

1Peter 11-04-15a

This is Friday, the 15th of April, 2011. We continue our study in the book of 1 Peter. We resume tonight in chapter 3, verse 14.

We'll take a moment as we begin to go to the Lord in prayer. It's an opportunity to sort of reorder the content of what's in our minds, set aside the things that are distracting and recall to mind the things that pertain to what we have learned so far in this letter and the goal of our study, which is the appreciation of God's truth and the recognition of the things that are in this passage that pertain to us now and in the immediate days ahead. So let's take a moment and go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, once again, we are grateful for the opportunity to spend time together in fellowship around the study of your word. We thank you for the spiritual gifts that you have distributed amongst us and the blessings that we receive through them and the building up and edification that is in our midst when we spend time together in fellowship. We thank you for the truth of your word.

We thank you for the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Most of all, we are grateful for the Lord Jesus Christ for his express love and compassion for us in coming and living in our flesh and in our midst and in coming and not only living a life of exemplary obedience and spirit-filled faithfulness, but also in burying our sins, taking our place and making it possible for us to have the relationship that we have with you. We thank you for all these things.

We pray that as we study your word this evening, God the Holy Spirit will enlighten us and illuminate these verses so that we each individually and collectively can see not only the meaning as Peter wrote it to the original audience, but also the pertinence and applicability for us in our circumstances and in what remains to us of this life. We are thankful once again for all of your many blessings and we ask your blessing on this study tonight. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. First Peter chapter 3 verse 8 says finally all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another, love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous, not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling. And you remember when we entered this section of the letter that the finally is the word in the end or this is the result and it is the result of earlier things.

If we have paid attention to what we have seen in the outline of this letter, if you go back and think about the broad outline of it, what did Peter start out talking about? Hello there pilgrims, howdy to all of you scattered Jews in Pontius and Galatia and all these far off places. And then what did he do? What did he remind them of? God has a plan for your life. It is your calling.

It's not an accident. God isn't sort of discovering you where you are and trying to see if there is some way he can help. You're there by the foreknowledge of God.

You have been called to be where you are. God's not catching up with you and finding you and seeing if he can, he's not like roadside assistance. He has been there from the beginning and Peter went to great lengths in the first chapter to emphasize God's deliverance.

Wherever we find ourselves right now, you stop and think, I, me, myself, I. For me, it's Sam. For you, it's fill in your name here. What are your circumstances right now? What are my circumstances right now? I've got some things going on that are good.

I've got some challenges and some tasks. I've got some difficulties. Everybody does.

This is in the plan. God knew this. He orchestrated it.

The whole first part of this letter is Peter telling people, don't think that what's befalling you is a happenstance. It's the plan of God. God has deliverance built into it.

We are in these circumstances to be delivered. We are in these circumstances to be blessed and to be a blessing and to lay hold of righteousness by faith. These are opportunities.

We wouldn't have these opportunities. There would be no need for deliverance if we didn't have trouble. There would be no need for faith if we didn't have challenge.

There would be no need to lay hold of righteousness if we were already as righteous as we need to be. If we knew everything we were supposed to know, school would be out. We would be taken to glory.

We don't know everything we need to know. There are things we can learn. There are things that God can show us in these circumstances.

He has created these circumstances so that he can reveal himself, so that we can see the glory of Jesus Christ, see the pertinence of the example of Jesus Christ. That's why we're here. This letter, if you wanted to say one sentence that summed up 1 Peter, it would be a difficult thing, but you could say, he addresses the purpose of our Christian life.

This is a purpose letter. This is a mission statement. You are here for these reasons.

So that was the first part of the letter, deliverance. There is hope for the future. We saw this in the first part of chapter one.

There's some trial in the present, but this is nothing new. People in the past saw it coming. The angels stooped down to see it.

The prophets of old longed to see these things. That led him into the second part of the letter, which is, since we're in this circumstance, what is the purpose? If this is a purpose letter, if God has made this big plan and has called us to be in it and to be active parts of it, what is the

substance of it? I get that God orchestrated it. I get that I'm here for a reason.

