

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)*

How Do We Live at the Edge of the Storm?

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1 Peter 1:13-25

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Introduction:

Good morning. Please turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Peter, chapter 1. You'll find that right near the end of your New Testament.

I have been so encouraged, and also so convicted by the opening of Peter's letter. Remember, he's writing to Christians who are on the on-ramp to persecution. The storm clouds are becoming visible over the horizon and the Christians in and around Asia Minor are noticing. Peter loves these people. Peter wants to prepare these people. So, what does he say?

Does he tell them to hide?

Does he tell them to compromise?

Does he grumble and complain about the culture?

Go home and read verses 1-12 again. Read it aloud and listen to the JOY in Peter's language!

He says, Christians! You are the chosen children of God! You belong to another kingdom and you have been born again into a hope that sees beyond the grave! You have a reward in Heaven

that is being kept for you and you have a Father in Heaven who is keeping you for your reward! You are living in the days that the Old Testament prophets desperately looked forward to – your gospel hope is something so special that not even the angels are able to comprehend it! And, he says this, which is becoming one of my favourite verses in all of the Bible:

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and **rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory** (1 Peter 1:8 ESV)

Now is not the time to complain, nor is it the time to hide! God is still good, He is still strong and He is still holding onto you! If you are in Christ – if you have turned from your sin and placed all of your trust in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ – then you WIN! The world can't take your hope! The storm can't steal your joy! The devil can't pry away your prize!

We need to see all of that, Peter says, because there is a storm coming. He has reminded us of the foundational truths that will help us to stand in the midst of the storm. We've done all of our preparatory work – we've boarded up the windows and sandbagged the entrance.

But, beginning in verse 13 Peter shifts from the indicative to the imperative. He has been reminding us of what is true, but now he is teaching us how to live. With storm clouds overhead, Peter reminds us that there is still yet some work to do. In today's text, Peter begins to answer the question: How do we live at the edge of the storm?

Look with me now to 1 Peter 1:13-25. Hear now God's holy, inerrant, living and active word to us:

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.

In the Greek, there are only four imperative verbs – four commands – in this entire text. These four commands will help us to answer the question: How do we live at the edge of the storm?

How Do We Live at the Edge of the Storm?

You'll notice that the text begins with the word “Therefore”. Peter is pointing back to everything that he has said in the first 12 verses and he's saying: “Therefore, we can do this! Yes, there is a storm coming, but we are secure in Christ so let's get to work!”

So, where do we begin? How do we live now with storm clouds looming overhead? First, Peter says:

1. Fix your hope on Christ

We see this command in 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.** (1 Peter

1:13 ESV)

I love the language Peter uses here! The only way that you will be of any use in storm season is if you are firmly convinced that God's grace for you through Jesus Christ is unaffected by the storm. Hope says: "No matter how hard it gets down here, I know that my treasure is secure for me up there."

Jesus modeled this hope for us as he passed through the ultimate trial. The author to the Hebrews encouraged us to look to Jesus:

the founder and perfecter of our faith, who **for the joy that was set before him** endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.
(Hebrews 12:2 ESV)

Do you see that? When Jesus was facing his own storm – a storm that far outweighs anything we could ever imagine – he looked ahead to the glorious joy that was waiting on the other side of the cross!

If we are going to suffer well, then we need to be filled with hope! We need to fix our eyes on the joy that is set before us through Jesus Christ.

But, practically speaking, how are we supposed to go about doing that? Thankfully, Peter's letter is a very practical letter. He sets up this command with two important explanatory phrases:

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)

How are we going to keep our hope fixed on the grace of God in Christ? First of all, prepare your minds for action. The Greek actually reads: "Gird up the loins of your mind." In Peter's context, men wore long, flowing robes. You can imagine trying to run with a long robe dangling around your feet. So, in times of battle or times of urgency, the men would tuck their robes into their belts to free them up to move quickly.

Peter is saying here that there are things in your life that are slowing your mind down. He then

comes at the same point from a different angle. He tells them to be “sober-minded”.

The idea here is very similar. It’s easy to sneak up on someone when they’re in a drunken sleep, isn’t it? If you were stuck behind enemy lines and you were trying to navigate your way back to friendly territory, you wouldn’t stop to have a drink, would you? Of course not! You need your wits about you in dangerous times.

That’s what Peter is saying here. You’re living in dangerous times. The enemy is lining up an attack against your faith. If you’re going to endure this wave of affliction, then you are going to need a hope that is firmly fixed on Jesus Christ.

I want you to think very practically about this. What does it look like to prepare your mind for action? In times of ease and comfort, we can get away with a certain amount of T.V. viewing, can’t we? When the family is healthy and happy and our bellies are full – when our faith is unchallenged and our opposition is quiet, we can survive with a diet of mindless entertainment. We can immerse ourselves in sports in a way that is unhealthy. We can become fixated on home repairs or financial investments. We can spend almost all of our waking moments thinking about temporary, trivial pleasures.

