



1 PETER 1.12-25 THIS IS THE GOSPEL

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The Fellowship of Ailbe

HOPE IN TIMES
OF SUFFERING



WHAT THE
PROPHETS SAW



REDEEMED TO
BE HOLY



STANDING ON
THE WORD



THE WHOLE
TRUTH

A ReVision Resource

This is the Gospel: 1 Peter 1.12-25

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1 Peter 1.12-25: Introduction

The Gospel is not about going to heaven when we die. Not *merely*, that is.

For the Gospel is not about dying, but living, living in holiness and hope, even in the midst of trials, suffering, and uncertainties.

This is what Peter wants his readers to understand. All the revelation of God from the Old Testament pointed forward to the glorious day of the coming of the Kingdom and salvation of the Lord. Now believers everywhere were coming to know what the prophets only glimpsed, but they were discovering that the Gospel is far more powerful than anything they might have imagined.

For in the midst of trials, the Gospel is unchanging. Its power for holiness remains, for it is grounded in the unfading, unassailable Word of God. All those who have the hope of the Gospel, therefore, can persevere in the midst of their trials, knowing the power of the Gospel to carry them through and lift them above all adversity as they rest their confidence in the Lord and His promises.

This is a message Christians in every age have cherished and live. And its just as lively, available, and true for us in our day.

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1 and 2 Peter can encourage, embolden, and instruct us, if we're willing to take the Apostle's words to heart. My prayer is that all who take up this study will do just that. Thank you for joining us.

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1 Get Your Mind in Gear!

1 Peter 1.12, 13

¹² To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven – things which angels desire to look into.

¹³Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, and be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The Story: How should we respond to the trials and suffering that come our way? Peter says we need to prepare our minds so that we can gain the victory from within. Note two things about this. First, we are to prepare our minds *for action*. We are to practice sobriety and hope as we look forward to the coming of Christ and our ultimate deliverance. Thus we may persevere in the calling which is ours as followers of Christ. The Christian life is an active life of good works, and not even the harshest trials must be allowed to turn us from our course and calling. Second, we must be sober-minded and keep in mind the whole context within which our trials come upon us. A sober-minded person has all his wits about him. He is not clouded in his thinking by some kind of inebriation of the world spirit. Rather, He drinks from the living water of Christ, and in the power of the Spirit, sees all of reality in all its glorious, unseen beauty (v. 8). Thus, by remaining focused on the reign of Christ and planning a course of good works, we may not only endure through trials, but grow stronger and more complete – just as God intends (v. 7). This was the message of the prophets, as they pointed God’s people forward to the coming of Christ (v. 12), and it’s a mystery so blessed and wondrous and beautiful that even angels strive to get a glimpse of it. Imagine, that this great story has been unfolded to and within us!

The Structure: Those who have been renewed in Christ are called to work for the restoration of all things, beginning right where they are. But just as a butterfly straining to escape the bonds of its chrysalis struggles and has to endure pain, so the Christian must expect to struggle against the spirit of the age in order to make progress in the life of faith. This requires a healthy mind, one firmly rooted in divine revelation and focused on the glory that is yet to come when Jesus returns to take us to Himself.

What specific activities do you engage in to strengthen your mind in the ways mentioned in this verse?

2 Be Holy!

1 Peter 1.14-16

¹⁴...as obedient children, not be conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance, ¹⁵but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

The Story: Christians are called to pursue holiness (2 Cor. 7.1), to be transformed in every area of their lives so that they reflect the reality of the risen Lord Jesus Christ, and herald His Kingdom by their lives and words. Before coming to know Christ believers were run around by their passions and ignorant of the true nature of their calling. Now, in Christ, not even suffering or trials must be allowed to deter the believer from his calling in life. Rather than living in ignorance of who we are and what our lives are supposed to be, we are to be sober-minded and clear-thinking, so that we can pursue holiness as God intends. Holiness is a condition of living that reflects the reality and glory of God in all our conduct. So even in times of trial, Christians press on to realize their high and holy calling, to be like Him Who died for them and in Whose righteousness alone they have been made acceptable to God.

The Structure: Certain pastors and teachers in the evangelical community these days give the impression that what God wants most of all for His people is that they should be happy or be prosperous. These are worldly distractions, rooted in self-serving passions, and will keep us from our true and only calling, which is to be like Jesus in every area of our lives. Peter will have a few things to say about false teachers in his second epistle, and his words are firm and fearful.

