

## Suffering

By [Larry Bray](#)

When Peter wrote his first epistle he was writing to a church that was suffering persecution. They lost their homes, money, possessions, and friends. Even their lives were threatened where some would have escaped with only what they could carry. They were being persecuted because of Christ. They were living for Christ and proclaiming the salvation and hope of eternal life in Him. People were willing to hear about salvation, hope, and eternal life in Christ; but they did not want to hear about repentance and obedience. They were just like people of every other age, including ours: they did not want to hear about righteousness and godliness, about a Lord to whom they had to give *all they were and had*. Therefore, many people turned against these believers. Many believers had to flee into other countries in order to escape the persecution.

The recipients of this epistle were experiencing a great deal of fear because of their suffering. Therefore, one of the reasons Peter wrote to them was to encourage and strengthen them to continue on for Christ. But what was the best way to do this? What could he say to encourage a people who had lost everything and were having to flee for their lives? What would you say to encourage these persecuted Christians? There was only one message that could encourage and strengthen them: the glorious message of the Gospel. They needed to keep their focus upon the grace and salvation of God rather than their circumstances. This is what Peter preached. In the first 12 verses of the first chapter he proclaims the wonder and greatness of salvation. Then, in verses 13-16 he changes direction by starting with the word "therefore." He tells us of the glories of the Gospel, and then tells us what we are to do with these truths. When we are facing the trials and temptations of life, it is not enough to keep our eyes upon salvation. We must also act; we must do something. When we undergo the trials of life, whether persecution and suffering or temptation and sin, we must act. We must dedicate our lives to God, and we must get our minds ready.

*1Pe 1:13-16 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."*

In this passage we learn what specifically we are called to focus in on and concentrate our attention on:

1. The consummation of grace and salvation (1 Pet1:13).

2. Obedience (1 Pet 1:14).
3. Holiness (1 Pet 1:15-16).

### **The Consummation of Grace**

As we focus upon the consummation of grace, the salvation of God, we remember that grace is the favor of God showered upon us. We do not deserve His favor, for we have not believed God, not perfectly. We have disobeyed, transgressed, cursed, neglected, ignored, and rebelled against God. Even with all of this hatred that we've shown God, He has favored us. Because He loves us He has provided salvation for us. He has sent His Son into the world to take all of our transgressions upon Himself and to bear the righteous judgment of God that was against us. This is what is meant when Scripture says that *Jesus Christ died for us*. He took the guilt of our transgressions against God upon Himself, and He bore the judgment and punishment for us. This is God's grace to us, the great favor and blessing which He has bestowed upon us, even our salvation. We can now be saved from sin and from death; we can now live with God eternally, not because of what we've done, but because of what Christ has done on our behalf. But there is a tension between the salvation that we have now as our possession and the salvation that we will have fulfilled in Heaven with God. We are not saved from the presence of sin and death yet. We are still living in this world and in the presence of evil and corruption. We will be delivered some day; we shall be perfected in body and soul, never again experiencing sin and death. But we are not there yet. However, the day is coming, the day when our glorious redemption will be completed. We are still waiting for this day; the day when Jesus Christ will burst open the heavens above and return to earth to bring about the perfection of our salvation. That is the day that we should be focused on. We need to pursue this perfection of grace and not be running after the little distractions of this dying world. Paul talks about pursuing this hope when he speaks of running a race in 1 Corinthians 9. He tells us to run in such a way where we may obtain the prize. He tells us that athletes put themselves under training and self-control for a prize that will fade away. How much more then should we exercise self-control and training to pursue a prize of eternal weight that will never die? There are 3 things that we must do to pursue God's grace and salvation.

1. Preparing your minds for action (1 Pet 1:13). The word for "preparing" here means to "gird up" as one would take their robe and gird it up under their belt to get ready for work. The term carries the idea of straightening up those things that are loose so that you are ready for action. What we're being told here is to gather up all loose thoughts; to prepare our minds and thoughts for action; to concentrate and focus our attention on the grace and salvation to come at the revelation of Christ. We are called to control every thought and focus upon (Php 4:8)...

