

2025 BIBLE STUDY SERIES
THEME: “HOPE IN THE FACE OF DIFFICULTY”

March 5, 2025

A CHANGE FOR THE BETTER:
“Pursuing Sustained Spiritual Growth”
1 Peter 2:1-3 (Focus: 2:2)

Topics

- Reflection Questions
- Important Emphasis
- Key Terms
- Scripture Reference
- Outline
- Introduction
- Background and Context
- Exploring The Text
- Check For Understanding
- Life Application

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

A. What do people often turn to as a remedy in times of sorrow or suffering?

B. Which of the remedies mentioned in Question A provide lasting relief? Briefly explain.

C. What does it mean to crave pure spiritual milk in our modern-day lives?

IMPORTANT EMPHASIS

Songs that are soaked with spirituality give us support and strength to live for God. One of those songs is:

Changed
Tramaine Hawkins

*A change, a change has come over me
He changed my life and now I'm free*

*He washed away all my sins, and he made me whole
He washed me white as snow
He changed my life complete, and now I sit
I sit at his feet... A wonderful change has come over me*

Jack Welch with change is an opportunity, it is paramount that we need to get energized not paralyzed.

Framework of Peter

1 Peter gives us the affirmation and confirmation of the joy found in a new life within Christ. Though there is immense joy in Christ, this joy is met with a journey of suffering. This is the pure reality of this “catholic” or “general” Epistle written by Peter. There is an absolute devotion to God as the only God. While there is an appeal to submissive behavior which colors the Christological disposition these exiled believers should seek.

Peter stands against the norms of its larger society. These believers are viewed and treated as aliens, ecclesiastical immigrants, they are foreigners. The social context shapes faith, and faith shapes the social context. Their alienation is a mark of their faithfulness. **1 Peter 3:8-9**

Woodrow Wilson if you want to make enemies change things

There is intense concern for the internal life of the Christian community, but the “World is not roundly condemned except as it represents a set of practices that the Christian have left behind”.

Theological Themes

God: Only in 1 Peter in the New Testament is God explicitly designated by the noun “Creator” The whole epistle presupposes that history is in God’s hands, from the beginning to end.

Christ: Christ is the one that brings believers to God. His suffering is both the example and the ground for the faithfulness of Christians who also face suffering.

Suffering: and certainly, the major purpose of this epistle is to address the and strengthen the distress of Christians. There is a contrast between “us” and “them” they are the Gentiles who represent the life that Christians have left behind.

Life in Exile: Christians are exhorted to be exemplary aliens in the land that does not welcome them.

Introductory Insights in Peter

- **Messenger of Christ** 1Peter 1:1
- **Missionaries of Christ** 1 Peter1:2
- **Mercy of Christ** 1Peter 1:3
- **Molding of Christ** 1Peter 1:4-9

Hope is the Foundation of Change 1 Peter 2:1-4

- **Dispensing with Vices**
- **Discipline of Victors**
- **Disseminating the Virtuous Values**

Dispensing with the Vices: Malice , guile, insincerity , envy and all slander.

Slander- TO speak critically of another person with intent to hurt. Matthew 12:36

Malice- Vicious Intention; desire to hurt someone . characteristics of pre-conversion life in opposition to God.

Guile- Crafty or deceitful, treachery, duplicity

Envy- Painful or resentful awareness of another's advantage joined with the desire to possess the same advantage.

Discipline of Victors: Liken unto 1 Peter, this passage represents a contrast between the old life and the new. Leaving behind their old clothes, they left behind their old lives of malice guile, insincerity, envy and slander.

Disseminating the Virtuous Values: This Ridding themselves, spoken in verse 1 of chapter 2 of Peter is an Imperative. These habits are what can destroy the mutual love to which 1 Peter calls believers. On the other hand, Peter speaks of the spiritual milk. Here milk is a gift and grace. It is of the spiritual realm, not of the flesh. This milk does not represent in any way spiritual immaturity. This Spiritual milk according to scholars can be connected with Rom 12:2 “ a reasonable worship” Our worship is our spiritual lifestyle.

Our brains are like closets that we have things in it that do not fit and we have thrown some things out.

How do we do this?

