

1 & 2 Peter: Faith Under Fire

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!
According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the
resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and
unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith
for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
(1 Peter 1:3-5 ESV)*

Action In Advance Of The Storm

September 23rd, 2018

1 Peter 1:13-25

Rev. Paul Carter

Introduction:

Good morning. I want to invite you to open your Bibles this morning to 1 Peter 1:13; that on page 1014 in your pew Bibles. For the last two weeks we've been talking about the foundational truths that Peter wants these folks to anchor into in advance of the coming storm and we've been listening carefully because in a lot of ways we feel like we are living in very similar times to those being described here. These people were living about 50 years before the outbreak of formal and fatal persecution. They were living in the early days – the days of cultural, social and financial marginalization – but Peter knew that this was just the beginning. This was the calm before the storm and so he is writing this letter to prepare them.

He wants to remind them of who they are, who God is and what God has done to secure their salvation and he wants them to remember the inheritance that they have – kept safe for them in the heavens. And then lastly he wants to remind them to keep their eyes fixed on Jesus. No matter what happens out there, he says, no matter the wind or the waves – you keep your eyes fixed on Jesus and he will hold you fast.

That's what he says in the first 12 verses. That is what scholars refer to as “the indicative portion” of Peter's letter and now in verse 13 we enter into “the imperative portion”. From now on Peter is giving commands. He is telling them – and us - what to do in advance of the coming storm.

There are appropriate actions to be taken in the days before a storm. In the days before a hurricane you need to board up your windows, you need to stock up on bottled water, you need to put gas in the generator and you need to lay some sandbags around the foundation of your house. Well likewise, in the days before a spiritual and political storm you need to take some wise actions as well and it is to those wise actions that we turn our attention now. Hear now the Word of the Lord; beginning at verse 13:

Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, 15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” 17 And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, 18 knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. 20 He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you 21 who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. 22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, 23 since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; 24 for “All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, 25 but the word of the Lord remains forever.” And this word is the good news that was preached to you. (1 Peter 1:13–25 ESV)

This is the word of the Lord, thanks be to God!

There are four imperative verbs in this passage – that is to say that there are 4 distinct commands that Peter gives to these people in advance of the coming storm.

What To Do In Advance Of The Coming Storm:

The first thing he says you’ve got to do is found in verse 13.

1. You’ve got to set your hope fully on the grace that lies ahead

Now remember, this passage doesn’t exist in a vacuum – it is connected to the indicative section that we just went through. At the end of that section Peter told them to **KEEP THEIR EYES ON JESUS THROUGH THE STORM**. He said you are doing that – you see Jesus in the Scriptures, you love him, you’ve taken hold of him – that’s so good, he said last week, now here he says, **KEEP DOING THAT. SET YOUR HOPE FULLY on the grace that will be brought to you at**

the revelation of Jesus Christ. Lock into that! See Jesus – up there at the Father’s right hand. At the right time he’s going to come and he is going to bring judgement on your enemies and he is going to bring reward and vindication for his people.

See that!

Lock into that!

Set your hope FULLY on the grace that will be given to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The word that he uses there reminds me of those old VGA chords that you would use to connect your computer tower to a monitor. Do you remember those? You would make the connection but you also needed to drill down those side things if you wanted the connection to hold – that is exactly what Peter is saying here. You can’t just pray a little prayer and sew your salvation ticket into your underwear and then go back out there into the world – there’s a storm coming! And if you just mosey on out into the world with a loose connection you are going to get blown away. You need to lock this down if you want to survive and thrive in the days ahead.