But that won’t work when the storm comes. The day is coming – in fact I would argue that it is dawning on us right now – when our faith is going to be tested in the fire of affliction. Is your mind prepared? Or is it being lulled to sleep by mindless entertainment?

It’s time to prepare your mind! You need to see Christ who is your hope! You need to get rid of every distraction that would keep you from being fixed on him. Press into the word of God. Read. Study. Listen. Pray. Watch. Fix your hope on Christ.

Second, Peter says:

2. Commit yourself to holiness

We find this command in verses 14-16:

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.” (1 Peter 1:14-16 ESV)

To be holy is to be set apart. We are supposed to conduct ourselves in a way that looks nothing like the world around us.

This is an important word for us. If we are not COMMITTED to holiness – if we give ourselves permission to bend and distort God’s commands every time the culture pushes on them – then we are going to compromise. We will. We’re going to be tempted to give an inch here, and an inch there, so as to go undetected by the culture. But we can’t! Peter is determined for us to see this so he uses two phrases to hammer it home.

First, he tells us in verse 14:

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

You used to act out every sinful desire that would pop into your mind. You were enslaved to your passions and your lust for pleasure and you chased those things down even when you knew you shouldn’t.

But that’s not who you are anymore! You are obedient children of God. You are chosen by God – born again into a living hope – therefore you can and you MUST resist! The old self was enslaved to sin. But this new self was made for obedience. We saw that in verse 2, didn’t we? That’s where Peter said that we were saved “for obedience to Jesus Christ.” You were saved to obey! God saved you so that you would be holy. I think Kevin DeYoung says this so well:

You can’t make sense of the Bible without understanding that God is holy and that this holy God is intent on making a holy people to live with him forever in a holy heaven.¹

Your Heavenly Father adopted you into His family. He picked you up out of the mire and the muck, he wiped all of the dirt and the filth off of you, and then He put His Spirit into you. And now, Peter says, you need to be looking more and more like your Father in Heaven every day.

¹ Kevin DeYoung, *The Hole in Our Holiness*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2012), 31.

That was the plan, Old Testament and New:

since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:16 ESV)

You don’t need a Bible college degree to get this, do you? We see this on an earthly level. It’s an observable fact that children frequently follow in the footsteps of their parents. I watched my Dad serve in pastoral ministry for my whole life. I sat through all of his sermons, I heard him answer the middle of the night phone calls, I saw him love and serve the church, and when it came time for me to get a job I wound up right here. I don’t even know how it happened! I was trying to be a recording artist, then I blinked twice and I was preaching in this gymnasium.

The more time we spend with our parents – if they are good parents – the more we will begin to look like them. And here, in our text, God is telling us that we ought to look like Him. If we’re spending time with Him – if we’re fixing our eyes upon Jesus every day and delighting in what we see, then we should be looking more and more like Him and less and less like our old selves. As the Apostle Paul 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)

So, how are you doing with this? What would your wife say? What would your co-workers say? What would your neighbour say? Do you look any different from the world? Are you cursing and swearing on the job site and complaining about your wife? Are you looking at filthy pictures on your phone and living as a slave to pleasure? Are you more likely to argue about politics or vaccination than you are to share the gospel? Because listen, if you’re compromising and capitulating now, you will be toppled over when the storm winds blow.

Put off that old way of living and put on Christ. Commit yourself to holiness.

Third, Peter says:

3. Conduct yourself with reverence

Look with me at verse 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 (1 Peter 1:17 ESV)

Here Peter strikes a note that we need to hear loud and clear. He tells us: “God is your Father, but He is also your holy Judge! You’re going to stand before Him some day and you’re going to give an account for how you lived this life.”

Peter began his letter with comforting assurance. He said: “God chose you before the foundation of the world and He’s guarding your inheritance and He’s holding tight onto you!” He essentially says: “Have no fear! God’s got you!”

So how then can He go on to say what we see here in verse 17? God’s going to judge my deeds? I should conduct myself with fear? Is this the same Peter writing here?

Yes, it is. And he has no problem setting this tension before us. Peter felt great liberty to preach this way, because Jesus preached this way. Jesus said thing like:

²² On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’²³ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’ (Matthew 7:22-23 ESV)

And:

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness.²⁸ So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. (Matthew 23:27-28 ESV)

Peter is just preaching like Jesus, and we need to do the same.

Hear this: If you have turned from your sin and placed your trust in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, then you are safe and secure in the hands of your loving Father. You are filled with the Holy Spirit who is changing you from the inside out. You are washed by the blood of Jesus Christ whose blood was shed as a ransom for you. You are guarded by the Father

who put this whole plan of salvation into motion. Hallelujah! Yes!

But, when all of THAT happens to you, you change. Hope and holiness begin to grow in you. Jesus used the illustration of a tree – just as a living tree produces good fruit, so too does a living Christian produce obedience. Where there is no fruit there is no tree and where there is no obedience there is no Christian.

