

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

1 & 2 PETER LESSON 1 (1 Peter, Chapters 1-2)

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet. 1:3). Welcome to our study of the Books of 1 and 2 Peter. Peter is an interesting and unique individual in the New Testament. He always was impulsive and impetuous. For example, when Jesus walked on the water, Peter was the go-getter who said, “Lord, bid me to come to you.” He went out on the water, but then began to sink. Peter is the one who, when Jesus said, “All of you will forsake Me,” said, “Not I Lord. I will die with you.” Jesus then told Peter that before the rooster crowed, Peter would deny Him. Peter was indeed a go-getter, but he needed to grow and increase in his faith. He needed to be reminded of certain truths in which he had not yet grown. Thus, in 1 and 2 Peter writes about final reminders—things that we need to always keep close to our hearts and remember. But what are those reminders that Peter wants us to know about, and that God wants Christians to keep close to their hearts in order to live faithfully before Him?

First of all we need to realize that Christians have a living hope. In 1 Peter 1:3 we read, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” Peter and God remind us that our hope is not a dead hope. It is not a hope in something past, but is a hope that is alive and that is based on the future. When we face trials and temptations, or when we feel like giving up, what is it that keeps us going? We have a living hope. Hebrews 6:19 says, “This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.” Our hope is what holds us down and keeps us firm and steadfast in the midst of tribulation. Colossians 1:27 talks about the “hope of glory.” That is the hope we have. In Titus 1:2 we read that we “live in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began.” We have the hope of one day living with God in Heaven. We live in that hope in the here and now. But 1 Peter 1:3 says that this hope comes “through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” If there had been no resurrection, we would not have a living hope. We would have **no** hope. The fact that Jesus rose from the grave is the hope that Christians have. In fact, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15 that were it not for the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, our hope would be in vain. Yet we do have a wonderful hope. In John 11:25-26 Jesus expressed this hope when He said, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.” What is the hope we have? We have hope in the here and now that if we live faithfully before God, we will receive the crown of life. This life is not all there is. When we get down and discouraged, we need to remember that if we will remain faithful here in this life, we have the hope of eternal glory with God.

What else does Peter want us to remember? He wants us to remember our hope. But he also wants us to remember that we have a heavenly inheritance. We have a hope “through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” that is, as 1 Peter 1:4 tells us, “an inheri-

tance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.” We have an inheritance. Wouldn’t it be great one day to wake up to a knock on the door and learn that you are the heir of a millionaire or the heir of someone who had many wonderful things in this life? When we are children of God, we have something far better than that. We are an heir of all that Heaven has to offer. Imagine the wonder and splendor of that. In Philippians 3:20 the Bible says that “our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body.” We are not citizens here. We are true citizens of Heaven itself. We have a reservation. Can you imagine that? When a person obeys the Gospel and becomes a Christian, he or she has a reservation in Heaven. If you go on a journey and you go to a motel, the one thing about making reservations ahead of time is that when you go up to the desk and say your name, it’s right there on the roll. A room is waiting for you. That is what our heavenly inheritance is like. If we have obeyed the Gospel and have been faithful, our names are written in the Book of Life (Rev. 3-5). If we endure to the end, our names will be on the grand roll in Heaven itself. We have that inheritance. Jesus talked about this in John 14:1-6 when He said,

“I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you.”

We have a reservation in that heavenly dwelling that God has prepared for His children. In Matthew 25:46 Jesus said that the righteous shall go away into eternal life. In 2 Corinthians 5:1 we read, “If our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” Don’t you want to go to Heaven? We must constantly remind ourselves that Heaven will be worth whatever we have to endure. In Romans 8:18 Paul said, “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” It does not matter what we face or what trials come into our lives. We must remain focused on Heaven. That is what Peter is saying.

