

I Peter 1:17-25
February 12, 2017

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

As a quick summary, Peter is writing to scattered Christians in northern Asia Minor (modern day Turkey) who are facing all kinds of trials. Peter's approach to encouraging them is to focus their attention on their salvation. He wants them to know that in the scheme of life, the trials they are enduring are only for a "little while" and don't even come close to comparing to the eternal inheritance that has already been promised to them. He reminded his readers that salvation is their foundation that is sturdy and cannot be shaken. Accordingly, Peter wants them to live like they have salvation, but that comes with some responsibilities.

Transition: Today we will pick up where we left off last week by reading I Peter 1:17-25. I still want us to consider that **all of us can successfully work out our salvation BY fulfilling the RESPONSIBILITIES God expects of us**. Let's tag the responsibilities that come with salvation, and then wrestle with HOW to actually fulfill these responsibilities. That will be our challenge. Let's begin.

BOOK (NIV 1984):

V.17:

- Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, **live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear**.

V.18:

- For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers,

V.19:

- but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

V.20:

- He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.

V.21:

- Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

V.22:

- Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere (*anypokriton, i.e. without hypocrisy*) love (phileo) for your brothers, **love (agape) one another deeply, from the heart**.

V.23:

- For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

V.24:

- For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall,

V.25:

- but the word of the Lord stands forever.” And this is the word that was preached to you.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q v.17: What is the first responsibility you see? [Live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.]

Q: What does Peter mean by “living as strangers?” [Our citizenship is in heaven. We are pilgrims in a foreign land. Thus, don’t adapt or conform your thoughts and behaviors to the patterns of this world. The secular worldview is the wrong template!]

Q v.17: Peter connects “living with reverent fear” with our Father “judging each man’s work impartially.” Why? [Because of the **high cost of salvation**, how we live our lives matters to God. He wants us to live with a tender conscience and avoid doing things that would displease Him. When we obey Him and serve Him in love, He notes that and prepares the proper reward.]

Point of Interest: Because the Lord cares about how we live our lives, we will all stand before Him when He returns. There will be a time of judgment called “the Judgment Seat of Christ” (Rom. 14:10–12; 2 Cor. 5:9–10), which has nothing to do with salvation, except that salvation ought to produce good works. Each of us will give an account of his works, and each will receive the appropriate reward. ***This is a “family judgment,” the Father dealing with His beloved children. The Greek word translated JUDGES carries the meaning “to judge in order to find something good.” God will search into the motives for our ministry; He will examine our hearts.*** But He assures us that His purpose is to glorify Himself in our lives and ministries, “and then shall every man have praise of God” (1 Cor. 4:5).

Q v.18-19: Peter is not one to downplay the high cost of salvation. How does he describe it to his readers? [Redeemed from the empty way of life by the “precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.” They were not purchased with “perishable things like silver or gold.”]

Reflection Q: Has it really sunk that we have been **bought**. You and I were bought at a great price. So when we wake up each day, does it really occur to us that our life is not our own? If we let our thoughts conform to worldly thoughts, then it will be easy to think we can live our lives however we choose – without any regard to what will please God. It’s too easy to take this for granted. What are your thoughts?

Q: What does he mean by “the empty way of life?” [It’s a life without purpose. Unsaved people today think their lives are “full” and “happy,” but in fact there is a void in their heart that can only be filled by Christ. Until they discover Christ, their lives are really empty.]

Q v.20-21: When was Christ chosen to be our Savior? [Before the creation of the world]

Observation: Notice that Peter highlights an integral part of the gospel message, which is our belief in the resurrection of Jesus. Our faith and hope is in God who has the power to raise people from the dead!

Q v.22: What is the next responsibility you see? [Have sincere love (phileo) for your brothers and love one another deeply with a “sincere love,” from the heart. Peter used two different words for love: *PHILADELPHIA*, which is “brotherly love,” and *AGAPE*, which is godlike sacrificial love. It is important that we share both kinds of love. We share brotherly love because we are brothers and sisters in Christ and have likenesses. We share *AGAPE* love because we belong to God and therefore can overlook differences.]

Q: How do we fulfill that responsibility? What does “sincere love” look like? [With a changed heart – it’s an agape love that is without hypocrisy. Not only is this love a spiritual love, but it is a *sincere* love (“unfeigned”). We love “with a pure heart.” Our motive is not to get but to give. There is a kind of “success psychology” popular today that enables a person to subtly manipulate others in order to get what he wants. If our love is sincere and from a pure heart, we could never “use people” for our own advantage.]

