

## Message 2

### I Peter 1:13 – 2:10

The verses in the first message gave us the context, the foundation, for the remainder of the letter. The remainder of the letter is filled with practical instructions. You will notice that verse 13 begins with the word “therefore.” This word tells us that Peter is going to give a practical application of the truths he has previously written. Peter understands that the believer here on earth must be spiritually and emotionally prepared for the trials and difficulties that will come.

I Peter 1:13 through 2:10 is the focus of this message. However, we will not be analyzing all of the verses in this passage. When he was writing this letter, Peter occasionally departed from the main topic in order to provide commentary or explanations to the main theme. For example, in chapter 1, verses 10-12 were added to give an explanation about the subject of “salvation” which was mentioned in verse 9. These add-on explanations are not unimportant. In fact, they have very significant information and teaching. However, these add-on verses are like parentheses which can lead us away from the main flow or theme of the writing. In these four messages, we will concentrate on our subject “Living and Ministering Under Pressure,” and, to do this, we will skip over some verses. The main theme of this letter jumps from verse 9 to verse 13. We will begin with verse 13 today.

There is one more thought which will help us to understand this letter. Peter concentrates on two main issues. The first is Conduct and Attitude of the Believer, and the second concerns Interpersonal Relationships.

### Conduct and Attitude of the Believer

#### Read I Peter 1:13-17

There are several commands in this passage.

Believers are to be **prepared for action**. Peter an idiom which meant “be prepared for quick movements.” In the first century, men wore long robes. When they were preparing for hard work, they would pull up those long garments and tuck them in their belts so that there would be nothing to hinder their movements. Peter wanted the readers of this letter to be mentally prepared for the work they must do.

Believers are to be **self-controlled**. Believers are to be focused. They are to avoid distractions. They are to be serious and thoughtful. They are to be resolute and determined, steadfast and devoted. For the believer, life has a purpose.

Believers must **set their hopes on the grace to be given when Jesus Christ is revealed**. Without hope, people become despondent and despairing. Our hope in God should sustain us through our earthly difficulties. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews described this kind of hope. He instructed us to “fix our eyes on Jesus,” and to “consider Him” so that we “will not grow weary and lose heart” in our existing circumstances.

God supplies an abundance of grace to us throughout our lives. We live and we breathe because of the grace of God. "It is by grace that we have been saved" (Ephesians 2:8); it is the gift of grace which enables us to be involved in ministry (Ephesians 3:7-8). Other aspects of God's grace will be given to us when Jesus Christ is revealed. Our experience of God's faithfulness should give us confidence about God's grace, and keep our hope strong. Remember the key verse of this letter? I Peter 5:12. We are to be steadfast in the grace of God.

**Believers must not conform to the evil desires of the unsaved.** The literal meaning is "do not pattern your life" after unsaved people. Instead, we are to live "as obedient children." This means that we are to remember our family relationship. We are members of God's spiritual family, and He is our heavenly Father. He expects us to live according to His standards and requirements. His standard is given in verses 15 and 16.

**Believers are to be holy in all they do** because God, the One who called us, is holy. We are to pattern our lifestyles, our activities, our thoughts on God. We are to demonstrate God's character in all our actions. In chapter 2, verse 11, Peter wrote: there are "evil desires which war against the soul." Holiness separates us from those evil desires. To be holy means to be set apart for God, to be dedicated for His use, to live our lives like God wants us to live.

Verse 15 states that God "called us." The word "calling" is similar to the words "foreknowledge" and "election" and "predestination" that we talked about in the first message. Our "calling" requires us to be holy. We must become more and more like Jesus Christ (Romans 8:28-29).

**Believers are to live their lives as strangers here on earth in reverent fear.** The words "reverent fear" in this verse mean to have proper respect. It does not mean to live in terror or anxiety. The object of our "respect" is the Father, who is the One "who judges each person's actions." Verse 17 is an extension of the thought of verses 15 and 16. We will be holy in our actions if we have proper respect for who the Father is. The problem of many people, especially immature believers, is that they are very concerned about what people think about them, and that shapes their behavior in worldly ways. Our greatest concern should be what God thinks of us. Our desire to please him and honor Him should be our highest priority. We must be more concerned about the judgment of God than what non-believers think about us.