A third reminder that Peter provides is that we must stay faithful because of the wonder of salvation that God has given to each one of us. In 1 Peter 1:9-10 we read, “...receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls. Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully. This salvation was something the prophets wanted to know. God had been working toward our salvation from eternity. We have that salvation if we obey the Gospel. We need to remind ourselves every day that we are children of God. We have been saved. We are saved. And we will be saved in Heaven if we remain faithful. In 1 John 2:25 we are told, “This is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life.” To really appreciate salvation, we need to go back and consider the state of sin and despair in which we were previously. In Romans 3:23 the Bible says that all of us have “sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” Romans 6:23 says that “the wages of sin is death.” Our sins have separated us from God (Is. 59:1-2). As the psalmist said in Psalm 38:4, “My iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me.” When we think about the wonder of salvation, we need to remember where we once were. All of us have been lost in sin and headed down the path to Hell. But because of God’s love, and because of salvation, we have been relieved of that burden. God said to those under the New Covenant who had obeyed the Gospel, “I will be merciful to their sins, and their lawless deeds I will remember no more” (Heb. 8:12). Because of what Jesus did for us, we can have salvation. “He Himself bore our sins in His own body upon the tree that we, having died to sin, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes we are healed” (1 Pet. 2:24). Look at the beauty of God’s scheme of redemption. “God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” From

the beginning of time (2 Tim. 1:8-10) God had been planning and working to bring salvation to humanity. We in the New Testament age have the privilege of taking part in that salvation. Let's be reminded that we today have the blessing of being saved.

We also must remember, Peter says, that in order to receive this salvation, like God, we must be holy. In 1 Peter 1:15-16 we are told, "But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'" When we think of things that weigh on our minds and motivate or propel us, one of those things is the challenge to be holy. Here is why holiness is something that we must possess. Hebrews 12:14 says that without holiness, no one will see God. Habakkuk 1:13 tells us of God, "You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness." If God cannot look upon wickedness, and if His Son has come to perfect us (and He has), then we must do our best to live a holy life. I am not saying that we must live perfectly. Nobody is perfect. At times, we all have fallen short, and continue to fall short. But holiness means that we try to walk in the light every day (1 Jn. 1:7). If we fall, we confess our sins and repent of them (1 Jn. 1:8-9). We must try every day to be a sacrifice for Jesus. Paul said in Romans 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." We are to be holy. We must not get caught up in the things of the world. We must not be contaminated by sin any more. We must stay away from that lifestyle. We must run from it if we have to—in order to be holy every day.

Our motivation for remembering these things, and for being holy, is based in the great, eternal plan that God made for mankind. Notice 1 Peter 1:18-20, which tells us that we were not redeemed with corruptible things like silver or gold, but "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you." When we think about being holy and being motivated to live for Jesus, what is it that challenges us? Before the first second on the clock of time had ticked away, God already had begun to make a plan of salvation. In 2 Timothy 1:9-10 we are told that before the foundation of the world, God made our plan of salvation. Titus 1:2 says that we live "in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began." Before this world was even started, God knew that He would create man. In His divine wisdom, He knew that man would sin. He could have chosen not to create anything. But He did anyway. He already knew that He would have to make a way of salvation for us. Can you see in that the eternal love of God? Look at what God knew that He, the Holy Spirit, men and women throughout the centuries, and even His Son would have to go through. Hebrews 9:22 says that "without shedding of blood there is no remission." Do we realize that God knew His Son would have to bleed, suffer, and die for us? Jesus said in Matthew 26:28 as He instituted the Lord's Supper, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Christ knew. He is God (Jn. 1:1; Gen. 1:26). He knew those things would have to happen. In Acts 20:28 Jesus we see that Jesus purchased the church (there's the eternal plan of God). Ephesians 3:10-11 tells us that Jesus purchased the church with His own blood. Colossians 1:14 tells us that we have redemption through His blood. Revelation 1:5 tells us that we are washed and cleansed in the blood of Christ. When we think of living a holy life, what challenges us to do that? God loved us so deeply that even before Adam and Eve had committed the first sin, He had made a plan to save us. We need to realize the importance of God's love, and how deeply He cares for us.

What else do we need to remember today? We must remember that we are "new creatures in Christ." We have been given a second chance. In 1 Peter 1:23-25 we read,

“...having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, 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, but the word of the Lord endures forever.’”

Peter reminds us that if we are going to be faithful and really live the life God wants us to live, we must realize that we are a new creature. When we obey the Gospel, we put the past behind us. We get a second chance. Romans 6:1-4 talks about this when it discusses the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. We die to sin. We are buried with Christ in baptism. And we are raised to walk in newness of life. Listen to 2 Corinthians 5:17—“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” It is a privilege to be a Christian. We must put our past lives behind us. We no longer can live like that. In fact, Peter will say in 1 Peter 2:1 that we must lay aside “all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking.” All those ungodly things that used to be a part of us, we must put behind us. This is a reminder that each of us needs every day of our lives.