Peter supplies two instrumental participles in this verse to help us understand what he means. An instrumental participle tells us how a command should be executed. The ESV does a great job of preserving the distinction between the command – “set your hope fully” and the means by which these people are to execute the command. Look at verse 13 again:

Therefore, **preparing your minds for action**, and **being sober-minded**, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 1:13 ESV)

So the way to drill down, the way to set your hope fully on the grace that is coming is first of all, Peter says, to prepare your mind for action. The Greek phrase is actually “to gird up the loins of your mind” but that doesn’t make any sense at all in modern English. You see, in that world a man usually wore a long flowing outer garment and so before he could do anything physical, like running or engaging in battle or even going out to work in the field he would have to gather up the folds of his robe and tuck them into his belt. So this is an expression that meant to prepare; it meant to get serious. Peter is saying you have to prepare your mind. You have to get into a

STORM MINDSET. There may have been a way of thinking and acting that was ok on a sunny day – but this isn't a sunny day so you need to get your mind into EMERGENCY MODE or you are going to get blown away.

As always friends, we notice here, that change begins in the mind. This is where Paul begins too when he shifts from indicate truths to appropriate commands. He says in Romans 12 at the hinge of that letter:

Do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewal of your mind**, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2 ESV)

So change begins in the mind! Before you DO the right things, you have to get into the right mindset.

So let me make this as practical as I can. The devil wants to own your mind and he's got lots of people in Hollywood and in the media on his payroll. Now there is an amount of TV and an amount of media that you can probably get away with on a sunny day – when you don't really need your wits about you – but its not a sunny day anymore. Its about to get nasty and so the first thing you need to do is to dial back your exposure to the world. You need to unplug your heart and your soul from the poison of the world and you need to PREPARE YOURSELF FOR ACTION.

The second participle is making a parallel point. Verse 13 talks about “being sober minded”. Here Peter is warning them about the danger of being anesthetised by the amusements of the world. The devil wants to amuse people right into hell. He wants to so entertain people that they don't even notice that they have fallen asleep at the switch. Think about that: how many minds have been ruined in our culture by drugs? How many minds have been weakened and warped by alcohol? How many minds have been bewitched and befuddled by television and social media? The devil wants to amuse us all into hell – and Peter says, if you want to avoid that – if you want to have your wits about you – then get control of your mind. You need to be mentally and spiritually sharp in the days ahead. So SOBER UP AND LOCK INTO your relationship with Jesus Christ.

That's what he's saying – and it would be hard to think of a more urgent bit of counsel for Christians living in our world here today.

SOBER UP.

Pull out of the drugs, pull out of the manipulation and BENUMBING INFLUENCE of television and popular media. Dial that BACK. And LEAN IN – LOCK IN – to your relationship with Jesus Christ. That's job 1 in advance of the coming storm.

The second command is found in verse 15:

2. **Be holy in all your conduct**

That word translated as “be” could also be translated as “become”. Peter is telling them to become like the one in whom they have believed - he is commanding them to GROW in the direction of Jesus Christ. This is what theologians refer to as “sanctification”. Now once again, Peter provides some very helpful content that helps us understand how it is that we should execute this command. In verse 14 he says:

As obedient children, **do not be conformed** to the passions of your former ignorance (1 Peter 1:14 ESV)

That phrase “do not be conformed” is another instrumental participle, meaning that Peter is telling us how to grow in holiness. He says first of all, you have to look away from the world and you have to look away from your past way of doing things.

Hear that.

Christian growth requires a clean break with your former, worldly ways of thinking. You have to break with that. You have to unplug from former influences and you have make war on old habits and ways of thinking. You have to break with that in order to look at Christ.

That's the flow in this passage. In verse 14 – he says you've got to look away – but then in verse 15 he says you've got to look at Jesus. He says:

but **as he who called you is holy**, you also be holy in all your conduct (1 Peter 1:15 ESV)

The standard of holiness is God himself as revealed in Jesus Christ. AS HE WHO CALLED YOU IS HOLY - you don't get to be holy however you like – “holy” is defined by the pattern of Jesus Christ. So you've got to look at him to grow in holiness. The Apostle Paul said exactly the same thing. He said:

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed **into the same image** from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:18 ESV)

According to the Bible, you become what you look at. So look away from the world; look away from your old habits and patterns and look to Christ.

