

Reflections on 1 Peter 1.13-2.3

by Will Groben

Day 1

Learn: Pray for understanding and then read 1 Peter 1.1-13. Verse 13 starts with “Therefore.” The passage we will study this week is all based on the previous passage of verses 1-12. Each day this week, we will start with that “Therefore,” to remind ourselves that what we are learning is the direct result of what we have already learned.

[According to verses 1-12] Despite our present suffering, we can experience hope and joy because we are assured of our salvation and ultimate deliverance out of the trials of this life and into a wonderful inheritance in Heaven and eventual resurrection to life on a new Earth... Therefore [verse 13 says] prepare your mind and stay well balanced so you will put all your hope on God’s saving grace that comes through Christ. Even if we believe in Christ and his gospel, we can be tempted to hedge our bets, sometimes without even realizing it. We might hold on to good luck charms, follow superstitions, turn to the occult or horoscopes, start to feel we are earning at least part of our righteousness, or get drawn into New Age ways of thinking. It is easy to go astray, so Peter reminds his readers that we must prepare our minds to stay focused on trusting only in God’s grace and then stay well balanced [or sober-minded] to remain so focused.

Reflect: Do you ever wonder if God will not take you to Heaven or not resurrect your body, even though you believe in the gospel? From what source do such doubts come? Do you get tempted into human ways of coping with fear and the unknown, such as the ones mentioned above? Are you trying to control your destiny, to co-pilot with God, or are you trusting fully in him? What can you do to be more consciously focused on trusting in God’s grace and not other things? One suggestion might be to memorize verse 13 and repeat it to yourself every day! The more we learn about Christ and the nature of his salvation for us, the more prepared we will be to cling to these truths and act on them.

Day 2

Learn: Pray and then read 1 Peter 1.13-16. *Despite our present suffering, we can experience hope and joy because we are assured of our salvation and ultimate deliverance out of the trials of this life and into a wonderful inheritance in Heaven and eventual resurrection to life on a new Earth... Therefore [verses 14-16 say] we must learn to be pure, obedient, and conformed to God’s character.* We must learn to be obedient children of God, because we are God’s adopted children, who are living as exiles here, immersed in a sinful culture but experiencing the purifying process of progressive sanctification [which we learned about last week]. That purifying process will lead us to be conformed to God’s character instead of to the fleshly lusts that guided us before we knew God. We must seek to be holy [pure and focused on being used for God’s purposes], because God is holy [Leviticus 11.45; 19.2; 20.26] and he created us to reflect his image and represent him here in our culture. The end goal of our sanctification process is to make us be like Christ, who perfectly reflected the image of God the Father and represented him completely while on Earth. As we put our trust and hope in God’s deliverance, we will seek to become more obedient. Because we trust God, we obey him. God gave us complete transformation from spiritual death to spiritual life, so he seeks complete transformation in our character to reflect that change, which will lead to complete transformation in our lifestyles too.

Reflect: Are there any areas of life in which you know you are disobeying biblical instruction or God’s will? Are there any aspects of your character that you know need to improve? Begin to pray for God to work on you in these areas. Desiring to submit and conform to God is the first step, then comes actually submitting, followed by success in conforming. It takes our lifetime for us to become more like Christ, more like God designed us to be, but that’s ok, we just focus each day on doing our best. Being holy is not only about avoiding the negative things, it also is about doing the positive things Christ taught, such as serving others, giving generously to the church and to those in need, sharing your faith with non-believers and teaching and encouraging other believers [which means you need to be well read in the Scriptures!], being involved in Christian community, worshipping passionately, praying diligently, and so on. Do you need to step up a little in any of these areas?

Day 3

Learn: Pray and then read 1 Peter 1.17-21. *Despite our present suffering, we can experience hope and joy because we are assured of our salvation and ultimate deliverance out of the trials of this life and into a wonderful inheritance in Heaven and eventual resurrection to life on a new Earth... Therefore [verses 17-21 say] we must learn to be reverent toward God while we are on Earth, because God delivered us out of our futile lifestyle through the blood of Christ, which is why we put all our faith and hope in God.* Most English translations note that verse 17 refers again to our exile status as temporary residents in this culture. While non-believers around us pursue lives without godly purpose and with ungodly activities, we must learn to respect God and his desires for us when we make decisions about what to do, say, or even

