

A Study of First Peter
Week Two
1 Peter 2:1-25

Day One

2:1 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. 2 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, 3 now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

v. 1 – I knew a Bible teacher who used to say, “When you see a therefore, find out what it’s there for.” This therefore probably refers back to 1:23: “For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.” Notice that you are to rid yourself of the negative things that are contrary to the imperishable seed with which you were born.

The list of things to put aside here are subtle issues of the heart, like deceit, hypocrisy and envy. Some of them manifest in things spoken, such as slander. When you are hypocritical, often there are only two people who know you are: you and God. So the issues that Peter addressed here are those secret things of the heart that will eventually manifest to others but usually exist in us long before others notice.

I am teaching a class to college students and we are studying the seven deadly sins, one of which is envy. I never gave much thought to the difference between jealousy (which is for relationships and what I have) and envy (which is for things and what others have). God is actually jealous for us—He doesn’t want to share us. And I can be jealous for my reputation, for my position with the Lord, and for my ministry and not sin. Yet envy is always sinful, for it resents what others have and plots to either get it or undermine it. That is why I think slander follows envy on Peter’s list. When you envy what one has, you can begin to discredit their worthiness of such.

At one time, I was envious of anyone who had writing success, especially if they had a best-selling book. **Do you harbor any envy for anything that someone else has?**

vs. 2&3 – Your spiritual life is a life of growth and development. It starts out with being born again and requires spiritual things that will sustain and nurture growth into maturity. And if I understand this correctly, we are never to stop growing and developing. I am 55 and I thought when I turned 50 that my growth would continue but be minimal at best. But I think I have grown more in the last five years than during any other five-year period since I met the Lord 32 years ago.

Are you growing? Or are you coasting, satisfied with limited spiritual growth? One of the other deadly sins we are studying is sloth. Sloth isn’t related to laziness at work, but laziness where spiritual things are concerned. When I think of spiritual growth and laziness, I think of two passages:

Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first (Revelation 2:4-5).

And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God (Colossians 1:10-11).

Have you abandoned the things you did when you were young in the Lord? Are you still growing in the knowledge of God?

Day Two

4 As you come to him, the living Stone — rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him— 5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

v. 4 – Rejection. Who likes it or looks forward to it? But at one time or another, it is something everyone has to face. We face it successfully, however, because Jesus did and still stayed focused to do God's will.

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not (Isaiah 53:3).

He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God (John 1:10-13).

Has rejection hindered or wounded you? Can you go to Jesus and ask Him to heal you? Can you forgive those who rejected you? Has the rejection affected your ability to serve God? Jesus understands; He's been through it and it was as painful for Him as you. Go to Him for help today.

v. 5 – In the Old Testament, only certain men from a certain family could be priests. Through the blood of Jesus, all who call on the name of the Lord are a nation of priests. Priests were appointed to represent men to God and God to men. We can all fulfill that function now. **Do you take your priesthood seriously?** All priests also made spiritual sacrifices. Today our sacrifices are prayer, worship and a life yielded to God as we carry out our purpose on a daily basis. Don't live in someone else's sacrifice. Offer your own. Don't watch someone else fulfill their purpose; find and fulfill your own.

v. 6 – Here is Adam Clarke's commentary on the cornerstone:

This is the same as the foundation stone; and it is called here the chief corner stone because it is laid in the foundation, at an angle of the building where its two sides form the ground work of a side and end wall. And this might probably be designed to show that, in Jesus, both Jews and Gentiles were to be united; and this is probably the reason why it was called a stone of stumbling, and rock of offence; for nothing stumbled, nothing offended the Jews so much as the calling of the Gentiles into the church of God, and admitting them to the same privileges which had been before peculiar to the Jews.

Then Peter quoted Isaiah 28:16, with the comforting promise that those who trust in this stone will never be ashamed or disappointed. This doesn't mean that you and I won't have shame or disappointment when we serve the Lord. It does mean that those who trust in the stone for salvation will never, ever be disappointed, for God will deliver on His promise to all those who put their trust in Him.

Day Three

7 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone," 8 and, "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the message — which is also what they were destined for. 9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

vs. 7&8 – The stone that is so precious to those who believe is a source of stumbling and offense to those who choose not to believe. Once again we see that, according to Peter, only those who put their trust in this stone (Jesus) can find salvation. God established this so that no man could boast that he or she had earned their standing before God. Those who rejected that stipulation were destined to stumble.

But we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:23-25).

Don't allow yourself to be swayed from the simplicity of the gospel. Jesus is the only means to God. Many present alternative paths to God. While there may be some truth in them, they lack the main truth and that truth is Jesus. I am reading an excellent book right now about how to support and stand with people as they listen to their inner man. But the author is so concerned about not violating anyone's "space" that he seems to imply that there are many truths that one can get in touch with as he or she searches their inner being. And we must not pass judgment on whatever conclusion they come to.

