

1 Peter 1.13-2.3 Sermon [Church of the Open Bible / 07.14.13]

- † **Introduction:** [Slide 1: Title Page] [PRAY] I used to teach college economics. I would tell the students that my honest goal for the semester was to help them become smarter about economics than 90% of Congress and 100% of reporters. It was fun, because introductory economics is fairly easy to learn and immediately useful in life.
- I was surprised to find in graduate school that economics at that level is all mathematical modeling. You know how people say, “This ain’t rocket science”? Well, we learned rocket science! We learned a formula that NASA used in planning how to send a rocket around a distant planet at a certain date. It’s called a Hamiltonian, named after the American who stole it from the Russians. One time, we had a formula that was three blackboards long; the teacher was struggling to solve it even using her notes, but the lady sitting next to me, who was from China, was solving it in her head. I wasn’t that smart! But what I could do was see whether something we were learning would be useful or not. One day, we were discussing a model of the economy; after a while, I said, “This model has no basis in reality”; the professor turned to me and replied, “That’s no reason to abandon such an elegant model!”
 - Sometimes there is a disconnect in academia between theory and application. If I were teaching you economics, I could teach you the useful theories, but not show you how to use them for real life decisions; or I could teach you how economics is relevant to your life, but not any of the useful theories. Which would be best, to learn the theory alone, the application alone, both?
- † Now let’s consider the Bible. If we learn all that the Bible has to say, but we never let it change us, we never apply it to our way of thinking or behaving, then what good is the knowledge? Not much: the Bible says such people are deceiving themselves.
- On the other hand, what if we try to apply all that the Bible tells us to do, but we never learn the theology, the beliefs, which are the reason for the commands? Then we are trying to change ourselves in our own power, which ultimately will fail.
 - God wants us to learn all that he has revealed in scripture – the theology and the commands – so that the Holy Spirit can interact with God’s Word to renew our minds and thus transform our characters. As we experience this renewal and transformation, we will change how we live.
- † Last week, we began to study the letter of 1 Peter. Peter wrote this letter to some believers who had been deported from their homes and exiled into areas of what is now northern Turkey, such as Cappadocia, pictured here. The local pagans were persecuting the readers because of their faith. The Christians felt confused, frightened, and ashamed, and they wondered if God had forgotten them or stopped loving them.
- We learned in the first twelve verses that we can continue to experience hope and joy, and to offer God our praise and thanks, even when we are suffering, if we understand the fullness of our salvation, because then we can know that God will never stop loving us, and ultimately he will deliver us out of the struggles of this life and into a glorious inheritance in Heaven.
 - That first sermon was very theological; the main action step was to change the way we think about, and respond to, suffering. This week, we will focus more on action, as Peter will take us through five ways we should respond to the theology we learned last week.
- † Verse 13 begins with the Greek word *διό*, meaning “therefore,” or “for this reason”; it connects everything in today’s passage with what we learned in the first twelve verses.

- For each of Peter's five points, I will state the response he desires in us, we will look at the Scriptures, and then I will elaborate for a couple of minutes before moving on to the next point. I hope you will see how Peter connects the theology and commands in this passage.

[Slide 2: v.13] Peter's First Point: Because we have this promise of deliverance out of suffering and into a glorious inheritance with God, we must place all our hope in God's grace that comes through Christ. We must place all our hope in God's grace that comes through Christ.

† We begin with 1.13. If you are not sure how to find 1 Peter in your Bible, I suggest you look it up in the table of contents so you can learn where it is. I am reading from the New English Translation.

1 Peter 1.13 NET: ¹³ Therefore, get your minds ready for action by being fully sober, and set your hope completely on the grace that will be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed.

- † Christ being revealed refers to when Christ returns. The response Peter is looking for is that we set our hope completely on Christ resurrecting us to complete our salvation when he returns. That was an important point in the last sermon, and Peter reiterates it here in this transitional verse.
- We have this promise of salvation and deliverance, but do we really trust it? The Bible says there is a Triune God of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that Jesus was both a man and the divine Son of God, that he died to pay our penalty for sin, and was resurrected from the dead on the third day. Are you willing to bet your life on that? Are you willing to bet your eternal life on it? Because that is what we mean when we say do you believe: are you willing to bet your eternal life on it? Today's question is a little different: Are you willing to base your life on it?
- † It is easy to begin hedging your bets. Some people believe in Christ and his sacrifice, but still think at least in part they are earning their way to Heaven. I once was trying to deserve the grace I knew I had received, as if I could prove that God was right to forgive me. Friends of mine believe they have to obey enough or avoid sinning too much or do specific activities in their church to get to Heaven. According to the Bible, all of this is wrong thinking.
- Other people say they believe in Christ, but then turn to the occult when they need deliverance, look to their horoscopes for guidance, and knock on wood to keep bad things from happening. If that is you, then you need to stop. If you want to be a good witness, next time someone asks you what is your sign, tell them, "The sign of the cross!"
 - Listen, we must put all our hope, all our trust, in God delivering us through our struggles and then ultimately into our inheritance in Heaven and resurrection when Christ returns. Only that complete trust is indicative of true faith.
- † So how do we protect ourselves from getting tempted into hedging? Peter says we should respond by getting our minds ready for action and being fully sober.
- In Greek, it says, "having bound up the loins of your minds." To bind up your loins meant to pull up the skirt of your tunic, so you could free your legs for action. Peter wants us to prepare our minds, to get them ready to focus our hope and trust on God.
 - Also, we should stay fully sober. The Greek verb νήφω means to stay self-controlled, well balanced. The idea is that we should prepare to focus and then we should stay focused and not be whimsical or negligent about it.
 - If we prepare and are careful to stay focused on God's promise of deliverance, we should be able to keep our hope and trust there.