- whatever is true
- whatever is *honorable*
- whatever is *just*
- whatever is *pure*
- whatever is *lovely*
- whatever is *commendable*

- if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things

Notice the clarity and simplicity of Scripture here: we are not to allow our thoughts to roam about aimlessly and be set on thoughts of lust and worldliness. We are to focus our thoughts on things of virtue and of praise. Our thoughts do affect us; therefore we need to be careful with what we think upon. Those things that we set our minds on are those things that we grow our affections towards. If we focus our minds on the things of God, we will grow in our love of God. If we focus our minds on the world, we will grow in our love to the world.

2 Corinthians 10 is even more clear and forceful when God tells us that...  
*...though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, (2Co 10:3-5)*

The warfare that we are called to is spiritual. Therefore, we must...

- Destroy arguments.
- Destroy every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God.
- Bring every thought captive to obey Christ.

Imagine—*every thought* is to be captive to Christ.

Are our minds ready for action? Do we take every thought captive to Christ? Do we even try to? In all areas of our life we must be committed to bringing every thought under the Lordship of Christ. Whether it is at work, during a lunch with clients, at home with our wives and children, watching TV and movies, listening to music...everything! The Scriptures go so far as to saying that even eating and drinking is to be done to the glory of God. Just think about how the Scriptures resonate with this idea:

*For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. (Rom 8:5-6)*

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Rom 12:1-2)*

*and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (Eph 4:23-24)*

Isaiah tells us of a promise for those who have their minds fixed on God when he says concerning God...

*You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. (Isa 26:3)*

2. Be “sober” (1 Pet 1:13). Sober means two things: 1) Not to become intoxicated with drugs or alcohol of any kind. 2) To be sober in mind and behavior; to be controlled in all things; not to be given over to indulgence, license, or extravagance. Sobriety is the opposite of indulgence, of indulging in anything such as eating, drinking, or recreation. It means to live a sober, solid, and controlled life. The believer is to be sober as he pursues the consummation of grace and salvation. He is not to indulge and gratify his flesh in the way that the rest of the world does: drugs, alcohol, food, sleep, entertainment, sex, possessions, position, pornography, comfort, etc.

The believer is to live a well-balanced life. He is to be sober, controlled, solid, and steady. He is to keep all things in the proper place. He is to be sober, focused and concentrated upon the grace and salvation of God. God’s word is replete with a call to such sobriety:

*So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. (1Th 5:6-8)*

*Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. (1Ti 3:11)*

*For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, (Titus 2:11-13)*

*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. (1Pe 1:13)*

*The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. (1Pe 4:7)*

3. Hope to the end for the grace and salvation of God. Our hope must be kept alive. There is a *dead hope* and a *lifeless hope*. A *dead hope* is the hope that so many people have; the hope that they will be acceptable to God when they die. But they seldom think about the fact; they just let their hope lie dormant in their mind. It is the hope, the feeling that most people have; the feeling that God would never reject them, not in the final analysis. Whatever life there is that follows death—they are not sure what it will be like—they think that they will be okay and acceptable. They are not *perfect*, but they are not unacceptable to God. This is a *dead hope*, an occasional thought that they will be

okay in whatever life follows death. Note the exhortation of Scripture: hope to the end for the grace and salvation of God. Begin to hope now and keep on hoping to the very end. This is a living hope, the hope demanded by Scripture. Pursue, seek, and go after the grace and salvation of God. Hope for it and keep on hoping for it. Hope until the revelation of Jesus Christ. He is going to rend the clouds above and return to earth to save us from the sin and death along with the evil and corruption of this world. Therefore hope and keep on hoping, pursue and keep on pursuing, for the consummation of grace and salvation of God.

*For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? (Rom 8:24)*

*because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, (Col 1:5)*

*For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, (Tit 2:11-13)*

*so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. (Heb 6:18-20)*

*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, (1Pe 1:3-4)*

*See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. (1Jn 3:1-3)*

## **Obedience**

Obedience is to be our focus (1 Pet 1:14). There is a sharp contrast in this verse. Note exactly what it says:

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

The phrase “obedient children” means *children of obedience*. That is, believers are to be so obedient to God that obedience becomes the basic trait of their lives. Obedience is to be so characteristic of our lives that we can be called *children of obedience*. However, in contrast to being *children of obedience* is the phrase “conformed to the passions of your former ignorance.” As stated this is a sharp contrast. It pictures us as *children of fleshly passions or lusts*. That is, we used to be so given over to our own desires, to doing our own thing and serving the flesh, so much so that we could be called *children of lusts*.