Sorry, for the believer truth isn't even a doctrine—it's a person and all truth comes from Him. In the gospel of John, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth" 30 times! What else could he ever tell us! Why did He have to say that so often? Jesus was telling us that His words were and are indeed true, but He had to say it so often because His words seemed

to be un-true to the unbelieving Jews to which He was speaking. The same is true today. People don't always believe that what Jesus had to say is truth to which they are accountable.

v. 9 – Those who believe that Jesus' words are true become a holy nation, a peculiar people, and a royal priesthood. What a privilege to be part of all those! **Are you part of the holy nation of the redeemed? How do you show this reality? Are you part of a church? Do you play some role in your church? How are your spiritual disciplines expressed, like prayer, fasting and worship? Do you share your faith? To be part of God's holy nation has duties and responsibilities that don't earn your salvation, but give testimony to the reality of your salvation.**

Day Four

10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. 11 Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. 12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

v. 10 – Peter strongly emphasized the fact that as believers they were the people of God. This is in direct contradiction to the Jews, who also claimed that they were the people of God. Remember, Peter's readers were under extreme pressure and probably persecution. He had to remind them of their great standing before God, for to depart from the faith would be to reject citizenship in God's kingdom.

v. 11 – Having reminded them of their high standing in Christ, Peter returned to his holiness theme. Not only does it seem that these believers were under pressure, it also seems that they were having some struggles against sin. Peter acknowledged that they were in a war, as we are. We can't call time out in this war or sue for peace or negotiate a ceasefire. The kingdoms of darkness and light are at war and you cannot run or hide. Well, you can run, but only into God, our refuge and strong tower.

There is a battle raging in my heart and it is the battle against sinful desires. I don't understand those who say that they have no sin or have reached a point where they seldom grapple with sin. I just came through an airport and I had to battle sin the whole time. People cut me off, others were rude, I dropped my phone, I almost missed my flight—and through that all I had to control my temper, remind myself that God is in control and forgive people I didn't even know. And all that was in a stretch of 30 minutes!

I am open to the fact that I have a lot of internal issues, but I think we all do. I think I am doing all right until someone steps on my foot or invades my space and then I'm back in the war! **Do you sense a war going on in your members? What is the nature of your war? Do you think I am the exception or the rule in what I encountered in the airport?**

v. 12 – The world of the early church was a corrupt, wicked place. Life was cheap, immorality raised to new levels and disguised as religion, and idolatry rampant. Against this backdrop, Peter urged his readers to behave so well that they would stand out from everyone else. That would not have been hard to do if the believers followed God's commands, for no other world system at that time had any moral code like the Christians.

There are two phrases in this verse worth notice: "though they accuse you." The believers, though holy, were still accused of wrongdoing by nonbelievers. And the second is "on the day he [the Lord] visits us." When will the Lord visit us? Some believe this refers to the end time, when the Lord will literally return. I don't think that is what Peter was referring to. I think there is a day when God "visits" to vindicate His people. Consider Martin Luther King. He was criticized and vilified while he was alive. Then the Lord took him and today he is a hero around the world. People who would have hated him when he was alive now praise him as a great man, as God's man.

My point here is that God knows how to vindicate His people and you as an individual. It may be in life or in death that He visits you to prove that you are His. Can you trust Him to do that, thus yielding yourself to unquestioning, trusting obedience right now? Can you trust God to prove to your enemies that you did indeed know God, even though now they question your sanity? Even Jesus' family thought He was crazy. Can you function when yours feels the same way about you?

Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind" (Mark 3:20-21).

Day Five

13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, 14 or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. 15 For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. 16 Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. 17 Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.

vs. 13&14 – Peter did not want believers to be perceived as anti-government, so he urged them to submit to all the governing authorities. This did not mean that they were to obey the authorities, for eventually the authorities would order them to denounce Jesus. They could not do that, but they could joyfully submit to the consequences when they refused to obey an unjust order that contradicted God's law. Even Jesus had to submit while not obeying:

When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, and he went back inside the palace. "Where do you come from?" he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?" Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given

to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin” (John 19:8-11).

Jesus would not obey Pilate’s command to speak, but acknowledged that Pilate had the right and power to put Jesus to death—even wrongfully. In essence, Jesus was saying, “My Father gave you the power you have and you will answer for how you use it. That is none of my concern. Because of that truth, I have more of a problem with Judas who delivered me to you, than I do with you exercising your civil authority. Kill me if you choose.” **Do you see the difference between submission and obedience?**

A wife must submit to her husband, but let’s say her husband wanted her to break the law by selling drugs. She must refuse—she must in essence disobey. Then her husband may abuse her verbally or order her out of the house. Then she must submit to the consequences of his authority but obey the higher authority, which is God. **Does this make sense to you?**

v. 15 – Paul knew that the believers were a minority, controversial sect in the Roman world and had to model exemplary behavior. But beyond that, Peter had seen how Jesus related to the Roman authorities and now Peter was making that the standard for all believers to follow. Peter wasn’t just advocating good public relations, where the believers would not do anything to antagonize the authorities. Christians are to stand for law and decency wherever that isn’t in conflict with God’s laws.