Lay aside somethings Hebrews 12:1

Long for spiritual things Psalm 42:1

Lord of Solid things 1 Peter 2:4

KEY TERMS

Attitude
Change
Crave
Deceit
Envy
Faith
Goodness
Gracious
Grow
Hope
Hypocrisy
Joy
Kindness
Long for

Lord
Malice
Newborn babies
Perseverance
Pure milk
Salvation
Sincere
Slander
Spiritual
Taste
The Lord
Transformation
Word

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE**1 Peter 2:1-3 (NASB 1995)**

¹Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander,

²like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,

³if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

OUTLINE

- I. Put Aside Sinful Behavior (1 Peter 2:1)**
 - A. Cut out Carnal Ways
 - B. Cast off Cruel and Wicked Ways
- II. Pursue Pure Spiritual Sustenance (1 Peter 2:2)**
 - A. Purity Promotes Progress Toward the Prize
 - B. Perseverance Preserves the Prize
- III. Perceive the Sweet Goodness of the Lord (1 Peter 2:3)**
 - A. Transformation through Truth
 - B. From Feeble to Fruitful

INTRODUCTION

The phrase "**A Change for the Better**" typically refers to a transformation or improvement in a person's circumstances, character, habits, or outlook that leads to positive results. It highlights the idea of progress—moving from a less desirable state to a more beneficial, fulfilling, or constructive one. This phrase can apply to various areas of life, such as:

Personal Growth: Developing new skills, building healthier habits, or overcoming challenges.

Relationships: Improving communication, resolving conflicts, or deepening connections.

Spiritual Journey: Growing in faith, finding purpose, or aligning one's life more closely with higher values.

In the context of **1 Peter 2:1-3**, "a change for the better" signifies spiritual growth. It's about craving or longing for "pure spiritual milk"(God's Word) to mature in faith and experience the transformation that reflects God's grace. It's a call to continual or sustained spiritual growth driven by a deeper relationship with God.

Augustine of Hippo's perspective on change: While he does not have a single direct quote explicitly stating, "a change for the better," his philosophy heavily emphasizes the concept of personal transformation through God's grace, which can be interpreted as a call to strive for positive change in one's life; some relevant quotes include:

- **Finding peace for a restless heart:** "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you," highlighting the pursuit of a higher state.
- **Resisting bad habits:** Augustine warned against letting negative habits become ingrained, stressing the importance of actively working against them to cultivate virtue. "Habit, if not resisted, soon becomes necessity," suggesting that actively working against negative habits is key to positive change.
- **Conversion is a process:** Augustine emphasized that change is a journey, not a single event, requiring continuous effort and reflection.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Apostle Peter wrote this letter around AD 62-63 during the reign of Emperor Nero. He likely wrote it from Rome, which he refers to as "Babylon" in the letter. The letter is addressed to Christians scattered across various regions of Asia Minor, including Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

The Apostle Peter, in 1 Peter 1:1-25, urges new believers to remain strong in their faith despite challenges. He speaks of the _____ and _____ from Jesus Christ's resurrection, promising an eternal inheritance. Peter highlights the importance of _____, refined through trials, leading to praise and honor when Christ returns. He calls for holy living, obedience to God, and maintaining a distinct identity in a Greco-Roman society. Believers are encouraged to respect authorities, live righteously, and love each other deeply, while holding onto the hope of eternal life.

The chapter also underscores the importance of _____ one another deeply from the heart and reminds them that they were redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. Finally, Peter reiterates that the Word of God endures forever.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

1. What does the phrase "A change for the better" typically mean? (Introduction)

A transformation or improvement in a person's circumstances, character, habits, or outlook that leads to positive results.

2. What three areas of life does the phrase "A change for the better" typically apply to? (Introduction)

Personal Growth, Relationships, and Spiritual Journey

3. Identify two things that Peter highlighted in the first chapter of his letter to the new believers? (Background)
- the importance of faith, refined through trials, leading to praise and honor when Christ returns.
 - holy living,
 - obedience to God,
 - maintaining a distinct identity in a Greco-Roman society.
 - respect for authorities,
 - living righteously,
 - and loving each other deeply, while holding onto the hope of eternal life

EXPLORING THE TEXT

I. Put Aside Sinful Behavior (1 Peter 2:1)

¹Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander,

A. Cut out Carnal Ways

Believers are strongly exhorted to remove any attitudes or obstacles that hinder love for others, as mentioned in **1 Peter 1:22**. This concept of “putting aside” or “getting rid of” is also found in other New Testament passages (**Romans 13:12; Ephesians 4:22, 25; Colossians 3:8; James 1:21**). It symbolizes the removal of a sinful past “put away” or “put off”--like taking off old clothes. This command is specifically for born-again Christians, who have the ability to break from their past sins. Although complete sinlessness is unattainable, Christians are urged to strive towards becoming more like Christ by putting aside sin.

B. Cast off Cruel and Wicked Ways

Peter listed several types of sin to remove from our lives. The sins Peter listed here fight against love and cause dissension among believers. The first two sins mentioned refer to general categories. The last three sins refer to the specific acts that flow out of them.

