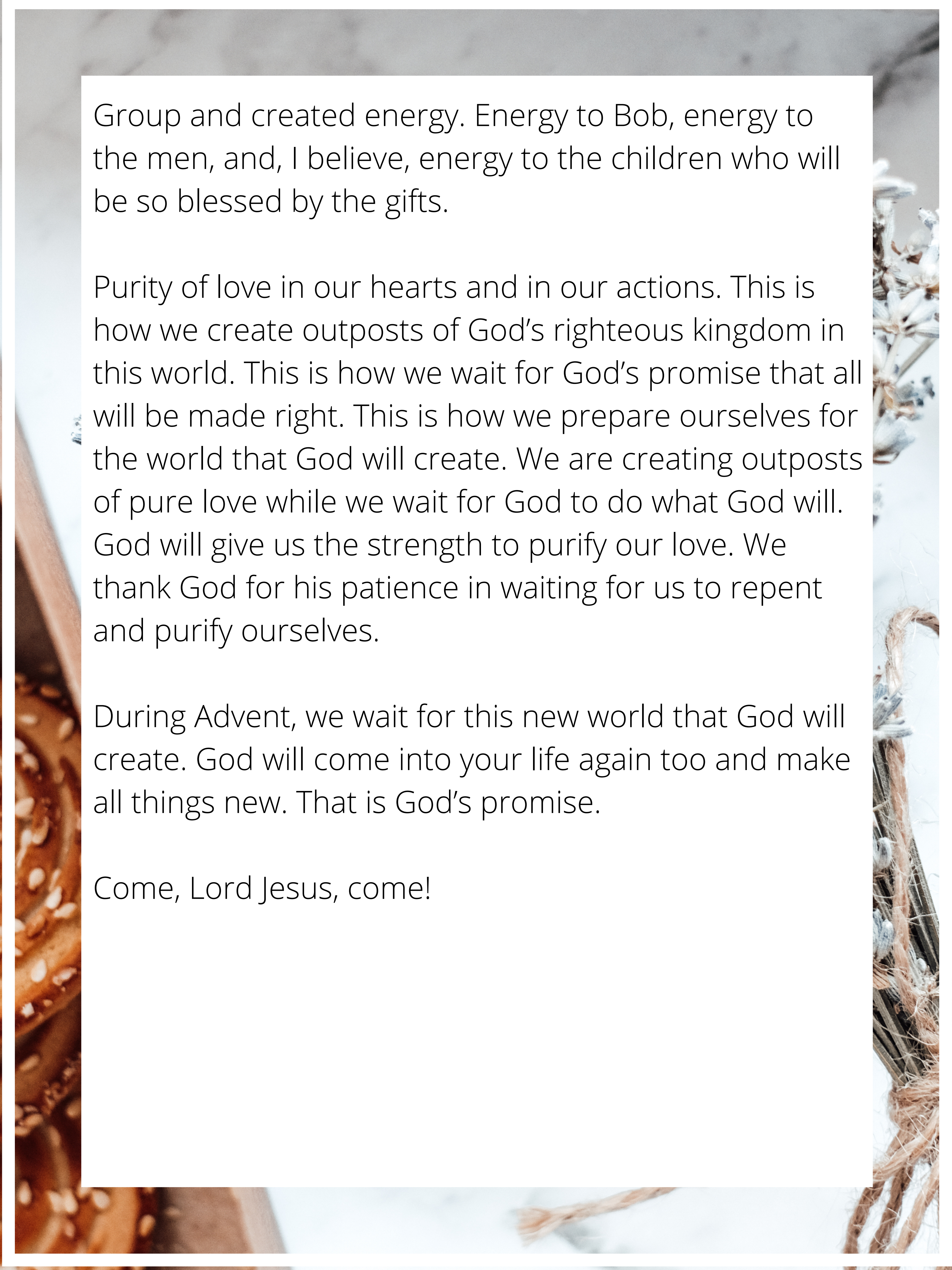
Earlier on in the letter, Peter says ***"support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with godliness, and godliness with mutual affection, and mutual affection with love."*** (2 Peter 1: 5-7). Love is what we



do and what we purify in our hearts and actions..
Examine your hearts. Is there anything that blots or blemishes love? Is anything in your heart taking away your affection for others? Are you disconnected from God's love? Are you numb to it? Do you lack discipline in cultivating love? Are you blinded by ignorance? Are your behaviours tainted and not reflective of love? All these things, we need to bring before God in repentance and ask to be cleansed of them so that our love is pure. Do our actions spring forth from the purity of this love?

Purity of Love

Bob Kim sent out an email for the Teesdale Toy Drive to the Men's Group. He offered to go shopping for all the toys if the men wanted to contribute. What a smart move too! He ended up getting over \$1500 in contributions from 22 men! What an inspiration. On Friday, Irene shared how stressed out Bob has been the past few weeks. She thought that him doing all this shopping would bring him more stress. But Bob realized that being Santa made him so happy and joyful. After dropping off the gifts at church, on the way home, he had a huge smile on his face and said how happy he was. Purity of love in action. This simple act of love sparked the hearts of all the men in the Men's



Group and created energy. Energy to Bob, energy to the men, and, I believe, energy to the children who will be so blessed by the gifts.

Purity of love in our hearts and in our actions. This is how we create outposts of God's righteous kingdom in this world. This is how we wait for God's promise that all will be made right. This is how we prepare ourselves for the world that God will create. We are creating outposts of pure love while we wait for God to do what God will. God will give us the strength to purify our love. We thank God for his patience in waiting for us to repent and purify ourselves.

During Advent, we wait for this new world that God will create. God will come into your life again too and make all things new. That is God's promise.

Come, Lord Jesus, come!