LOOK:

For those who are Christ-followers who enjoy the gift of salvation, we have some responsibilities to work out that salvation. Let’s be intentional to love our brothers and sisters in Christ with a sincere love and agape love.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 2, pp. 397-400). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

The Judgment of God (1 Peter 1:17)

As God's children, we need to be serious about sin and about holy living. Our Heavenly Father is a holy (John 17:11) and righteous Father (John 17:25). He will not compromise with sin. He is merciful and forgiving, but He is also a loving disciplinarian who cannot permit His children to enjoy sin. After all, it was sin that sent His Son to the cross. If we call God "Father," then we should reflect His nature.

What is this judgment that Peter wrote about? It is the judgment of a believer's works. It has nothing to do with salvation, except that salvation ought to produce good works (Titus 1:16; 2:7, 12). When we trusted Christ, God forgave our sins and declared us righteous in His Son (Rom. 5:1-10; 8:1-4; Col. 2:13). Our sins have already been judged on the cross (1 Peter 2:24), and therefore they cannot be held against us (Heb. 10:10-18).

But when the Lord returns, there will be a time of judgment called "the Judgment Seat of Christ" (Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:9-10). Each of us will give an account of his works, and each will receive the appropriate reward. This is a "family judgment," the Father dealing with His beloved children. The Greek word translated *JUDGETH* carries the meaning "to judge in order to find something good." God will search into the motives for our ministry; He will examine our hearts. But He assures us that His purpose is to glorify Himself in our lives and ministries, "and then shall every man have praise of God" (1 Cor. 4:5). What an encouragement!

God will give us many gifts and privileges, as we grow in the Christian life; but He will never give us the privilege to disobey and sin. He never pampers His children or indulges them. He is no respecter of persons. He "shows no partiality and accepts no bribes" (Deut. 10:17). "For God does not show favoritism" (Rom. 2:11). Years of obedience cannot purchase an hour of disobedience. If one of His children disobeys, God must chasten (Heb. 12:1-13). But when His child obeys and serves Him in love, He notes that and prepares the proper reward.

Peter reminded his readers that they were only "sojourners" on earth. Life was too short to waste in disobedience and sin (see 1 Peter 4:1-6). It was when Lot stopped being a sojourner, and became a resident in Sodom, that he lost his consecration and his testimony. Everything he lived for went up in smoke! Keep reminding yourself that you are a "stranger and pilgrim" in this world (1 Peter 1:1; 2:11).

In view of the fact that the Father lovingly disciplines His children today, and will judge their works in the future, we ought to cultivate an attitude of godly fear. This is not the cringing fear of a slave before a master, but the loving reverence of a child before his father. It is not fear of judgment (1 John 4:18), but a fear of disappointing Him or sinning against His love. It is "godly fear" (2 Cor. 7:1), a sober reverence for the Father.

I sometimes feel that there is today an increase in carelessness, even flippancy, in the way we talk about God or talk to God. Nearly a century ago, Bishop B.F. Westcott said, "Every year makes me tremble at the daring with which people speak of spiritual things." The godly bishop should hear what is said today! A worldly actress calls God "the Man upstairs." A baseball player calls Him "the great Yankee in the sky." An Old Testament Jew so feared God that he would not even pronounce His holy name, yet we today speak of God with carelessness and

irreverence. In our public praying, we sometimes get so familiar that other people wonder whether we are trying to express our requests or impress the listeners with our nearness to God!

The Love of God (1 Peter 1:18–21)

This is the highest motive for holy living. In this paragraph, Peter reminded his readers of their salvation experience, a reminder that all of us regularly need. This is one reason our Lord established the Lord's Supper, so that regularly His people would remember that He died for them. Note the reminders that Peter gave.

He reminded them of *what they were*. To begin with, they were slaves who needed to be set free. The word *redeemed* is, to us, a theological term; but it carried a special meaning to people in the first-century Roman Empire. There were probably 60 million slaves in the Empire! Many slaves became Christians and fellowshipped in the local assemblies. A slave could purchase his own freedom, if he could collect sufficient funds; or his master could sell him to someone who would pay the price and set him free. Redemption was a precious thing in that day.

We must never forget the slavery of sin (Titus 3:3). Moses urged Israel to remember that they had been slaves in Egypt (Deut. 5:15; 16:12; 24:18, 22). The generation that died in the wilderness forgot the bondage of Egypt and wanted to go back!

Not only did we have a life of slavery, but it was also a life of *emptiness*. Peter called it “the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers” (1 Peter 1:18), and he described it more specifically in 1 Peter 4:1–4. At the time, these people thought their lives were “full” and “happy,” when they were really empty and miserable. Unsaved people today are blindly living on substitutes.

While ministering in Canada, I met a woman who told me she had been converted early in life but had drifted into a “society life” that was exciting and satisfied her ego. One day, she was driving to a card party and happened to tune in a Christian radio broadcast. At that very moment, the speaker said, “Some of you women know more about cards than you do your Bible!” Those words arrested her. God spoke to her heart, she went back home, and from that hour her life was dedicated fully to God. She saw the futility and vanity of a life spent out of the will of God.