So what's the reason? Well, Peter expresses this in the latter part of chapter one and the first part of chapter two, and that was, first of all, be holy. You ought to look different. If you are called and if you're living a supernatural life, it ought to look different.

We ought to be different. We ought to have a different attitude. We ought to have different problem-solving devices.

We ought to have different frame of reference. We can see not only the horizontal, but we can see the vertical, not just the immediate, but also the future, the eternal weight of glory that is resting on these things. We ought to be different because of that perspective.

So be holy. When it says be holy, be ye holy for I am holy, what does it really mean? It doesn't mean stop all that sinning now, you, quit that carping and nasty stuff. What does it mean to be holy? It means to be eternal-minded.

God is eternal-minded, and he says, because I am eternal-minded, you be eternal-minded. It's a part of our calling. So be holy.

Love one another. The expression of that holiness and that sensitivity to eternal things changes the way we treat each other. We become those who love based on who and what we are instead of who and what the object is.

Our love becomes objective instead of subjective. The world's love is subjective. If you're attractive, and as you get older and start being unattractive, why, go get yourself fixed up.

Have a nip and a tuck and a vacuum out here and an implant there and keep looking good because this is how you're going to be loved. This is how you're going to be attractive. This is how you're going to keep your job if you're in entertainment or in public eye.

Even people that are just public relations, it's a part of their job. They can sometimes even expense their cosmetic surgery for work because they need it. They've got to have a good face.

It's the idea that my qualities are going to determine how people respond. Well, if we are those responding people, and if we have the love of Christ, and if we have the word of God, and if we have that eternal-minded holiness in us, we are objective. Doesn't matter how lovely someone is.

We will treat them according to God's policy because God has changed us on the inside. So be holy, love one another, desire the pure milk of the word. You remember, that's the supernatural power that makes us different.

We can't just decide to be different. We went over this in great detail. It's not a decision.

It's a process, and God's power has to come through us and transform us, and it comes through

the pure milk of the word. And this enables us, with that gifting from God, with that enablement from God, then we can offer spiritual sacrifices. We de-invest ourselves from the world, and we invest ourselves in eternity.

I am not going to worry about the damage to my reputation, or what this person is saying, or their low opinion, or the fact that I didn't get credit, or there isn't a sufficient level of gratitude, or there's just such an injustice here. I was done wrong. I got the short end.

I got the fuzzy lollipop with no candy. This is just a terrible thing that happened to me, and we just get in a little short mundane loop over it. We pull out of that.

I don't know how else to say it. We un-invest, and we are able to do that because God's power is circulating in our soul, and we do what we do to please God. We had the examples of when you get into chapter 3, if you're going to abstain from fleshly lusts, how do we do that? How do you abstain from anything that's bad for you? In the human realm, you sublimate, you substitute, you find something else.

Kojak wants to quit smoking, so he goes for Tootsie Pops. The best thing is not to sit there like Jerry Reed saying, don't smoke, don't smoke, don't smoke, don't smoke. We turn our attention somewhere else, and God says, if you're going to abstain from fleshly lusts, what you've got to do is reinvest, redirect energy.

This works on sort of a human level, even in the secular arena, but in the spiritual realm, I think one of the reasons it works for people is that it partakes of spiritual truth. Every time in the Bible it says change of mind, it is always away from one thing and toward something else. Remember in Hebrews chapter 6, not laying in the foundation of change of mind away from dead works and faith toward God.

I'm not just going to sit here and say, well, I don't want to do any more of those dead works. So Peter makes that point. There is a purpose to our life.

There is a plan for our life, and there is power to execute the plan and fulfill the purpose. That's the progression that you see in 1 Peter. He starts out emphasizing that God is in his heaven and there is a plan.

God has a purpose, and he makes provision to accomplish all of those things for this plan. And so that brought us to chapter 3, actually the last part of chapter 2, the first part of chapter 3, which deals with submission. This is almost a politically incorrect word.

Nobody wants to be submissive. Slaves are submissive. The downtrodden, you're putting me down, you're disrespecting me.