think. We once were mired in sin, ignorant of God, unsaved, condemned to Hell. Through the awful death of Christ, whose bloody sacrifice paid the penalty for our sins, God has redeemed [delivered, bought, liberated] us out of that mess and into a life of purpose and value, a relationship with him, eternal life and the promise of better things to come. For this reason, we need to show God proper respect and even healthy fear [reverence includes both] as we go through this life, understanding that God will judge us for our works. And again Peter reminds us that because our salvation is from God through Christ's sacrifice, we must put all our faith and hope in God and his promise, not in anything else. Reverence and trust will lead to obedience. [If you are interested in the perfect lamb imagery, see Exodus 12 and Isaiah 53.]

Reflect: If you think it would be useful, go through the questions of Day 1 again, to continue assessing whether you are placing all your hope and faith in God. Are you ever careless about your relationship with God? Most of us are at times. Do you neglect to pray some days? Do you neglect to study God's Word in the Bible carefully, so he can speak to you daily and so you can learn about him and his ways? Do you find times and ways to worship, or is this not a priority for you? Do you rationalize or make excuses for your sins, or are you trying your hardest to avoid them and quick to confess and repent when you mess up? Are there any ways you could show more reverence toward God?

Day 4

Learn: Pray and then read 1 Peter 1.22-25. *Despite our present suffering, we can experience hope and joy because we are assured of our salvation and ultimate deliverance out of the trials of this life and into a wonderful inheritance in Heaven and eventual resurrection to life on a new Earth...* Therefore [verses 22-25 say] we should be experiencing a growing capability to love others, and we should seek to love others sincerely and fervently, because we are born again from the eternal Word of God in the gospel. Peter quoted Isaiah 40.6-8, a passage that asserted 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 of his covenant people would live on. In Peter's day, this would encourage his readers, who were suffering in the powerful nation 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 he faithfully keeps his promises. The promise in the gospel is that through Christ's sacrifice we can be pardoned for our sins, released from our punishment and our bondage to sin, and delivered into a relationship with God and eternal life with him. It is by faith in this promise that we are born again into this salvation, and that should result in God's love becoming more manifest in us, such that we begin to show more love to others, even to the point of it being "fervent." Again, this is a process of change, but we should sense our love for others growing and our willingness to sacrifice for them growing.

Reflect: How much of your money and your time do you use for your own benefit, and how much to bless others? In church, do you insist on your own priorities and desires, or do you seek to help out with whatever the pastor/elders need? Do other people think of you as loving? Do they think you show such abundant love that they can see Christ in you? Pray about feeling more love for others, and also to show love even when you don't feel it. What are some ways you could show more sacrificial love right now?

Day 5

Learn: Pray and then read 1 Peter 2.1-3. *Despite our present suffering, we can experience hope and joy because we are assured of our salvation and ultimate deliverance out of the trials of this life and into a wonderful inheritance in Heaven and eventual resurrection to life on a new Earth...* Therefore [verses 2.1-3 say] we should put aside negative attitudes and actions, and focus on getting more "spiritual milk" from God, so we can grow through the sanctification process, and thus become more godly and less sinful. In Psalm 34.8, to taste that the Lord is good is to take refuge in him, to trust him for deliverance. If we have done this, it is the necessary first step, but there is so much more that God wants for us! Just as God gave us life and we trust in him for deliverance, we also must rely on him to grow us into Christ-likeness. We have two choices: focus on the world's ways or God's ways; focus on the impulses of our sinful flesh or the instructions of God's Word; focus on being successful in this world or on being successful in reflecting God's character and representing him to this world. If we want to grow as Christians, to develop spiritually into the character of Christ, we must learn to live God's way and adopt his attitudes. This starts with reading the Bible every day, learning how to study it, memorizing key verses, receiving good teaching in church, and reflecting on all we learn in these activities.

Reflect: Do you make time to read or study God's Word every day? Are you in a good church that teaches what scripture says and means? How could you learn to study scripture better? Have you memorized any verses? You can memorize one each week, and practice the ones you know at red lights or other breaks in the day. Are there any negative emotions or attitudes you want God to take away? Pray about all these things, and commit to spending more time with your Bible on a daily basis. Be sure to reflect on what you read: it is better to read for ten minutes and reflect on what you read for ten more than to read for twenty.