What else must we do? Peter gives us in 1 Peter 2:2 a reminder that will always be present for the child of God. “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.” A baby has an insatiable desire to eat. And if we do not give him what he wants, he will be unhappy and will let everyone know it! A baby must be fed in order to grow. We are like that in a spiritual sense. We must take the Word and use it to grow. In Matthew 5:6 Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.” In 2 Peter 3:18 we are told that we are to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” This means that if we have been in the church for ten, twenty, or thirty years, we ought to be teachers. We should not need someone to teach us again the first principles of the oracles of God (Heb. 5:12-14). This means that we must break up our fallow ground—that which we have not studied, that in which we have not grown, that on which we have not worked in our lives. We must break up that fallow ground (Hos. 10:12) and work on it. Like those in Acts 17:11, we must search the Scriptures every day. When we become children of God, the work is not over. It is just beginning. We must grow every day. We must have an insatiable appetite for the Word of God because we have tasted how good that Word is.

In 1 Peter 2 Peter reminds us that Christ is like four different kinds of stones. And so are Christians. Christ is a living stone. He is a chief cornerstone. He was the rejected stone. And He was a stone of stumbling. We have a living hope because we have accessed the living stone—Jesus Himself. He is the chief cornerstone. What does that mean? He is the locking piece that holds everything together. Without Jesus there is no hope. He must be the chief cornerstone in our lives. Everything we do must be because of our love of Christ and the motivation that He gives us. He is the rejected stone. Being a Christian does not mean that everyone will like us. There will be times when we have to say the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). People will reject that, reject Christ, and reject our lifestyle. But that should not bring us to shame. It ought to give us glory. “If anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter” (1 Pet. 4:16). At times, Jesus is a stone of stumbling through the things we say. People will not always obey or realize the importance of the Gospel.

Peter also reminds us of a very valid point for Christians today. When it comes to matters of the flesh, we must remember that abstinence is the only biblical approach to the lust of the flesh. In 1 Peter 2:11 we read, “Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.” God’s plan is not a plan of safety. It is a plan of abstinence. If we are going to fulfill the commands of God in areas of the lust of the flesh,

we must abstain from things that are not right. The only place where sexuality is to be fulfilled is inside the marriage bond. "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4). Every area that does not fit that pattern—the pattern of marriage—is outside the boundary and guidelines that God has given. We must abstain from those things. Young people, listen carefully. If you are going to please God in matters relating to these things, you must abstain from lusts of the flesh. In 1 Thessalonians 5:22 we are told to abstain from every appearance of evil. If something seems evil and is ungodly, we need to stay away from it. James 4:4 says that if we do not, we become adulterers and adulteresses, and we have fellowship with the world. Consider two people in the Bible—one who did not abstain, and one who did. Solomon was the wisest man. God gave him wisdom from above. But for such a wise man, he made some really foolish choices when it came to lusts of the flesh. Solomon had multiple wives and concubines. If you read 1 Kings 11 you will see that those wives and concubines led him away from God. He did not abstain; he gave in. And as a result, sin took hold of his life. Think, too, of Joseph. Joseph provides us with a powerful example of abstaining from lusts of the flesh. Potiphar's wife had an attraction to Joseph. Over a period of time, she tried to get Joseph to lie with her. Finally, one day she caught him in the house alone. She embraced him in an effort to get him to have relations with her. Joseph left his garment in her hands and ran out of the house. There were consequences to that, of course. She told her husband that he had done something, when he had not. But Joseph did what was right. And ultimately he was vindicated by God. We must consider that example. In 1 Timothy 6 we are told to flee youthful lusts. We must remember to abstain from the lusts of the flesh.

As Christians, we also have the reminder of our responsibility to others. What is that responsibility? In 1 Peter 2:13-20 we are told to respect and honor all people. We must give respect to those who are due respect—like those who are older, those who are wiser, and those who are leaders in the congregation. We must love the brotherhood. The church is a wonderful thing. Part of Peter's reminder is that we must realize that the brotherhood is important. We must fear and respect God all the days of our lives. We must give Him the honor and glory that He deserves. We also must honor the king or the governmental rulers. The Bible says that in 1 Peter 2:13-20. Jesus said that we should render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's. The Bible teaches in Romans 13:1ff. that we must obey the laws of the land. We must give respect to those who are due respect.