I shouldn't have to be submissive, I should be autonomous, I should be admired and respected

and all of my grades should be good and all of my results should be happy and all of my checks should be large regardless of the work that I do. We have this sense of entitlement, and submission is contradictory and opposite to submission. Well, why would anybody want to be submissive? I was on an atheist website the other day, and this atheist was saying, I'm your, I think it's called the conversational atheist, you can probably find it, conversational atheist, and his goal is to equip other atheists with good pithy arguments to silence all of these Christians.

Tell all of these Christians what's the matter with their Bible and what's the matter with God and what's the matter with... And so this one particular area was all about slavery, and he was saying, you know, he's like wink-wink, nudge-nudge, he was saying, you know, now this is a way to get these Christians. Next time you're talking to a Christian, ask them about slavery and ask them if they're against it. And when they say, oh yes, slavery is terrible, then take them to these passages in the Bible where God says, well, if you beat your slave so hard that he dies, you're kind of in trouble, but if you beat him and he gets better in a couple of days, then that's okay, no problem.

And you know, this is a part of the law, it actually says that. And they're just horrified, you know, slavery, oh my heavens, you know, it's the most awful thing in the world. And he goes on from there, well, why is everybody so horrified at slavery? There are abuses that have taken place under slavery, and there's been very wonderful, beneficial, taking them out of the dark and bringing them into the light through slavery, in the same way that there has been abuse and oppression in employment, and there has been great blessing and prosperity in employment, or in any other relationship where somebody's in charge and somebody else is doing the work.

Slavery is a really kind of charged word for a work situation. We don't live in the ancient world anymore where armies go in and completely obliterate a country. But suppose that the invading legions come in and they burn and pillage and raze to the ground the civilization, and they say, we have conquered you, be sure and send in some tribute next year, and they march away.

And here's all the people with nothing. They have no crops, they've got no cities, they've got no wherewithal to rebuild, they're going to starve, it's going to be dog-eat-dog, it's going to be chaos. What did the ancient armies do? They took a lot of people back with them and made them slaves.

In the Roman days, they took them back to Rome. In Greece, they took them back to Helas. In Babylonian days, they took them to Babylon.

How much better education do you think Hananiah and Mishael and Azariah and Daniel got in Babylon, in the finest universities of the land, than they would have gotten in Jerusalem in its waning, declining days? I'm not saying that hands up everybody that wants to go into captivity, but I'm saying that there are pluses and minuses. It's not all denigration and degradation and beatings and murders and abuse. It's a mixture, just like everything else in life.

And the biblical view of slavery isn't shocking if you put yourself in the ancient world and realize

that many of these people became wildly prosperous as quote-unquote slaves or servants in the households of the Israelites because the Israelites became wealthy. And the rising tide floated all boats. The Egyptians and the mixed multitude that came out with them and had children and their descendants went into the land were free.

Many of those people were slaves of other stripes. It wasn't just Hebrew slaves that the Egyptians had. So there is a real animosity.

There's a very great resistance and contradiction to submission. And yet there are great benefits if you get past that initial resistance and stop and think for a moment about the benefits. Someone who places himself under authority, someone who functions under authority, is going to learn things that will make them a good authority later on.

This is the principle of military training for officers. You look at the story of Joseph, who was a great servant before he ever became a great leader in Egypt. You look at the Lord Jesus, who took on the form of a what? Servant.

Who took on the form of a slave. And the Bible says he learned obedience through the things that he experienced, the things that he suffered. Why would the Lord God in heaven take the second person of the Trinity and send him to earth in human form and make him in the form of a slave and let him learn obedience through suffering? Because there are things you can learn in that mode that cannot be learned or understood or appreciated in any other way.

And it is one of those typical reversals in God's economy that just when you think you have given everything away is when you end up with everything. And just when you have agreed to become submissive and agreed to let go of the desire to be in charge and superior and admired and up on top of the heap, when you say, you know what, I'm perfectly fine being down here in the household of Potiphar. I'm perfectly happy being down here.