Do you submit to governing authorities? In recent times, there have been American presidents for which I did not vote and for whom I had little use as politicians. But I never criticized them publicly and prayed for them privately. I never call my local policemen any derogatory nick-names as is the habit of some.

v. 16 – There are some I’ve known who flaunt their freedom, not joining a church, not obeying authorities and doing pretty much what they please. They use their freedom as a cover-up for lawlessness and rebellion. Then I’ve known others who sin and don’t believe that their sin has any consequences—God will forgive them.

v. 17 – Peter gave them a simple summary of how to live: love the brothers, fear God and honor the king. Pretty simple terms, don’t you think? Paul expanded on this same theme when he wrote the Galatians:

You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other (Galatians 5:13-15).

Are you enjoying your freedom in Christ, using it to obey God? Are you doing what God wants, regardless of the criticism you receive from other believers or even unbelievers? Are you maximizing your freedom, making the most of every opportunity to serve God and your fellow believers?

Day Six

18 Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. 19 For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. 20 But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. 21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

v. 18 – This verse will always have special meaning for me. There was a time that I was working for a man who had serious moral flaws in his life. I allowed my attitude to deteriorate where he was concerned. Consequently, my finances on the job “dried up” and God brought me to this verse. In the NAS version, the word “harsh” is translated “perverse.” This man was perverse but God still wanted me to submit to his authority. That was hard!

Is there anyone in a position of authority in your life right now who is harsh or perverse? What is your attitude toward that person? Do you honor them? Are you submitting to them? Can you see God’s hand in this situation as He teaches you about authority and your response to it? When I went through my situation with that “perverse” supervisor, I had to ask God to change me. I was too rebellious to submit to that man let alone God’s word.

vs. 19&20 – Wow! How different God’s ways are from mine. God tells me here that if I suffer unjustly, God commends me. But I can’t “hear” God’s commendation, so I have to receive it by faith. Of course, Jesus is once again my model here. He was mistreated and persecuted by the Jewish leaders and Roman officials. Yet He was humble and did not rail against them or resist their mistreatment.

Lord, help me! I want to be like Jesus, but I can’t be. I’m too self-centered, too ready to defend my position and reputation. I see Jesus’ example but I can’t attain to the same standard without the power of the Spirit. I am a rebel. I don’t like authority, especially unjust authority. I want to be my own man and submit to those with whom I agree or whom I like. I need Your help. Amen

Do you need to pray that prayer with me?

v. 21 – Hummmm. This isn’t something I’ve ever heard described as a calling: to suffer like Christ did. I’ve heard about being called to the ministry, but never heard anyone say, “God has called me to suffer at the hands of unjust men.” There are many models and examples I could follow as I lead and work, but Jesus is to be my ultimate and primary model. I have studied and taught many leadership case studies, but Jesus should be the main focus. Jesus suffered for me, so I should suffer for others as well. Then He calls me to follow in His footsteps and I should willingly and eagerly seek to emulate Him and

His lifestyle. I want to break out in a prayer for help once again, but I will refrain and re-pray the prayer I wrote in verse 20.

Day Seven

22 "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." 23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. 24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. 25 For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

v. 22 – Peter referenced another verse from Isaiah, this time from 53:9. You may want to take some time to read this passage, which describes Jesus so accurately. There is no more clear passage that describes His humility and gentleness. It also predicted the suffering that this loving God would endure at the hands of sinful men. I cannot read Isaiah 53 without being deeply moved. Read it and see what you feel.

v. 23 – When Jesus was insulted, He did not retaliate. Peter reminded his readers that in the midst of their suffering, they were obligated to act like Jesus would act, more accurately, like Jesus had behaved when He suffered unjustly. Why did Jesus not retaliate? Because He entrusted everything to God the Father for Him to deal with. When we do that, only then can we be sure that true justice is done. **What do you do if and when you are insulted? How do you handle rejection or disapproval? Our goal, no matter how painful, is to handle it like Jesus did!**

When I want to take matters into my own hands, especially when it comes to defending myself, I can never be sure I am acting from right motives and righteously. So if I can entrust the issue to God, then I am sure that He, who knows all things and men's hearts, will do what needs to be done that is in the best interests of His purposes and all those with whom I am interacting. In other words, when I do this, I allow a perfect God to act instead of acting from my own imperfect motives.

Paul also urged his readers not to seek their own vengeance when he wrote:

Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:19-21).

And both Peter and Paul were referring to what the Lord said in Deuteronomy:

It is mine to avenge; I will repay. In due time their foot will slip; their day of disaster is near and their doom rushes upon them" (Deut 32:35).

Can you do that? Can you trust the Lord to deal with your enemies as you focus on your response according to God's will?

vs. 24&25 – What Jesus did brought healing to my life. I'm not sure that this verse is to be applied to the realm of sickness and disease, although many believe that it should be. I think the context here is that Jesus cured my waywardness, my inability to pursue and serve God. It seems that this promise applies to my sin sickness and not my physical sickness. (I do think there are other verses that pertain to healing.)

Jesus is the Shepherd of my soul and I have come home to Him. Once I was estranged from God and His wrath rested on me. Now I am His child, the way paved to Him through the blood and life of Jesus. Hallelujah!