Notice that Peter states that we are to "live as strangers here." Peter also mentioned this in verse 1. We must remember that our citizenship is in heaven. God's people have often described their lives on earth as a "sojourn." For example, Abraham "By faith made his home in the promised land and lived like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Hebrews 11:9-10). Did you recognize the contrast? Tents are dwellings which are not permanent; they can be moved around. Cities have foundations; they are permanent.

Now we jump to **I Peter 1:22**. The next command is to “**love one another deeply, from a pure heart.**” Peter is not talking about the general nature of God’s love. Rather, he is referring to love as evidence that we are believers. The Apostle John wrote about how God’s quality of love comes to us when we become believers. He wrote: “We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death” (I John 3:14), and “Let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love” and “if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us” (I John 4:7-8, 11, 12). I’m sure you understand how God’s love makes it possible to love others, especially other believers. God expects us to have this quality of love.

Peter assumes that all his readers will manifest this quality of God’s love in their lives. In verse 22 Peter is urging his readers to take this quality of love to a deeper level. Peter does not want this God-like quality of love to be only intellectual or to be at a superficial level. Peter states that this deeper love comes from a “pure heart.” A deep godly love is the result of personal purity in an individual’s life. This matter of a pure heart goes back to the instructions about “holiness.” “Holiness” is not something that comes automatically to the believer. Yes, God makes immediate changes in our attitudes and behavior when we are born again, but sanctification, the process of becoming more and more like Jesus Christ, is something we must work on day by day. The spiritual victories over sin we have one day will not guarantee victory the next day. Maintaining a pure heart is a matter of day by day spiritual discipline.

Remember the diagram, especially the part about sanctification.

The next command is in chapter 2, verse 1, Believers must “**rid themselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.**” Why does Peter mention these sins next in the sequence of commands? Because they are sins against other people. In verse 22 Peter wrote about sincere love for brothers, and about love for one another. Believers do not automatically become perfect people. Even believers have their problems in interpersonal relationships. [Have you ever observed these problems in the Church?] If we are to become more and more like Jesus Christ, we will have to get rid of a lot of improper attitudes and behaviors in our interpersonal relationships.

What are we to get rid of?:

**Malice** is the desire to do harm to another person, to pay back, or get even. Malice comes from the heart of a person who is filled with anger, meanness, even hatred.

**Deceit** is dishonesty or cheating. Deceit comes from the heart of a person who wants to gain personal advantage over someone else.

**Hypocrisy** is pretending to be something different than you really are. It is an indication of insincerity. It is masking evil with a show of righteousness. Hypocrisy comes from the heart of a person who wants to appear better than he really is.

**Envy** is a form of jealousy or greed. It is the desire to have something possessed by someone else. Envy comes from the heart of a person who wants to have more and more earthly advantages and material possessions.

**Slander** is saying something false about someone else; something that damages the reputation of the other person. It is often used to ridicule and criticize others. Slander comes from the heart of a person who tries to become more important by making others smaller.

These are not the only five sins involved in interpersonal relationships. They are only examples. The character trait which overcomes these sins is “love which comes from a pure heart” (verse 22). If we truly love others, we will seek to build them up, not tear them down. Our motives should be to put other people ahead of ourselves. This is what Jesus Christ did: He laid down His life for others.

The word “rid” means to discard, throw off, remove. We can’t rid ourselves of evil through human effort. We must allow God to change us, and He does this through His word. Chapter 1, verses 23-25, mention the Word of God. The Word is described as living and enduring. We must apply this living and enduring Word of God to our lives so that God will be able to shape us and conform us into the kind of people He wants us to be.. This thought continues into chapter 2 verse 2.

**I Peter 2:2** Like newborn babies, believers must **crave pure spiritual milk**. Newborn babies have an eager and frequent desire, a craving, for milk. That is like the desire that believers should have. Peter is illustrating the necessity for believers to feed themselves on God’s Word. The Scriptures are like food which provides spiritual strength and helps the believer to grow up spiritually.

