

Persevering Through Trials **1 Peter 1:13 - 2:3**

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1:13 Therefore, preparing your minds for action,^[a] 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.

^{2:1} So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. ² Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— ³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

I'm wondering how many of you like rugby. I know that both Harada-san and James Wright enjoy rugby, but how about others of you? I like rugby a lot. I played rugby for five years all the way back in junior high school, and I was quite happy to go to the Rugby World Cup in Japan in 2019 to watch the games. Actually, one of the best rugby players in the world is playing now for a rugby team in Chiba called Shining Arks. His name is Israel Folau, and he is an Australian. If you have a chance, please go and see him. Or watch him on YouTube. His side steps are the best. However, Israel Folau was forced to quit playing in Australia three years ago, despite being the best player on the Australian national team. This is because of his Christian beliefs. He was fired as a player on the Australian national team for having a normal, traditional Christian attitude. Then followed three very difficult years. There was a series of labour court cases, which cost a lot of money, and in the end, various clubs decided not to hire him. It was a very difficult situation.

How can we persevere in the midst of trials? Here are three ways:
First, look forward to future grace.
Secondly, fear the God who judges.
Third, long for the Word of God.

Grace, fear, and God's Word.

How can we persevere amidst trials? The first way is to look forward to future grace.
1 Peter 1:13. "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."

This letter was written by a man named Peter. He was one of the disciples of Jesus Christ and was a leader among the disciples. In the first century, when Jesus was captured by the Roman soldiers and the leaders of Israel, Peter betrayed Jesus and felt his weakness greatly. But nevertheless, when Jesus rose from the dead, he appeared to Peter, ate fish with him, forgave him, and appointed him to give testimony to Jesus' grace and to the role of caring for his people.

From that starting point of ministry, Peter spent the next 30 years with other disciples of Jesus, preaching about Jesus in Jerusalem, around the Mediterranean Sea, and as far as Rome. As a result, many people became Christians and received great hope. However, along with that hope and the credentials of being a child of God, those who became Christians also suffered a lot of persecution from the people around them. As a result, these Christians were driven out of their original places and scattered to different areas. Peter wrote this letter to encourage and strengthen these scattered Christians.

At the beginning of the letter, Peter tells us that there is great hope because of the resurrection of Jesus. Then he wrote today's verse to help us understand what we should do in response to the hope given to us.

1 Peter 1:13. "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."

Jesus promised that at some point He would appear again in the flesh on this earth. At that time, those who believed in him, the Christians, would be given great grace. When Jesus comes again, Christians will receive praise, honor, and glory, and they will receive a perfect, resurrected, glorified body to live in a perfect world with a perfect community. When Jesus appears, Christians will be given great blessings, so until that time, even while enduring trials, we are commanded to set our hope fully on the grace that will be brought to us when Jesus Christ appears. This doesn't mean just thinking about it occasionally. To "set your hope fully" means to think about it a lot; to concentrate on it.

Christ also commanded us to imitate God the Father and be like him, to be children of our Heavenly Father who gives us great hope. We are not to follow the foolish desires of life that we had when we didn't know God. Let's look forward to our future grace!

Both Jesus Christ and his disciples often talked about how the world will be remade when Christ comes to earth again. Some things are good today, but they will be much, much better than they are now. Therefore, we should set our hope on the future and look forward to it. However, when some people hear this, they take it to mean that they don't need to think about how to deal with their current problems. As a result, they lose interest in their love for their family, their efforts at work, and the challenges of their

friends. But as I read today's passage, both are important. It says that the grace that will be given to us in the future is very important and that we should wait and hope for it, and it also expresses the loving and holy character of God the Father in our present relationships.

I am currently doing research on a man named Kanzo Uchimura. He worked as a newspaper reporter and junior high school teacher. After that, exactly 100 years ago, he preached messages from the Bible to about 600 people every Sunday, 200 meters away from this building. He said the same thing as the Apostle Peter. He said that the best religion is Christianity or a religion that emphasizes future grace: "There is one thing that the history of Christianity and the history of Buddhism have in common. When the belief in the hereafter was at its strongest, the religion was also at its most genuine and prosperous."

The words are old and a little difficult to understand, but the fact is that both Christianity and Buddhism can benefit greatly in many ways if future blessings are well understood and emphasized.

Jesus Christ himself went about his daily life with a clear idea of what the future held.
Hebrews 12:2. ". . . looking 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."

Jesus did not choose to live a life of ease. Instead, he thought of future grace, a time of joy with God the Father, and he lived his life with that as his destination. Because of this, Jesus had to go through a painful time, but as a result, he gave every human being the opportunity to receive forgiveness. What a significant and awesome life!