How do you measure progress in holiness in your own life?

3 Holiness with Fear

1 Peter 1.17-19

¹⁷And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear, ¹⁸knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

The Story: We don't hear much about the fear of God these days, but here is Peter, writing to those hard-pressed with trials, urging them to get their minds in gear to pursue holiness in the fear of God (2 Cor. 7.1). God, he reminds them, is continually watching over us, and He "judges impartially" what He sees. We know from the writer of Hebrews (12.3-11) that God takes seriously our call to holiness, so seriously, in fact, that He is able and willing even to bring discipline against us in order to move us along in the pursuit of righteousness. Peter's readers were a perfect example of how this works. God, seeing their earnestness, graciously allowed them to undergo hardship and suffering, to try their faith and to lead them even more to turn their backs on the ways of the flesh, so that they could, in the fear of the Lord, press on in holiness. They were bought with a precious price, Peter reminded them; for His sake Who redeemed them, they must persevere in the fear of God to become what God has called them to be.

The Structure: Salvation is not *by* good works, but *unto* them. They who have truly been redeemed through Jesus Christ are citizens of a new realm of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14.17, 18). They leave their old life behind and, regardless of the obstacles, take up the challenge of growing into Christ-likeness. This is how we can know who are truly saved and who are not. Merely confessing faith in Jesus and waiting for Him to bless can offer no true assurance of salvation. The truly saved lay aside their old life, set their minds on Christ – reigning and returning – and bring their lives into conformity with His holy and righteous and good example. This is how the restoring power of the Gospel makes all things new in our lives, cultures, and times.

Do you think the fear of God is emphasized as much as it should be? Why or why not? How does the fear of God factor into your own relationship with the Lord?

4 Redeemed to Hope

1 Peter 1.20, 21

²⁰He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in the last times for you ²¹who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

The Story: Faith, hope, and love are the three great abiding virtues (1 Cor. 13.13). Faith and love we can rather easily define. But what is hope? More specifically, what is the Christian's hope? Paul says it is the "hope of glory" (Rom. 5.1, 2). Peter says we have been redeemed by the Lord Jesus so that we might believe in God and hope in Him. What does it mean to "hope" in the glory of God? As we set our minds on Jesus Christ, reigning and returning, we see a glimpse of the glory of what is yet to be. As we lay aside our old lives and take up the life of Christ, we enter God's glory as it was lived out through Jesus and is expressed in all our conduct. Paul says that even down to how and what we eat or drink, we can bring glory to God (1 Cor. 10.31). Is this what you hope for? To *know* God in His glory and to *show* that glory to the watching world? This is our great privilege and calling, and it occupies every moment and every aspect of our lives. As we hope in the glory of God, He forms Jesus Christ in us more completely, day by day.

The Structure: This has been God's plan from the beginning ("before the foundation of the world"). In His Son, the Word of God Who became flesh in Jesus Christ, God intended to redeem from the lost world a people for His own possession (1 Pet. 2.9, 10). To them He shows His glory and, by His Word and Spirit, fits them to live for His glory in every aspect of their lives. How can we know that we belong to this God and have come to know the redemption He offers us in Jesus Christ? Simple enough: Do we hope in the glory of God and are we pursuing that glory in the fear of the Lord?

How do you engage God in His glory? How do you know when you have? How is it evident that you have?

5 Love like Jesus

1 Peter 1.22, 23

²²Since you were purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, ²³having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever...

The Story: Those who have truly been born again will live to the glory of God, just as Jesus did. Notice that the Gospel (“truth”) is something to *obey*, not merely to *receive* or *accept* or *believe*. It makes a difference, when we are sharing our faith with someone, whether we ask him to “receive” Jesus, “believe” in Him, or “obey” Him. Many will happily “receive” Jesus or “believe” in Him for the promise of forgiven sins and an eternal home in heaven. But if we do not call them, at the same time, to obey Jesus and follow Him in the path of righteousness, we have not preached the Gospel truly, but only in part. Which is as much as to say we have not preached the Gospel at all. When the Word of God has wrought its redeeming and transforming work in a person’s soul, the result will be, increasingly, purity in thoughts, affections, and actions, expressed as love for God and neighbor. Where such is not the case, we may have good reason to wonder whether true regeneration has occurred.