- † So the question is, how can we focus and keep our minds focused on God's grace?
- I would suggest that the more time you spend with God in prayer, worship, and Bible study, the more likely you are to set and keep your mind on his grace. You should be doing each of these activities every day. **[Slide 3: stats]** We are the Church of the Open Bible, and based on your interaction feedback last week, it does seem that most of us do open our Bibles. 93% of those who responded said they study during the week and 41% said they study five or more days each week.
 - Where we are soft is in memorizing scripture. Only 17% of respondents said they actively were memorizing scripture right now and only 31% said they had memorized many passages already. I think it would be useful to memorize key verses, one a week, starting with v.13 which reminds us to stay focused on God's grace. If you memorize a verse, then the Holy Spirit can call it to your mind when you need to hear it. Also, memorizing a verse is a great way to dwell on it, reflect on it, and that will help you own it and be renewed by it. I am terrible at memorizing anything, but I learned about 1000 Greek and Hebrew words one year for seminary. You can memorize one verse a week if you practice it several times every day. Write it out on an index card or the back of a business card and carry it with you. After you learn it, you will only need to practice it once a week or so to keep it fresh in your mind. You can keep the verses you already have learned in the car and go over them at red lights, or take them to work and practice when you take a break.
 - You also could read good books that elaborate on what Christ has done for you. 69% of respondents last week said they typically read or listen to other theological teachings. I want to recommend two books today that will help you focus on God's grace. The first is Chuck Swindoll's *The Grace Awakening*. Dallas Seminary used to make all students read this before they attended any classes. It is easy to read, but is a powerful teaching on God's grace. After you have read this book, if you want something that goes a little deeper, I recommend John Stott's *The Cross of Christ*. It is a little harder to read, but worth the effort, as he explains in more detail what it means to be saved. Both are available in electronic and audio formats too.
 - One more idea. It would greatly help if you were experiencing biblical community with other people in this church. Gather with your friends – or people who will become your friends – and help each other live out your faith. Encourage each other and provide accountability, so that you all stay focused on depending on God's grace instead of turning to worldly coping mechanisms.

[Slide 4: vv.14-16] Peter's Second Point: Because we have this promise of deliverance out of suffering and into a glorious inheritance with God, we must become pure and obedient to God. We must become pure and obedient to God.

1 Peter 1.14-16 NET: ¹⁴ Like obedient children, do not comply with the evil urges you used to follow in your ignorance, ¹⁵ but, like the Holy One who called you, become holy yourselves in all of your conduct, ¹⁶ for it is written, "You shall be holy, because I am holy."

- † The last sentence is a quotation from Leviticus in the Old Testament. God wants us to become like him. Genesis says God made us in his image, to reflect his character and represent him on Earth. And God is bringing believers through a process called progressive sanctification, in which the Holy Spirit purifies our character so that we become more godly and less sinful.
- † We respond to God's grace by not complying with the evil urges we used to follow in our ignorance. When we didn't know God or much about him, we were easily led into sin, because we followed our urges, emotions, or feelings; like jealousy, hate and anger, desire for revenge, sexual lust, material lust, power lust, the desire to escape or get high...