If you're going to whether the storm then you need to take a serious look at God, you need to take a serious look at what he has done to save you, and then you need to take a serious look at yourself.

Look at God: He is your holy judge. The author to the Hebrews wrote:

for our God is a consuming fire. (Hebrews 12:29 ESV)

One day we will stand before Him and all of our works will be laid bare. What will God see in you? What will He make of the evidence that unfolds before Him? Will He see a born-again follower of Jesus Christ responding in obedience, gratitude and love to the glorious gospel? Or will He see someone who has been putting on a charade? A white washed tomb – dressed up on the outside but full of dead men's bones? Peter wants us to see how seriously God has dealt with our sin and so he breaks out of this list of instructions and he spends a full paragraph just basking in the wonder of the gospel.

Look at what God has done for you!

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 you²¹ 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. (1 Peter 1:18-21 ESV)

Listen to the language here: God ransomed you out of the futile ways you inherited from your forefathers. You were born into slavery. Slavery to sin, slavery to your passions, slavery to destructive desires. You were on the road to hell.

But God ransomed you out of that slavery. He didn't buy you with silver. He didn't buy you with gold. He bought you with the precious blood of His own Son. The infinite God gave of Himself to save finite, sinful me. And you. And look with me at verse 20:

He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you (1 Peter 1:20 ESV)

Do you hear that? God knew what it would cost to save you before the foundation of the world. He knew you, and He knew what you would do. He knew that you would rebel against Him. He knew that the only way to save you would be through the spilling of the blood of His own Son. And He put that plan in motion. Can you imagine that?

Now look at yourself. Are you living a life that is reflective of those awesome realities? Or are you playing with sin? Peter is telling us loud and clear that this is not a game! You were purchased at so great a price! God is infinitely holy and He is your judge and He will not be fooled by your charades. Examine yourself! Live like you know who your God is! He is a righteous judge. Conduct yourself with reverence.

Finally, as we stand on the brink of the storm, Peter says:

4. Devote yourself to love

Up until now, Peter has been giving commands that deal with personal holiness, but now he shifts to our corporate faith. How do we live with one another in these coming days? Look at verse 22:

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 (1 Peter 1:22-23 ESV)

When the storm comes – when it gets harder and harder for us to live out our faith out there – we are not going to survive unless we are a loving community in here. This is another necessary word for us to hear today. We are a private culture and we are so tempted to privatize our faith. But the Christian faith is a corporate faith.

Look at what Peter says in verse 22. He tells us that we've been purified – we've been saved - FOR a sincere brotherly love. Let me put that together for you: You were saved FOR – IN ORDER THAT – FOR THE PURPOSE OF – brotherly love!

Loving one another isn't optional. It's what we were made for! God saved us so that we would love one another. Now, obviously, we were saved for other purposes as well, but Peter doesn't mention those other purposes here. No, with a storm coming in, Peter wants us to see THIS: You need each-other! You were made for each-other! Devote yourself to love!

In the cultural climate that we're living in today, we so often treat the church like a country club. We pop in once or twice a month, enjoy some small talk with some acquaintances, drop off our donation for the tax deductions and then leave as quickly as we can after the service so that we can get back to our hobbies at home.

But the days are coming when that shallow treatment – that insipid understanding – of the corporate gathering of God's people simply won't suffice. When the world hates us out there, we had better be loving one another in here. Peter uses the language of birth to remind us that we are family. Look at what he says:

since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; (1 Peter 1:23 ESV)

Your race, gender, age and income bracket don't matter in here because we all came into this family the same way. We were brought into this family through the living and abiding word of God – the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul wrote:

Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. (Colossians 3:11 ESV)

Many of us have grown out of touch with our biological siblings, haven't we? People change, people move, people fight. Peter speaks to our physical birth as birth that came from a perishable seed. Physically, you were born into a family that is perishable. It will eventually fade away.

But through the imperishable seed – the seed of the gospel – you have been born into an imperishable family. You have brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers all around you in the church, and you are united by the unchanging gospel of Jesus Christ. As the winds blow out there, and your world becomes increasingly unstable, it will become more and more important to you to have stability in here.

So, very practically, do you live like this is true? You were saved to love one another. Do you have Christian friends? Are you connected at all in the church? Are you holding grudges or slandering other believers? You need us. And, listen, we need you. Devote yourself to love.

Conclusion

God tells us that, if we have any hope of weathering this storm, then we will need to press into Him as He holds onto us. We will need alert and engaged minds that are fixed on the hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We will need to turn away from our old practices and to be holy as our Father in heaven is holy. We will need a healthy and reverent fear of the living God who is both our Father and our Judge. And we will need each-other. We will need to show love to and to be loved by the family of God. And by God's grace, we will live and serve even in the midst of the storm.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.