Interestingly, to make that point he references a passage from the Old Testament. That in itself is worth a sermon. Far too many Christians think that “being like Jesus” does not require them to read the Old Testament. Well, that would be news to Peter. When Peter wants to help his people understand what it looks like to become like Jesus he refers to the Old Testament and not just anywhere in the Old Testament, he refers to the Holiness Code in the Book of Leviticus. The quotation in 1 Peter 1:16 is taken from Leviticus 19:2:

You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy (Leviticus 19:2 ESV)

That verse is a sort of summary of an entire section of the Bible that we refer to as the Holiness Code. It is filled with commands and principles about how people should live with one another and before God. Let me give you a bit of a sample. There is a verse for example about respecting your parents.

Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father (Leviticus 19:3 ESV)

There is one about letting the poor people gather food from the corners of your field.

You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God. (Leviticus 19:10 ESV)

And there are a bunch about human sexuality. Leviticus 18:20 says:

you shall not lie sexually with your neighbor's wife (Leviticus 18:20 ESV)

So, being like Jesus means no adultery. Leviticus 18:22 says:

You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination. (Leviticus 18:22 ESV)

So, being like Jesus means no homosexual sex either. And to be clear, all of these commandments are commandments – not suggestions. The text gives every indication that God expects to be obeyed - he says at the end of the section:

24 “Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, for by all these the nations I am driving out before you have become unclean But you shall keep my statutes and my rules and do none of these abominations ... lest the land vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you. 29 For everyone who does any of these abominations, the persons who do them shall be cut off from among their people. 30 So keep my charge never to practice any of these abominable customs that were practiced before you, and never to make yourselves unclean by them: I am the LORD your God.” (Leviticus 18:24–30 ESV)

If you act like the world then you will be cut out of the kingdom. That's what God said in the Holiness Code and that is the passage Peter decided to reference when he told new believers to become like Jesus in all their conduct.

Are you hearing that?

Peter says, ‘the world has its way of doing money, family and sex – but you have been saved into a better world – you have been saved into an everlasting kingdom and we do things differently there. So turn away from the old ways and turn to Christ. Live NOW like who you are. That is what Peter COMMANDS them to do.

The third command that Peter gives to these folks in advance of the approaching storm comes to us in verse 17. He says:

3. **Conduct yourselves with fear**

Now, the Bible tends to use the word “fear” in ways that are slightly different than the way we tend to use the word “fear”. In the Bible the word can mean terror or fear of something bad but it can also mean to live reverently and wisely in light of eternal realities.

That is how Peter is using it here.

There are several references to judgment in this passage – he talks about God who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds. So there is a way to live wisely NOW in light of the fact that every human being will face judgment LATER. That’s what Peter is saying. He is saying start living NOW in light of final judgement.

Now, you might want to call foul here. You might want to object and say: “Pastor! I am a Christian and don’t you know that the Bible says that there is therefore now NO CONDEMNATION for those who are in Christ Jesus – Romans 8:1”.

Well what about that? What does that text actually say? It says that there will be no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus; it doesn’t say that there will be no judgment. It couldn’t say that because the Bible is VERY clear that ALL PEOPLE – Christian and NON-Christian will stand before God at Final Judgment. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. (2 Corinthians 5:10 ESV)

So we are ALL going to stand before God at Final Judgment and Peter is saying here – you better start living NOW with your eye on that day.

Because some of you don’t appear to be in that mindset. You think of God as your Father, Peter says, but you’re forgetting that he is also your Judge. Look at verse 17 – this is what Peter says on his way to the main imperative, he says:

if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile (1 Peter 1:17 ESV)

Peter says, just remember as you call on God as your Father – that is a special kind of father. The kind of Father who disciplines every son whom he receives. He is HOLY FATHER. He is, according to this passage, Father who loves AND Father who judges. Now, not Father who condemns – he doesn’t condemn his children – but he does put their feet in the fire when they

show themselves in need of refinement – we talked about that last week. So just be aware of that and conduct yourself accordingly.

Don't invite anymore storm than you need – Peter says.

Be aware, Peter says, that this is SUPERVISED SUFFERING. God SEES. Father who judges IS WATCHING.