Peter not only reminded them of what they were, but he also reminded them *of what Christ did*. He shed His precious blood to purchase us out of the slavery of sin and set us free forever. *To redeem* means “to set free by paying a price.” A slave could be freed with the payment of money, but no amount of money can set a lost sinner free. Only the blood of Jesus Christ can redeem us.

Peter was a witness of Christ's sufferings (1 Peter 5:1) and mentioned His sacrificial death often in this letter (1 Peter 2:21ff; 3:18; 4:1, 13; 5:1). In calling Christ “a Lamb,” Peter was reminding his readers of an Old Testament teaching that was important in the early church, and that ought to be important to us today. It is the doctrine of substitution: an innocent victim giving his life for the guilty.

The doctrine of sacrifice begins in Genesis 3, when God killed animals that He might clothe Adam and Eve. A ram died for Isaac (Gen. 22:13) and the Passover lamb was slain for each Jewish household (Ex. 12). Messiah was presented as an innocent Lamb in Isaiah 53. Isaac asked the question, “Where is the lamb?” (Gen. 22:7) and John the Baptist answered it when he pointed to Jesus and said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). In heaven, the redeemed and the angels sing, “Worthy is the Lamb!” (Rev. 5:11–14)

Peter made it clear that Christ's death was an appointment, not an accident; for it was ordained by God before the foundation of the world (Acts 2:23). From the human perspective,

our Lord was cruelly murdered; but from the divine perspective, He laid down His life for sinners (John 10:17–18). But He was raised from the dead! Now, anyone who trusts Him will be saved for eternity.

When you and I meditate on the sacrifice of Christ for us, certainly we should want to obey God and live holy lives for His glory.

CHRISTIAN TOGETHERNESS

1 Peter 1:22–2:10

One of the painful facts of life is that the people of God do not always get along with each other. You would think that those who walk in *hope* and *holiness* would be able to walk in *harmony*, but this is not always true. From God’s divine point of view, there is only one body (see Eph. 4:4–6); but what we see with human eyes is a church divided and sometimes at war. There is today a desperate need for spiritual unity.

In this section of his letter, Peter emphasized spiritual unity by presenting four vivid pictures of the church.

We Are Children in the Same Family (1 Peter 1:22–25)

When you consider the implications of this fact, you will be encouraged to build and maintain unity among God’s people.

We have experienced the same birth (vv. 23–25). The only way to enter God’s spiritual family is by a spiritual birth, through faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:1–16). Just as there are two parents in physical birth, so there are two parents in spiritual birth: the Spirit of God (John 3:5–6) and the Word of God (1 Peter 1:23). The new birth gives to us a new nature (2 Peter 1:4) as well as a new and living hope (1 Peter 1:3).

Our first birth was a birth of “flesh,” and the flesh is corruptible. Whatever is born of flesh is destined to die and decay. This explains why mankind cannot hold civilization together: it is all based on human flesh and is destined to fall apart. Like the beautiful flowers of spring, man’s works look successful for a time, but then they start to decay and die. All the way from the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11, to “Babylon the Great” in Revelation 17–18, man’s great attempts at unity are destined to fail.

If we try to build unity in the church on the basis of our first birth, we will fail; but if we build unity on the basis of the new birth, it will succeed. Each believer has the same Holy Spirit dwelling within (Rom. 8:9). We call on the same Father (1 Peter 1:17) and share His divine nature. We trust the same Word, and that Word will never decay or disappear. We have trusted the same Gospel and have been born of the same Spirit. The *externals* of the flesh that could divide us mean nothing when compared with the *eternals* of the Spirit that unite us.

We express the same love (v. 22). Peter used two different words for love: *PHILADELPHIA*, which is “brotherly love,” and *AGAPE*, which is godlike sacrificial love. It is important that we share both kinds of love. We share brotherly love because we are brothers and sisters in Christ and have likenesses. We share *AGAPE* love because we belong to God and therefore can overlook differences.

By nature, all of us are selfish; so it took a miracle of God to give us this love. Because we “obeyed the truth through the Spirit,” God purified our souls and poured His love into our hearts

(Rom. 5:5). Love for the brethren is an evidence that we truly have been born of God (1 John 4:7–21). Now we are “obedient children” (1 Peter 1:14) who no longer want to live in the selfish desires of the old life.

It is tragic when people try to “manufacture” love, because the product is obviously cheap and artificial. “The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords” (Ps. 55:21). The love that we share with each other, and with a lost world, must be generated by the Spirit of God. It is a *constant* power in our lives, and not something that we turn on and off like a radio.

Not only is this love a spiritual love, but it is a *sincere* love (“unfeigned”). We love “with a pure heart.” Our motive is not to get but to give. There is a kind of “success psychology” popular today that enables a person to subtly manipulate others in order to get what he wants. If our love is sincere and from a pure heart, we could never “use people” for our own advantage.