Probably all of you are thinking about your current lives as well as your future. The wife of a friend of mine had a baby six months ago. My friend's current job takes him overseas a lot, so he's been thinking about how his job is affecting his child. When the baby is older, he hopes to show his child that his father enjoys doing meaningful work. And he hopes that while the child is young, he will have the opportunity to experience a different culture and language. However, he wonders what he will do once the child is in elementary school. I'm sure you all have concerns about your future. But what the Bible is saying today is that it is not only about what happens before we die, but also about what happens after we die. It is important to think about and look forward to the blessings of that time.

When I was a freshman in college, I was having fun studying, playing soccer and partying, but I didn't understand the meaning and purpose of life. As a result, one night I won a big soccer game, went to a fun party, danced with a girl I liked, and then went back to my apartment and sat on my bed depressed. I felt that even though I was enjoying life and getting what I wanted, it felt empty because I didn't know the meaning of life and the destination that would truly satisfy me. It was then that I began to read the Bible and realized that our Creator had created us with a purpose and a desire. As I read the Bible for the next few months, my life gained meaning, hope and an understanding of future grace. I am still very grateful for that. The first point is, let's look forward to future grace.

How can we persevere amidst trials? The second way is to fear the God who judges.
1 Peter 1:17. "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,"

When Jesus appears, there will be great hope as well as judgment. And the one who will oversee that judgment is "the one who judges impartially according to each one's deeds." This means that he will look at everyone in the world, one by one, and see all that each person has done, said, and thought, and will judge them fairly. Fortunately, Christians can call the one who does that judging our Father, but we should not underestimate his greatness. And we should not live our lives as if our present lives will not be revealed to him and be judged fairly. Rather, we are commanded to live in fear.

The relationship of the world to those who are waiting for great blessings from God is that they are sojourners in the world. The people who received Peter's letter experienced various persecutions and trials from the society of that day. But in a way, this is natural, because Christians do not belong to this world, we are just sojourners in it. Therefore, in many ways, we are different from the values and ways of this world, and we are not likely to be understood by this world. Our true home is the future world, the new world where we will live with Jesus. Therefore, we are commanded, "conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile."

As a matter of fact, the people who received these letters from Peter had no hope and led empty lives. It was a traditional life in the Asian region (modern-day Turkey), where they were born and raised.

1 Peter 1:18-21. ". . . knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you 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."

The hope and faith that Christians have been given, are due to God the Father, as is the future judgment. Therefore, we are commanded, "conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile." We should fear the God who judges.

I think there are two not-so-helpful responses to the truth that the Bible teaches here. The first is that some Christians are proclaiming to people they don't know (in front of train stations, etc.), that they should repent because there will be judgment from God. The presenter's motive in wanting to share the truth is good, but the presenter is not a friend of the people who are listening, and in many cases, their love is not conveyed. When people hear this message, they don't understand that God is the Father. He just sounds like a scary being who judges harshly. The second less-than-helpful response is that if you only hear that the Christian God is love and that he loves you, there is a danger of portraying a biased image. Because the Creator is so rich in love, He also emphasizes justice. Both need to be presented.

Can you think of cases where justice was not done? Thankfully, we live in a country where the justice system is basically good. However, injustice does happen. In 1988, Junko Furuta who lived in Saitama, Japan, was a high school student, and had a part-time job after school. One day, while riding her bicycle to her part-time job, she was covered by four young men and fell off her bicycle. Then, Ms. Furuta was kidnapped by the four young men, taken to their apartment, raped repeatedly for 40 days, beaten, tortured, had her legs and other body parts burned, was fed only milk, and after being subjected to unspeakable things, she was killed. All four men were captured. One spent twenty years in prison, one spent eight years, and two spent five years. However, many people thought that punishment was not nearly enough. We have a great need for justice to be done. So how wonderful it is that the Creator will ultimately carry out

perfect justice in all cases. We are hoping for justice in this world, and we will try to improve the court system, etc., but perfect justice is impossible in this world. We don't have to be depressed about it, however. One day, according to the gospel of Jesus and according to today's letter from Peter, a disciple of Jesus, there will be a perfect judgment, thanks to God the Father.

Jesus Christ himself conveyed that understanding well.

Matthew 23:27, 33: "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 . . . You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?"

If we look back at the motives, thoughts, and words of our own hearts, what do we see? But thankfully, Jesus Christ came into the world 2,000 years ago to pay the penalty of our sin for us. Thanks to the noble death of Jesus on the cross, we can be thankful because the stains of our sins have been completely forgiven and cleansed, and conversely, his reward has become ours.

Today, some here may be hearing about this future grace and future judgment for the very first time. Welcome! And please don't misunderstand this message. We, today sometimes hear the word "fear" in the Bible and have a scary, fearful image. But the biblical image is different; it paints an image of respect for the father. I think there are many fathers in this world who are not good. I'm very sorry if the image of your father is scary. Please talk about it with someone. However, if he is a good father, he is not scary at all, but he is someone you should respect. He is the one who protects, loves and helps the family. Our Creator God is a much, much better father even than that.