But as much as anything, Peter encourages us as Christians to follow the example of Jesus. What is a reminder that Peter needed to know? He needed to know that he, at times, was not following Jesus. He needed to learn what it meant to really follow Jesus. That can be true of us as well. In 1 Peter 2:21-22 we read, "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 'Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth.'" We must follow in the footsteps of Jesus. What does that mean? It means that we must not sin or slander when others do such things to us. Jesus "committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth." Were people trying to tempt Jesus to sin? They said to Him on the cross, "If You are the Son of God, bring yourself down from there!" They were trying to get Jesus to sin and give in to what they wanted. God said, "Be angry and sin not" (Ps. 4:4). We must be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath, for the wrath of God does not produce the righteousness of God. We must not allow people to tempt us. That is part of the growing process. We must not revile or get angry. Rather, we must do the will of God. In 1 Peter 2:23 we read of Jesus "who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return." When people made fun of Jesus, He did not respond in a popular fashion. People say today, "Don't get mad; get even." That is not a Christian motto. The Christian motto is, "Don't get mad; let God get even." In Romans 12:19 God said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay." We are to love our enemies (Mt.

6). We are to do good to those who use us and who are spiteful toward us (Mt. 5:12-14). We must try to help those who are lost in sin, even if they are not good to us—because we want them to go to Heaven. We are not to sin or slander. We are not to revile. We must selflessly commit our lives to the will of God. In 1 Peter 2:24 Peter spoke of Jesus, “who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.” What does it mean to follow the example of Jesus? Jesus selflessly submitted Himself to the will of God. When we are walking in His footsteps, we must do the same. In Matthew 26:39 Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane. He knows that His hour of trial is upon Him. Although He wants to do the will of God, He cries out, “Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” That is the attitude we must have if we want to follow Jesus. Obedience to God and to Jesus will truly change the direction of our lives.

Peter reminds us of what it really means to live for Jesus. I want to ask you today if you are a child of God. Do you have that living hope? Do you have forgiveness of sins? Are you sure that the heavenly inheritance is yours? Are you saved? If you have never obeyed the Gospel, you can do so. You must hear the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). You must believe that Jesus is God’s Son (Jn. 8:24). You must make changes in your life and repent (Lk. 13:3). You must confess the name of Jesus before men (Rom. 10:10). And you must be baptized in water for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38). If you have not done that, then you do not have a living hope. But you can today. If you are a child of God, I hope that this lesson will encourage you to never give up, to always follow in the footsteps of Jesus, and to realize that you are born again, you are a child of God, and you need to remember that being a Christian is the greatest privilege in the entire world. May God bless us as we strive to live according to the Gospel of Christ.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR 1 & 2 PETER LESSON 1 (1 PETER, CHAPTERS 1-2)

1. As Peter opens his first epistle, what encouraging topic does he discuss in chapter 1, verse 3?
2. What important topic did the apostle Peter mention in 1 Peter 1:3 that also was discussed in great detail by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15?
3. According to Hebrews 6:19, what is the Christian's hope?
4. According to Titus 1:2, the Christian lives in hope of something. What is it?
5. What encouraging statement did Jesus make in John 11:25?
6. According to 1 Peter 1:4, what does the faithful Christian possess?
7. According to Philippians 3:20, where is the Christian's true citizenship found?
8. In John 14:1-6 what did Jesus say that He was leaving Earth to go do?
9. What, according to Matthew 25:46, are the righteous promised?
10. According to 1 Peter 1:9-10, what is "the end" of the Christian's faith?
11. What, according to 1 John 2:25, have faithful Christians been promised by God?
12. In Psalm 38:4, how did the psalmist describe our sins?
13. What does 1 Peter 1:15 command Christians to do?
14. What did Peter mention in 1 Peter 1:15-16 as the reason for Christians to obey the command he included in that verse?
15. According to 1 Peter 1:18-20, Christians are not redeemed with corruptible things like silver or gold, but with something else. What is that "something else"?
16. According to 2 Timothy 1:9, when did God plan to save humankind from sin?
17. According to Matthew 26:28, what was required for God to forgive our sins?
18. In 1 Peter 1:25, Peter speaks of something "abiding forever." What is it?
19. According to 1 Peter 2:2, what causes a Christian to grow spiritually?
20. In 1 Peter 2:7, Peter speaks of Christ. How does he describe Him?
21. What admonishment for Christians is found in 1 Peter 2:11?
22. What does 1 Peter 2:21 urge all Christians to do?