As long as I am serving the Lord and he's pleased with me, whatever state I find myself in, I am content. That is the time when we are not invested in the things of the world, when we don't need it, don't crave it, aren't driven by it. That's when God can give it to us in abundance.

It's a level above typical human thinking, especially given the entertainment that we watch anymore. Everything is just cause and effect, cause and effect. You know, somebody sets up a joke, the other person tells the joke, laugh track.

Set it up, tell it, laugh track. And a lot of our thinking is just superficial. Well, if I want to be on top, I'm going to have to look out for number one.

I've got to be in charge. I've got to climb the ladder. I've got to dominate.

I've got to dress for success. And nobody says, why don't you concentrate on being the best at

what you do, on being the best at following your instructions. That's what Peter is talking about when he says, slaves, be obedient.

Even if you've got literally a screwy master, a sciolos master, a twisted master, be the very best slave for that twisted master that you can be. Wives, it doesn't matter if your husband is several dozen points below genius. Be submissive.

Husbands, it doesn't matter how your wife is built personality-wise or in any other way. You treat her like fine china. You treat her with greater honor.

The weaker vessel gets greater honor. The finer crystal is handled more delicately. When it comes time to wash the dishes, which one are you going to treat with kid gloves? Because it's valuable.

Because it's precious. And that's the analogy that Peter gives. Same thing that Paul says in other places.

Why? Why? Step back. What is this letter about? God has a purpose. God has a plan.

God has given us the power. What is the means of fulfilling all of that? It's not jumping in there with both feet and saying, I'm going to develop a program. I'm going to start a ministry.

I'm going to drag all the lost into the kingdom. It is, I will submit. I will see where God has placed authority and structure into human interrelationships, and I am going to serve.

I'm going to follow the example of Jesus Christ and be obedient, even to the point of death, the death of the cross. That's the reason that God has highly exalted him and given him the name that is above every other name. Why? Because he was willing to be submissive unto death.

Submissive unto death. It's just counterintuitive to us. We think you can't rise if you sink yourself, but God says that's the whole thing about faith.

If you trust me and quit trusting your human intuition, you will find that those who are going to inherit and are going to rule in the kingdoms to come are those who were willing to not rule anything and not conquer anything in this life, but were looking to be faithful and obedient. That fear, phobos, that we studied, what is the definition of phobos? Respectful obedience. Respectful obedience.

Now, what if somebody doesn't deserve respect? Does it say respectfully obey all of those who have earned respect? It doesn't. How can you respectfully obey somebody that doesn't deserve either one? Deinvest, reinvest. It is a spiritual sacrifice to God.

Ever wonder how you offer a spiritual sacrifice? That's how. Be respectful, be obedient. Here's this person that's a complete turkey, and when you treat them just as though they were the finest,

most intelligent, most beneficent, most wonderful person with authority that ever lived, and you're just as complete and just as thorough in your obedience, why would you ever do that? Because you say, you know what, this economy, this kasis is something that God has assigned to me, and if this is my assignment from God, how well would I complete it? How well would I do this job if the Lord Jesus Christ walked in and said, excuse me, Sam, but would you do this for me? I mean, we would kill ourselves to do it.

Well, that's how we look at everything. That's submission. So, submission, and the reason there is all of this, beginning in chapter 2, verse 13, going all the way through chapter 3 up to verse 12, so we've got 2.13 through 3.12, that whole section is on submission, submissiveness.

It has a lot to say about it. Why? It's the heart of the letter. It's the center of the letter.

Why? Because the plan and the calling and the purpose and the provision and all of these other things that God has done fall to the ground in your life and fall to the ground in my life if we are not compliant, if we don't invest in that plan and purpose and let go of our ego and our ambitions and our aspirations and our stake in an argument, our stake in a situation. It reminds me of cleaning the garage, cleaning the attic. Have you ever tried to get rid of stuff? I know.

I can look. I know most of you here. I know you have.

But you pick up a thing and you say, oh, my child made this when they were in second grade or I've had this. My parents had this when I was a child. Here's my favorite example.