- But now we have new spiritual life from God and we desire to be like him, so we willingly resist these urges and stop behaving like non-believers.
 - We also respond by seeking to become holy in all things, because God is holy. To be holy is to be separated out for God's purposes, it implies purity in character and action.
- † Tell me, does it make sense to say you can trust God with your salvation, your eternal life, but then not trust God with your life on Earth also? No, and because we trust God, we are willing to obey him.
- God designed you and he designed people to live a certain way to experience many blessings. What God wants to do is keep the best of your unique individual characteristics, but purify your character to be like Christ, so that you will become how God intended you to be and you'll be more equipped to handle life.
 - If we choose to follow our fleshly urges instead of God, we choose to turn away in our relationship with him. We don't give up our salvation, but we do give up many blessings associated with walking with God and living the way he designed us to live; we are hurting ourselves. And – since by rebelling, we now are following Satan – we end up supporting the work of evil in our culture.
 - So we need to work each day at walking with God, following Christ, and yielding to the Holy Spirit, because we want to reflect God's character in everything we do, say, and even think.
- † Answer this question to yourself. Are there areas of sin in your life that need to stop? Are you doing things that you know are wrong? Part of the good news for believers, part of our deliverance, is that Christ has set you free from bondage to sin, so sin no longer has its full power over you. You will still be tempted, but now you have the ability, moment by moment, to choose to walk with God instead of sin.
- More than likely, all of us in here could be more obedient to the positive commands of Scripture. There are forty-something one-another verses we need to obey, such as love one another, encourage one another, accept one another, be hospitable to one another, and serve one another. And Christ has called every one of us to be involved in sharing the gospel with non-believers, teaching other believers how to walk with God, and worshipping passionately.
 - Reflect this week on what you need to do to be more obedient, more pure, to better walk in God's will, and to better reflect his character to the world.

[Slide 5: vv.17-21] Peter's Third Point: Because we have this promise of deliverance out of suffering and into a glorious inheritance with God, we must show God reverence at all times. We must show God reverence at all times.

1 Peter 1.17-21 NET: ¹⁷ And if you address as Father the one who impartially judges according to each one's work, live out the time of your temporary residence here in reverence. ¹⁸ You know that from your empty way of life inherited from your ancestors you were ransomed– not by perishable things like silver or gold, ¹⁹ but by precious blood like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb, namely Christ. ²⁰ He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was manifested in these last times for your sake. ²¹ Through him you now trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

- † Christ is eternal – God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit have always existed – but Christ was “manifested,” the Greek verb φανερώω means he was revealed to us, twenty centuries ago.

- One blessing Christ brings us is that we can trust and hope in God because of Christ's death and resurrection. We talked before about how God's plan for salvation was that Christ the Son of God would come to Earth, live a pure human life, die to pay the penalty for our sins, and be resurrected from the dead on the third day. All we have to do is believe in the gospel promise of salvation through this sacrifice. So through Christ, we can put our trust and hope in God.
- † A second blessing Christ brings is that, while we once had an empty way of life, Christ has redeemed or ransomed us into a life of purpose and holiness. We are to live like citizens of Heaven, even though we temporarily are residing here.
- When the Bible says Christ redeemed or ransomed us, it means Christ bought us out of our punishment and condemnation when he took the penalty for our sins on the cross. Peter says Christ paid with his blood, like that of a perfect lamb, referring to the sacrifices God demanded from his people before Christ died and the New Covenant began.
 - Christ ransomed you for a purpose. As you become more like Christ, God wants to use your godly character and your unique characteristics to bless others. God has a purpose for you in his ministry plan! Part of that purpose is universal – we all are called to share the gospel and help others grow in faith – but how you will do those things will be unique and part of your purpose also will be unique to you.
 - God calls some to foreign missions, others to minister to addicts, others to teach children, others to hold lunch time Bible studies for coworkers, others to pray fervently. As you grow more like Christ, you will be more equipped to do God's work, whatever it is he has for you.
- † Because we can trust and hope in God through Christ and because we have been redeemed into a life of purpose and obedience, we are empowered to respond by showing reverence for God at all times.
- Peter reminds us that God will judge believers for their lives. We shouldn't need that encouragement: God is the one who created us and saves us and transforms us and blesses us in every way, so it should be easy to show him the respect he deserves. But it's not, is it?
 - So we need to be reminded that our loving God is also God Almighty! He is good, but he is dangerous. God created the universe by speaking! He can destroy it just as easily. He is a potent force in your life, even if you don't realize it. He deserves our reverence, our respect, and even our healthy fear.
- † Ask yourself how you could show more respect to God day to day, even beyond obeying better. Could you think about God's priorities more before you make decisions, especially with how to allocate your free time or money? Could you speak more highly of God to others? Could you make more time to worship God in prayer and song each day? Could you depend on God more completely, instead of relying on yourself? This week, think about how you could show God more reverence.

[Slide 6: vv.22-25] Peter's Fourth Point: Because we have this promise of deliverance out of suffering and into a glorious inheritance with God, we must learn to love each other sincerely and earnestly. We must learn to love each other sincerely and earnestly.