The Structure: As we’ll see on Sunday, the whole Gospel is a call to repentance, faith, and obedience, issuing in a dedicated pursuit of holiness and love. A variety of false gospels are circulating today. Whoever says that being a Christian means “simply believing” in Jesus needs to explain what he means. If he doesn’t mean what Peter means, then this is “another gospel”, as Paul might say, and not the true Gospel at all. Which Gospel have you “obeyed”?

Briefly outline the Gospel as you might share it with someone this week:

6 The Word Alone Remains

1 Peter 1.24, 25

²⁴...because

“All flesh is as grass,

And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass.

The grass withers,

And its flower falls away,

²⁵But the word of the Lord remains forever.”

The Story: Here’s what Peter’s getting at: Where the Word of God has taken deep root in a person – in someone who has *obeyed* the Gospel and *repented* of his previous passions and ignorance, there the fruit of the Word will begin to be in evidence and continuing (cf. Jn. 15.1-17). Love is the overarching manifestation of the new life which comes from the Word of the Gospel. All our best efforts and intentions will fade like flowers, for they have no power within themselves to keep us going, especially in the face of difficulties and trials. But the Word of the Lord remains forever and continues to bear good fruit even in the midst of hardship (Ps. 1). So these believers can know that, even when life is difficult, they truly belong to the Lord because His abiding Word is in them, bearing the fruit of love to the praise of the glory of God’s grace. What a tremendous message of hope to motivate faith and ongoing obedience in the face of trial!

The Structure: In his second epistle Peter will emphasize the importance of having our faith grounded in the more sure Word of the Lord (2 Pet. 1.19-21). The Word of God draws us into the presence of His glory and fits us to go forth transformed into the image of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 3.12-18). The Word of God is sufficient to equip us for every good work (2 Tim. 3.15-17). So if we abide in God’s Word and it abides in us, nothing that happens to us in *this* world will be able to shake our assurance of belonging firmly and securely in the *next*.

Why does the Word of God abide forever when our best efforts at being good can’t hold up? How can we know when the Word of God is abiding in us, and us in it?

7 This is the Good News

1 Peter 1.25

²⁵Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.

The Story: Peter will say almost the same thing at the end of this epistle (5.12). He has been going on about suffering and its benefits and how we as believers should respond to it; about getting our minds rightly focused and ready to act in good works of love; about pursuing holiness in the fear of God; about the primacy of love as the way to show God’s glory to the world; and about the indwelling Word that never fails those who have been truly redeemed in Jesus Christ. And all this, Peter now says, is the “Good News.” This is the Gospel. The Gospel is life in a totally different framework. The Gospel is Good News that Jesus Christ can bring us into that framework, by grace through faith. The Gospel is that all who would enter that existence must lay aside their former passions and ignorance and get their minds in gear for glorifying God in good works of love. The Gospel is that all who obey the Lord, even in the face of hardship, will never fade or perish, but will, in His Word – in His Gospel – abide with Him forever.

The Structure: Anything short of the whole Gospel is not the Gospel at all, but a form of “near Christianity,” easy to hear and profess because it demands nothing of us. The Gospel, on the other hand, demands the pursuit of holiness and a life of devotion and love *even when outward circumstances would seem to make these impossible*. The reason the Church in America today is so weak is because we have not been preaching the Gospel that Peter outlined in this first chapter, but a gospel meant more to appeal to the needs of people than to demand their obedience and to effect their transformation into the image of Jesus Christ. We need to measure the gospel we preach and teach – and have believed – against the Gospel as Peter – and all the apostles – taught it.

How would you assess the Gospel as it is preached and taught in your church?

For reflection or discussion

1. Peter says, “This is the gospel...” *What* is the Gospel? Why is the Gospel such “Good News”?
2. Do you think churches are as aggressive as they should be in making the Gospel known throughout their communities? Why or why not?
3. How does believing the Gospel help us to keep on in the pursuit of holiness and the practice of love, even in the face of trials and adversities? How would you counsel a fellow believer to press on in holiness and love, even in the face of great trial?
4. What would be some examples of “false gospels” or “partial gospels” that we might hear these days?
5. Peter says the prophets knew they were writing and preaching about the day of the Gospel. Can you give some examples, from the prophets, of what Peter seems to have in mind? How should knowing this affect the way we read the prophets?
6. How can Christians help one another to persevere in holiness and love, especially when various trials and temptations beset us?

Prayer:

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