It's actually not my favorite example. Somebody's favorite example is the floor to ceiling lamp. What do you call that thing? Spring pole lamp that has three little cone shaped.

It's a 1950s, you know, Danish modern lamp. I love that lamp. My folks had that lamp when I was a tiny child and none of my siblings were even around.

That lamp has been through a lot in the last 50 years and I still have it. And so when it comes time to clear out and I come to the lamp and I say, well, you know, do I need this lamp? Am I actually even using this lamp? But I have an emotional investment. Well, if you can't pull out and de-invest yourself from stuff, you can't throw it out and you become a hoarder and you become buried alive.

You have to, you know, if you're going to be successful in thinning out your inventory and pitching stuff, take it to Salvation Army, whatever. If you're going to be successful, we know how this works. We say, yes, but I'm just going to shut my eyes and I'm going to put this in the pitch pile.

And once it's gone, it's not a problem. It's having it in your hand and saying, well, but I can't conceive of life without this thing. When I have it in my hand, you might not have seen it in three years, but when you open the box, oh, and you can't get rid of it.

Well, here's the thing. The immediate investment that we have, let's say you're in a dispute or you're having an argument or a lively discussion, as I like to think of them. And here's an issue and here's one side and here's the other.

And I know I'm right. I am right. I've been right before the thing even came up.

I was right. I'm right in the middle of it. I'm right after it.

And I don't understand why nobody can see that I am right. Well, it's like holding onto that thing. If you just say, you know what? Let me just step back from this and shut my eyes and let it go.

Two days later, I look back and I think, why was I so unwilling to put that in the pitch pile? Why did I feel like I really just had to win that point and win that argument? It's just silly. God gives us the power. We have the presence of the Holy Spirit.

We have the perspective from God's word to say, you know what? If I am trying to offer spiritual sacrifices here, I'm never going to do it hanging onto this stuff and being invested in the world. So let it go. That's submission.

Submission says, not mine, but thine. I don't need to win. I don't need to prevail.

I don't need to be recognized. I don't need to be appreciated. I don't need to be extolled.

I don't need to accomplish my goal. What I need is something I can take to the Lord and lay on the altar as a spiritual sacrifice, something I can invest in eternity, something that will be there that I'll never have to put in the pitch pile. So that's what 2.13 through 3.12 has been.

Examples. There's myriads of examples. Peter just selected three.

Slaves and masters. Wives looking at husbands. Husbands looking at wives.

And in all three situations, he says, if you can get a bit less personal and a bit more spiritual, you will learn submission. That's the key. So that's an overview of this whole letter.

There is a purpose. There is a plan. We are called to it.

There is provision to do it. And now we need the key to, okay, so I see all of this. How do I actually wind it up and make it go? How do I get there? This is how.

It is a daily exercise in submission. It is a daily exercise in picking something up that we're really invested in and laying it back down and saying, you know what? Let me just let that go. Let me look at it in a few days and I bet it's not going to seem nearly so important to me.

Y'all, many of you have seen my garage in years past where we couldn't get either car in it because it was just a warehouse stacked five and six levels high with boxes. And we manfully

and womanfully went through there and shut our eyes and put stuff away. It's amazing because I honestly cannot remember what was in most of those boxes now.

And they're gone. And it was so hard to take each one and get rid of it. But now that they're gone, I'm glad they're gone.

It's wonderful to be able to park in the garage and I don't really feel any loss. And I discovered, and I think we all discovered, that as we let go of these earthly things and try to look at our heavenly heritage, that we don't really have a loss. We don't feel a sense of loss.

We really haven't lost at all. We have begun to just touch the hem of the garment of what Peter is talking about here. We have begun to get into that eternal perspective.

All of this is important because, look at what's coming up in our passage tonight. When he says, who is he, in verse 13 of chapter 3, who is he who will harm you if you become followers of doing what is good? Who's going to get mad at you if you let every argument go? Who's going to get mad at you if you always try to do what you're asked to do? Regardless of who's wise and wherefores and who got the credit and who was appreciative or whatever. Who's going to come and beat you because you did exactly what they asked you to do? Who's going to come and get after you when you let them win? You let them have their big day of victory.