This love is also a *fervent* love, and this is an athletic term that means “striving with all of one’s energy.” Love is something we have to work at, just as an Olympic contestant has to work at his particular skills. Christian love is not a feeling; it is a matter of the will. We show love to others when we treat them the same way God treats us. God forgives us, so we forgive others. God is kind to us, so we are kind to others. It is not a matter of *feeling* but of *willing*, and this is something we must constantly work at if we are to succeed.

We have two wonderful “assistants” to help us: the Word of God and the Spirit of God. The same truth that we trusted and obeyed to become God’s children also nurtures and empowers us. *It is impossible to love the truth and hate the brethren.* The Spirit of God produces the “fruit of the Spirit” in our lives, and the first of these is love (Gal. 5:22–23). If we are filled with the Word of God (Col. 3:16ff) and the Spirit of God (Eph. 5:18ff), we will manifest the love of God in our daily experiences.

Pentecost, J. D. (1985). Daniel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 1, pp. 843-844). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

2. THE PRICE (1:17–21)

The high cost of salvation—the beloved Son’s precious blood—calls for believers to live in reverent fear before God. Holy living is motivated by a God-fearing faith which does not take lightly what was purchased at so great a cost.

1:17–19. Obedient children know the holy nature and just character of this One who **judges ... impartially**. Their right to call God **Father** leads to their obeying Him **in reverent fear**. So they are to live according to His absolute standards, **as strangers** (cf. “aliens” in 2:11) to the world’s shifting, situational ethics. “Reverent fear” is evidenced by a tender conscience, a watchfulness against temptation, and avoiding things that would displease God. Children of obedience should also be strangers to their former **empty way of life** (cf. v. 14) **handed down** from their forebears, since they have been **redeemed** (*elytrōthēte*, from *lytroō*, “to pay a ransom”) **with the precious** (cf. 2:4, 6–7) **blood of Christ** (cf. 1:2). That redemption is a purchasing from the marketplace of sin, a ransom not paid by silver or gold, which perish (cf. v. 7), but with the priceless blood of a perfect **Lamb**. Similar to the sacrificial lambs which were to be **without ... defect**, Christ was sinless, uniquely qualified as “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29; cf. Heb. 9:14).

1:20–21. This payment for sin was planned **before the Creation of the world** and **revealed** for people’s sake through the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. (The present Age is **these last times** [v. 20] whereas the coming Age is “the last time” [v. 5].) It is through Christ, whom the Father resurrected (cf. v. 3) and **glorified** in His Ascension (John 17:5; Heb. 1:3) that people may come to know and trust **in God**. As a result of God’s eternal plan and priceless payment for sin, **faith and hope** can be placed in Him. (Cf. “faith” in 1 Peter 1:5, 7, 9; and “hope” in vv. 3, 13.)

3. THE PURIFICATION (1:22–25)

The response of holy living that should result from the new birth is now applied to three areas. Obedience to the truth purifies and produces (a) a sincere love for the brethren (1:22–25), (b) repentance from sin (2:1), and (c) a desire for spiritual growth (2:2).

1:22. Holy living demands purification. A positive result of **obeying the truth** is a purified life (cf. v. 2b). “How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to Your Word” (Ps. 119:9). As trials refine faith, so obedience to God’s Word refines character. One who has **purified** himself by living according to God’s Word has discovered the joy of obedience.

A changed life should also be evidenced by a changed relationship with God’s other children. A purified life allows one to love purely those who share the same faith. **Sincere** (*anypokriton*) could also be rendered “without hypocrisy.” All evil thoughts and feelings regarding one’s **brothers** and sisters in Christ must be removed, for His followers are **to love ... deeply, from the heart**. This kind of loving (*agapēsate*, from *agapē*) can come only from a changed heart, from one whose motives are pure, and who seeks to give more than he takes. This love is to be expressed not shallowly but “deeply” (*ektenōs*, “at full stretch” or “in an all-out manner, with an intense strain”; cf. *ektenē* in 1 Peter 4:8).

1:23–25. Peter again reminded his readers that they had experienced the new birth (cf. v. 3): **For you have been born again**. This supernatural event made it possible for them to obey the truth, purify themselves, and love the brethren. This change in their lives would not die, because it took place through God’s **Word**, which is **imperishable** (*aphthartou*, the word in v. 4 that described a believer’s inheritance), **living and enduring**. Peter supported his exhortation (v. 22) by quoting Isaiah 40:6–8 (1 Peter 1:24–25). All that is born of perishable seed withers and falls, but God’s Word **stands forever**. This imperishable Word was the content of Peter’s preaching (cf. v. 12). His hearers must be affected by its life-changing power, as indicated in 2:1–3.