A few weeks ago, I read an email from someone that made me angry inside and out. The email made it sound as if I was the cause of a bad situation. Moreover, the email was sent to a third party as well. I couldn't stop being angry at the person who sent the email, because it was completely incorrect. I read the email around noon and continued to think about it into the evening. But in the evening, I finally remembered God's truth and felt relieved. That is, at the cross of Jesus, I have already received full honor and become a child of the Creator God, so losing the respect of those around me is no longer the most important thing. Also, I was finally able to give to God the actions of those who had wronged me. I was back to being God-centered and fearing God. Let's fear the God who judges.

The third way to persevere through trials is to develop a longing for God's Word.

1 Peter 1:22. "Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,"

The scattered Christians have been made new. They have been cleansed and made to love by hearing and obeying the truth of Jesus. By following the truth, there has been a wonderful change, and Peter hopes that they will continue to change. ". . . love one another earnestly from a pure heart." Peter emphasizes that the wonderful changes in their character are due to the Word of God.

1 Peter 1:23-25. ". . . since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for 'All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.' And this word is the good news that was preached to you."

What was the means by which the recipients of the letters were transformed from a life of emptiness to one of hope and new birth as Christians? God's Word. The Word of God was proclaimed as the gospel to these readers. That Word was sown like a seed and produced Christ followers.

And, just as the Word of God was the driving force behind the birth of Christians, the same is true for the path and means of Christian growth.

1 Peter 2:1-3. "So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good."

The first step in growing as a Christian is to discard the things that oppose the truth. We must forsake malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander. At the same time, like newborn infants, we are to long for the pure spiritual milk. The word "milk" is referring to the Word of God. Christians have already been born again by the Word of God and have tasted that God is good. Now, we will grow as Christians by seeking God's Word even more. The destination of growth is salvation, and when Jesus comes again, we will receive even greater grace from him. We persevere in trials by longing for God's Word.

Peter's letter was addressed to people who were scattered in various regions around the 60th year of the first century. At that time, there was the Old Testament as the Word of God, and there may have been the Gospels and certain letters written by the apostles of Jesus, but there was no Bible in its present form, no collection of all the letters written by the apostles. Therefore, the milk of the Spirit, the Word of God, at that time was the Old Testament, the gospel as it was told, and certain letters from the apostles. Today, we have the Bible, which includes the complete collection of the letters of the apostles. We have even more communication from God, for which we are thankful. Therefore, let us cultivate a deep desire for the Word of God, the milk of the Spirit.

I think the Bible uses a variety of awesome imagery to help us understand. In the Book of Proverbs in the Old Testament, we are told to learn diligence from "the ant". In today's verse, we are commanded to be like a newborn who is dependent on milk. Let's act this out a bit, shall we?

Baby: "Not really, I'm a little busy today, so I don't have to drink. . ." That's impossible.

Baby: "I'd rather have some barley tea today. I'll refrain from breastfeeding. . ." It's not possible.

On the contrary, babies want to be nursed. There's nothing they want more! In the same way, we should also seek after the Word of God, the Bible.

If we know that the way to grow is to long for and to take in the Word of God, we will be more apt to make it the center of our lives. But perhaps some of us know what Peter is talking about, but when we look at their own lives, we may feel guilty about how little we desire the Word. The challenge may be how to get our hearts to long for the Word of God. The solution is what Peter mentioned earlier in today's passage. That is, to think about the salvation and grace that will be given to you in the future. All the desires of your heart—praise, glory, honor, rest, love, and close companionship—will be fulfilled when Jesus appears. When your heart grasps this, it will turn to joy and longing. God is compassionate.

For some people, raising children takes up a lot of their time. The kids wake up early in the morning, and then there's breakfast preparation, school preparation, housework, taking care of the kids, and dinner preparation, there is almost no time left for reading the Bible at the end of the day. Fortunately, taking time to read God's Word does not make us children of God! We have already become God's children by simply believing

in Jesus. But if you want to grow, you might want to talk with someone about how you can take time to read, listen to, and practice God's Word. Maybe you and your marriage partner can read a chapter of the Bible together and pray before going to bed. Or maybe it would be good to listen to the Bible when you take public transportation.

This letter of Peter's is addressed to people who are undergoing various trials. Suffering is all around us. Jesus Christ lived a life filled with such suffering. He was betrayed by people, hated by people, opposed by leaders, and felt lonely and under a lot of pressure. And even though he was an innocent man, he was crucified.

1 Peter 1:18-20. ". . . knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you . . ."

How do we persevere amid trials? 1) Look forward to our future grace, 2) fear the God who judges, and 3) long for God's Word.

Let's pray.

Our Father in heaven, we ask that in the midst of the various trials and sufferings we are each experiencing, we may look forward this week to the blessings of the future appearing of Jesus, that we will reverence you as the future judge, and that we will long for your Word. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts because you are merciful. Amen.