They're flying their kite. They ran their flag up the pole. Okay, fine.

How are they going to come back and be mad at you? Who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness sake, can you see that in verse 14? Even if you should suffer, this is a really rare thing. If I say first-class condition, second-class condition, third-class condition, you know what I'm talking about, right? Because you've had all these classes in the past. First-class condition is what? If, and it's true.

What's second-class condition? If, and it's not true. What's third-class condition? If, maybe yes, maybe no. It can go either way.

Well, guess what condition this if is in verse 14? Fourth-class condition. Rare bird in biblical literature. This is a fourth-class condition.

Could happen, but I don't think so. That's the fourth-class condition. Yeah, the president could balance the budget, but I don't think so.

Fourth-class condition. And what this tells us is, even if you should suffer for righteousness sake, Peter says, I don't think this is very likely. Most Christians are not going to experience this.

Actually suffering for righteousness sake? You have your martyrs. You have your people who are actually persecuted for their faith, especially in countries other than this one. But Peter says, look, you are out in the Roman Empire.

The Romans are pretty squared away. They're not yet into the big persecutions and things that would come later. And most Jewish Christians out in the community weren't suffering for righteousness sake.

They were suffering because they were making pests of themselves by emphasizing the wrong things. And this is why Peter says, look, don't do that. Focus on your heavenly priorities and quit trying to elbow others out of the way in your periphery.

Even if you should suffer for righteousness sake, fourth-class condition, you're still blessed. Do not be afraid of their threats nor be troubled, but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you. This is what all of this is driving toward.

If we see everything that God has set up, His purpose, His provision, our calling, and we decide to participate in it and we go this route, we're probably not going to suffer. Even if we do, we're still blessed. Whatever happens, Peter says, do two things.

Sanctify the Lord God in your heart and be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you. The way to identify whether we're doing this right or not is whether our hope shows. Nobody's going to ask about a thing that doesn't show.

If the color of your hair changes, somebody's going to ask because it shows. If you haven't seen somebody in a while and you see them and they look very slender, they're going to ask, have you lost weight? Because it shows. Things show and you ask about it.

How can anybody ask us about our hope if it doesn't show? How's anybody going to ask us about the Lord Jesus Christ if He doesn't show? Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason for your hope. Peter says, if you're doing this, people ought to be asking. There ought to be some interest.

Wow, how did you get through that? I heard what that person just said to you. How come you're not just tearing things up and throwing vases and things? What is up with you? We ought to have unusually peaceful behavior, unusually serene attitudes, unusually pacific lives that aren't subject to the ups and downs that the world experiences. It ought to make a difference.

And when it does, anybody with a grain of interest or curiosity is going to ask, why aren't you doing what I would do in your shoes? Why aren't you worried? Why aren't you stressed? Why aren't you upset? Why aren't you angry? Why aren't you flailing? Why aren't you topsy-turvy? It ought to make a difference and it ought to show enough that there are questions asked. So this is sort of the measure of our progress. And I'm not saying that there's going to be just questions every week, but occasionally there ought to be some visible difference.

Whether or not a question gets asked, people are quietly saying, wow, that's a level-headed

person there. There's a peaceful person. That person has a... They just always seem to be happy.

And look at their circumstances. I'm a lot better off than them and I'm not nearly as happy as they are. It ought to make a difference.

There ought to be a question, even at least in someone's mind, about why we are so full of hope. How does that work? We'll pause and take our break and when we come back, we're going to see what the New Testament has to say about hope. If this hope is causing people to ask questions, what does it look like? What is it about? What is the substance of it? It's easy to say hope.

They made a movie called Hope Floats and all I can ever think of is that soap. You remember that? What is it? Ivory that floats? And so I've always think of it as soap floats. I know soap floats, but why does hope float? And I haven't seen the movie.

I have no idea what it's about, but we're going to find out whether or not hope floats when we come back.