1 Peter 1.22-25 NET: ²² You have purified your souls by obeying the truth in order to show sincere mutual love. So love one another earnestly from a pure heart. ²³ You have been born anew, not from perishable but from imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God. ²⁴ For all flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of the grass; the grass withers and the flower falls off, ²⁵ but the word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the word that was proclaimed to you.

- † Verses 24 and part of 25 are a quotation from Isaiah 40, in which Isaiah said that the nations could not thwart God’s will or word, that the nations, as mighty as they might seem, would perish, but God’s promise of deliverance for his people would live on. In Peter’s day, this would encourage his readers, who were suffering in the powerful nation of Rome, to look forward to God’s deliverance through the gospel.
- † It is good that Peter reminds us that God’s Word is eternal, which means in part that God faithfully keeps his promises. The promise in the gospel is that through Christ’s sacrifice we can be pardoned from our sins, released from our bondage to sin, and delivered into a relationship with God and eternal life with him. We are born anew by this gospel, God’s eternal Word, which empowers us to respond by loving each other.
- † Peter says we should love each other sincerely and earnestly, or fervently. The Greek word ἐκτενῶς implies a constancy to the effort. We know from other New Testament teachings that God’s kind of love is sacrificial and unconditional, that it involves putting the needs of other people first. Peter suggests it cannot be a whimsical thing, we cannot wait for an impulse to do something nice, instead we must put forth a constant, earnest effort to show love to others.
- † How can we do this? We might begin by living out those forty-something one-another verses, because they show us how to love in God’s way.
 - Beyond that, could you volunteer to help someone or give money for those in need? We are collecting school supplies and money right now for underprivileged children.
 - Would you be willing to host a Bible study at your house or to visit shut-ins and hospital patients? Right now, Hilma and Jack could use visitation, as could Celia’s sister Darlene.
 - Are you willing to help in the Children’s or teen ministry so the next generation grows up to know God? We have VBS coming up on the 28th, could you help in some way? Even if you are not good with children, we can find other tasks for willing servants.
 - Can you become an encourager, boosting people’s morale and helping them walk with God?
 - I bet there are over a hundred ways we could love each other better, so pray this week about how you want to love people more effectively and intentionally.

[Slide 7: vv.2.1-3] Peter’s Fifth Point: Because we have this promise of deliverance out of suffering and into a glorious inheritance with God, we must focus on getting nourished by God so we grow more godly in character and lifestyle. we must focus on getting nourished by God so we grow more godly in character and lifestyle.

1 Peter 2.1-3 NET: So get rid of all evil and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. ² And yearn like newborn infants for pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up to salvation, ³ if you have experienced the Lord’s kindness.

- † The NET lets us down in the last sentence: the Greek literally says, “if you have tasted that the Lord is good.” This is a quotation from Psalm 34.8, in which to taste that the Lord is good is to take refuge in him, to trust him for deliverance.
 - If we have put our trust in God’s deliverance through the gospel, then we also must turn to him and depend on him for the pure spiritual milk that will transform us into his image, to be like Christ, as he intended all along. That’s what Peter means by saying we may grow up to salvation: that we may become the pure person God created us and saved us to be.

- † We respond first by giving up the selfish, negative, attitudes of the flesh. It is not acceptable for us to do or speak evil, and Peter particularly notes we are not to be untruthful or harmful to others.
 - † But we cannot change in our own power. We cannot become more obedient, reverent, loving, or dependent on God simply by our own will power. Rather, we must respond by seeking nourishment from God's grace, if we want to grow to be like Christ.
 - This is where a lot of Christians fail: they get confident in their God-given abilities and start to feel self sufficient or even that they are as transformed as they need to be. What happens is that they stagnate: there is no staying level spiritually; if you are not growing more like Christ, then you are getting weaker and sliding back into the world.
 - † It is the Holy Spirit who works the transformation in us, but the Bible instructs us in how to avail ourselves of the means which the Holy Spirit uses.
 - These means include praying, worshipping, serving in the church, doing evangelism, participating in biblical community, confessing sins to God, and – of course – absorbing more of the revelation God has provided in the Bible.
 - If you are not spending time in prayer and Bible study every day, then you really are hampering your own growth, and thus lessening the blessing that can come to you. Even if you have read the whole Bible many times, God can still reveal more to you if you come with a willing spirit. We have provided you with a five-day devotion on this passage, if you are interested in learning it better and applying it more.
 - These are ways the Bible says we can get spiritual milk. As you pray, God might lead you to other things specific for you, but these are activities we all definitely should incorporate into our lifestyles.
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- † **[Slide 8: Title Page] Conclusion:** Let me summarize: Because we have this promise of deliverance out of our suffering and into a glorious inheritance in Heaven, we respond by putting all of our trust in God's grace that comes through Christ, obeying and revering God, loving each other fervently, and seeking spiritual nourishment from God. **[Prayer]**