So just get wise on that and conduct yourself with godly fear.

The fourth and final command that Peter gives here is found in verse 22. He says you guys need to:

4. Love one another earnestly

Let's read that again, starting at verse 22; he says:

Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, 23 since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God (1 Peter 1:22–23 ESV)

This is a really interesting sentence – if you're into that kind of thing. There is one command and two parallel statements of purpose. The command is LOVE ONE ANOTHER. That's the imperative verb – LOVE. But there are two statements of purpose. They are easy to spot – you don't have to have been to seminary. The first one is in verse 22. Peter says that you have purified your souls by obedience to the truth – which is just a fancy way of saying that you have been SAVED by responding appropriately to the Gospel – FOR – that's the purpose statement – a sincere brotherly love. That's a remarkable statement. Strip it down of all the fancy words and grammar and what is Peter saying? He is saying God saved you FOR loving community.

Now in case you don't believe that, Peter says it again – on the other side. So AFTER the main imperative verb – after the command to LOVE ONE ANOTHER EARNESTLY – look at verse 23 – SINCE you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable seed through the living and abiding word of God.

Are you seeing that?

Peter is saying that you were saved TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

That is just not something that we think about a great deal.

We talk about how we are SAVED TO WORSHIP – and that is true. John Piper likes to say that mission exists because worship doesn't. Meaning we do evangelism and mission SO THAT people get saved and then worship God. Saved to worship. We talk about that all the time.

And we talk about how we are SAVED TO SERVE. And that's true too. Jesus said – even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to SERVE and to give his life as a ransom for many. And then at the Last Supper he took off his outer robe and SERVED the disciples by washing their feet and he said:

If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. (John 13:14–15 ESV)

Ok, so no argument there. We are saved to serve. Saved to worship and saved to serve. Check and check!

And yet – here in this text we also see that we are SAVED TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

Tom Schreiner says here:

“The goal or purpose of their conversion is a genuine love for fellow believers.”¹

That is mind blowing – I'm just not sure that we are used to thinking like that – but Peter says here, you better get used to thinking like that because you are going to need a tight, loving, church community when this storm finally breaks upon you.

¹ Thomas Schreiner, *1,2 Peter, Jude* in *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2003), 93.

This is just biblical wisdom here. Whether the storm is personal or political – out there or in here – the wise course of action is the same. The bible says:

Do not forsake your friend and your father's friend, and do not go to your brother's house in the day of your calamity. Better is a neighbor who is near than a brother who is far away. (Proverbs 27:10 ESV)

Are you hearing that?

The Bible says – when calamity comes – when disaster strikes – when the storm breaks – personal, political or what have you - better the loved ones who are near than the biological family far away.

That, my friends, is wisdom.

You are going to need authentic church community before your life is done. Whether a personal storm or the storm of persecution – either way – when it hits it will be the people in here who will be helping you and serving you on that day.

So LOVE THEM.

Love them – don't turn your back on them and don't neglect them.

Love them.

Love them now – because you will need them later. And because you're going to be with them forever.

Peter says that in verse 23. He says your biological brothers and sisters were born of perishable seed – Peter makes a bit of an awkward analogy here – he says that humans are born of perishable seed – human sperm – human sperm is itself perishable and it produces perishable people and perishable families – but you were born of IMPERISHABLE SEED – the seed here is the Word of God. When you believed the Word of God – when that SEED found purchase in your HEART – you were born into an imperishable family. A FOREVER FAMILY.

Are you hearing that?

Your biological family is not your forever family.

Some of those people will share love and life with you for 50, 60 or maybe 70 years, but these people in here – these brothers and sisters in Christ – you are going to be with them forever. So start loving them now.

Conclusion:

Because there's a storm coming. Whether this year, next year or 50 years from now – there's a storm coming. So get your head straight. Sober up. Lock in. Start growing in the direction of Christ. Start living in light of eternity. And start loving the people around you. Because this is what you were saved for – this is what you're going to need when the storm finally comes – and because this is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God, let's pray together.