### **I Peter 2:4-10 Read**

Earlier I stated that this section of the letter is concerned about Conduct and Attitude. The verses so far have been focused mostly on Christian Conduct (“Prepare your minds,” “be self controlled,” “set you hope,” “be holy,” etc.). Chapter 2, verses 4-10, do not contain any more instructions about conduct. Instead, verses 4-10 emphasize the attitude that believers should have if they are to serve Jesus Christ.

There is a rather abrupt transition between verses 3 and 4. In verse 3 Peter presents Christ as food (“taste and see that the Lord is good.”) In verse 4 the imagery of Christ is a “rock” or “stone.”

The key word in verses 4-10 is “stone.” Jesus Christ is described as “the living Stone.” In verse 5 believers are compared to “living stones,” “stones which are being built into a special kind of building. The main thought in verses 4 and 5 is, “As we come to the living Stone, Jesus Christ, .... we become like living stones.” In other words, the more we come to Jesus, and the closer we are to Him, the more like Him we will be. Believers come to Christ by faith to find salvation, but they must continue to come to Him if they are to develop into the kind of believers He wants them to become. This is another focus on sanctification.

What does Jesus want us to become? Peter uses several word pictures. As believers, we are to become “living stones” which will be used to build “a spiritual house.” This “spiritual house” is the same as “a holy priesthood” which qualifies us to “offer spiritual sacrifices.” These are terms that were meaningful to believers from a Jewish background.

Most commentators think that Peter inserted these verses which speak of “stones” because all the early believers knew that Jesus had named Peter as the “Rock.” This event is described in Matthew 16:13-19. Jesus is the “living Stone” who is building His Church. Peter recognized that he and other believers were to continue the work of Christ on earth as the living stones (material) of Jesus Christ.

To believers Jesus is precious — the Cornerstone on which God established His eternal purposes, and we must recognize that it is a privilege to be involved in Jesus’ building effort. However, to those who do not believe, He is the “Stone that causes people to stumble and fall.” As you can recognize, there are two possible attitudes that people can have about Jesus Christ, and there are only two options for people; either believe or stumble.

In I Peter 2:9-10 Peter changes the metaphor describing believers; they are no longer “stones” but “a chosen people.” The word here is the same as the word “elect” in chapter 1, verse 1. Specifically we are “chosen people ... belonging to God.” The word “belonging” stresses ownership. The terms in verse 9 come from the Old Testament. In the Old Testament they applied to Israel. The Israelites were the “chosen people” of God. They were to serve as the priests of God before all the gentile nations of the world. They were to be a holy nation, and be obedient to the law if they were to fulfill their responsibility and be blessed by God. See Exodus 19:4-6.

Peter applied these terms to believers. Believers are to serve as priests. Priests are to represent people before God. They must be concerned for the spiritual well-being of non-believers. They are to offer spiritual sacrifices on behalf of the people and teach the people to worship correctly. Corporately, believers (the Church) are to direct the attention of the people to God. Collectively, believers are to be a “holy nation.” They are to be a model and pattern of righteousness for non-believers.

There is a reason why believers have been “chosen” to be a “royal priesthood” and a “holy nation” — they are to “declare the praises of God.” He is the One who sovereignly “called us out of darkness into his wonderful light.” Believers are to “advertise” (make known) the gracious actions of God in history. God’s actions would include His initiatives in redeeming sinful people, as revealed in both the Old and New Testaments. It would include the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And it would include the personal testimony of each individual believer, because each one of us is a lesson in how God has worked in history. God’s purpose in redeeming us is that we might be witnesses for Him.

Verse 10 is the conclusion to this section. It summarizes the situation of each one of us. Read Ephesians 2:1-10 for another, longer, description of our situation and what God did for us.

According to Ephesians 2:10. We were sovereignly chosen “(created) in Christ Jesus to do good works.” Peter explained that we were a “chosen people” .... “that we might declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light.” God has a purpose here on earth for each one of us. God called us so that the people of the world might learn about Him through us.

This message has been concerned with Conduct and Attitudes. These two characteristics go together. If we have the correct attitude we will be careful about our conduct. Good conduct will be pleasing to God. If our conduct is good, we will become more and more like Jesus Christ, and we will have more and more incentive (another word for “attitude”) to be spiritually mature.

End Message 2