This is not a pretty picture, but it is exactly what a person without Christ is: a *child of desire*, a person who lives just like they want to live as lead by their carnal desires and lusts. They do what they want to do instead of what God says to do. They obey themselves, their own desires, not God and His Word. Therefore, they are a child of carnal desires, *a child of lusts*. What kinds of lusts or desires are being referred to? All kinds including: money, sex, popularity, possessions, food, positions of importance.

Man must have the necessities of life. God made him to have a healthy desire for these things. But when we begin to lust and crave these things out of an inordinate love for them it becomes wrong. Our focus and concentration in life becomes the lust of these things, getting more and more of them in order to gratify our flesh. The lust of the flesh and of the eyes will enslave and consume us. This is a fact of human nature that is too often ignored and neglected. Note why: because of man’s ignorance. Man is ignorant of God. Man does not know God, not personally, not in terms of a close relationship in which he fellowships and communes with God day by day. When man thinks of God, he thinks of some misty Being or Force who is far away in outer space, too far removed for us to relate to Him in a personal way. Therefore, man feels that he is free to do his own thing and to go his own way through life. And before he knows it lust has gripped his life. Whatever it is that excites him or gives him purpose in this world, that thing enslaves him. The result is either obsession or emptiness. The person is either controlled and dominated by his lust or else left in despair and discouragement because his lust does not satisfy him.

The point is this: God is not far off and removed from man. God has revealed Himself in the person of Jesus Christ. Therefore, man is to look at Jesus Christ and see God, and he is to follow Christ. Man is to obey God; he is to obey God so much that he will become a child of obedience. The world and its lusts are no longer to control our lives. The Lord Jesus Christ is to dominate our lives. We are to focus and concentrate upon Him and the glorious grace and salvation that He is to bring at His revelation.

*Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (Mat 7:21)*

*"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been*

*founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it." (Mat 7:24-27)*

*For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother. (Mat 12:50)*

*Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him. (Joh 14:21)*

*Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. (Joh 14:23)*

*If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love... You are my friends if you do what I command you. (Joh 15:10, 14)*

*Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. (Rev 22:14)*

*This day the LORD your God commands you to do these statutes and rules. You shall therefore be careful to do them with all your heart and with all your soul. (Deu 26:16)*

*This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. (Jos 1:8)*

## **Holiness**

Holiness is to be our focus (1 Pet 1:15-16). To be holy (hagios) is to be righteous, pure, sinless, and godly; to be perfect, complete, and fulfilled in every possible sense; to be separated and entirely different from all other beings and things. This is what the believer is called to be.

God is the very embodiment and perfection of absolute holiness. God calls believers to be holy in all of life. His very purpose in saving us is to have a people who will be just like Him and who can live with Him eternally. God's purpose is for us to be holy, perfect, and separated from the world in order to be set apart to Him.

God does not want us to remain in a state of corruption, dying with the rest of the world. God wants us holy; He wants us set apart to be just like Him. God wants us to live with Him eternally. And to live with Him eternally we must be like Him: we must be holy.

Therefore, we must pursue, seek, and strive hard after holiness. We must live holy, pure, righteous, and godly lives. We must seek and go after God; we must seek to be like God while on this earth. If we do, then God gives us the most glorious of hopes: the hope of eternal salvation.

Scripture demands holiness from us. It is written in Scripture: "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (Lev. 11:45; 19:2; 20:7, 26). We have no choice: this is the command of Scripture itself. If we wish to be God's then we must live like God. Our lives must be given over to holiness rather than worldliness.

*For I am the LORD who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy. (Lev 11:45)*

*that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. (Luk 1:74-75)*

*Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God. (2Co 7:1)*

*See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; (Heb 12:15)*

*... it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." (1Pe 1:16)*

*Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, (2Pe 3:11)*

*And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" (Isa 6:3)*

*Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed. (Rev 15:4)*

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