- **Malicious behavior** means doing evil despite the good that has been received; the desire to harm other people. Malice may be hidden behind good actions.
- **Deceit** means deliberately tricking or misleading by lying (see also [3:10](#)).
- **Hypocrisy** means that people say one thing but do another; playacting; presenting good motives that mask selfish desire.

- **Jealousy** means desiring something possessed by someone else. This causes discontent and resentment as believers make unhealthy comparisons to one another. It also makes them unable to be thankful for the good that comes to others.
- **Backstabbing** means destroying another's good reputation by lies, gossip, rumor-spreading, etc. Malice often manifests itself through backstabbing (slander).

II. Pursue Pure Spiritual Sustenance (1 Peter 2:2)

² like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,

A. Purity Promotes Progress Toward the Prize

As **newborn babies** crave or “long for” milk, so born-again believers should crave (long for) **pure spiritual milk** that will nourish them and help them grow to maturity. This points to **the word of God**, which provides spiritual life to those who partake of it. Like milk, the essential nourishment for babies, God's word sustains life and gives growth. The purity of God's word means that there is no imperfection, no flaws, no dilutions, and that it will not deceive or lead people astray.

Note that “milk” is used by Peter in a positive context. This verse should not be compared to **1 Corinthians 3:2** and **Hebrews 5:12-13**, where the writers employed a similar metaphor but used milk—in contrast to meat—as depicting the diet of immature believers.)

B. Perseverance Preserves the Prize

By using the term baby, Peter was not implying that his readers were young believers; indeed, some of them had been Christians for as many as thirty years. Instead, he may have been picking up the reference to being “born again” in **1 Peter 1:23**. Peter was saying that believers should always crave more and more of God's word in the same way that a baby cries for milk. Then, by taking that nourishment, believers can grow into the fullness of their salvation.

Salvation is an _____ experience from the time of the new birth until the time Christ returns. At that time, salvation will be completed (**1:5**). In the meantime, as we live on this earth, we must constantly partake of God's word so that we can “grow up” in our salvation. We must not remain spiritual babies, but become mature in Christ (**2 Peter 3:18**).

The Bible says that _____ **in faith** is required to receive the prize of _____, which is eternal life. This idea appears in the Bible in **Matthew 24:13; James 1:12; Revelation 2:7; and Colossians 1:23**.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

4. What did the Apostle Peter strongly counsel the believers to do to avoid hindering their love for one another? (1 Peter 2:1)

any attitudes or obstacles

5. What types of sin did the Apostle Peter counsel the believers to “put aside?”

- **Malicious behavior**
- **Deceit**
- **Hypocrisy**
- **Jealousy**
- **Backstabbing**

6. How does the Apostle Peter describe the Word of God? (2:2)

Pure milk or pure spiritual milk

7. If a believer perseveres or endures until the end, what will they receive according to Matthew 24:13?

But he who endures to the end shall be saved Matt. 24:13 NKJV.

EXPLORING THE TEXT

III. Perceive the Sweet Goodness of the Lord (1 Peter 2:3)

³ *if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.*

A. Transformation through Truth

Peter picked up the beautiful invitation in **Psalm 34:8** and placed it in the past tense for these believers: “Taste and see that the Lord is good” (see also **Jeremiah 15:16**). The believers had already taken that first step in following God by accepting his salvation, and had been given **a taste of the Lord’s kindness**. As they lived out their Christian lives, growing to maturity in the faith, they were tasting more and more of the Lord’s goodness. That should only serve to whet their appetites. The more we taste God’s goodness the more tasteless other worldly options will become. We must not fill our lives with cheap substitutes so that we lose our craving for the _____ contained in God’s word. It is the only truth that transforms us.

B. From Feeble to Fruitful

The phrase “tasted that the Lord is good” highlights a **personal and experiential** aspect of faith. It’s not merely about intellectual knowledge or understanding of God’s goodness, but about experiencing and recognizing it firsthand.

Using the sense of taste is a powerful metaphor to convey the **intimate and satisfying** nature of experiencing God's goodness. Just as tasting good food brings pleasure and satisfaction, so does experiencing God's goodness.

The experience of God's goodness serves as a motivation for believers to **growing spiritually**. It is an invitation to a deeper relationship. Having "tasted" God's goodness, believers are encouraged to seek more of it by **pursuing righteousness and holiness**. Just as tasting a small sample can lead one to desire the full meal, experiencing a glimpse of God's goodness invites believers to seek a fuller, richer experience of His presence and grace—*Coram Deo*.

Coram Deo is about cultivating a constant awareness of God's presence and allowing that awareness to shape and guide every aspect of life. It's a profound way of living that brings depth, purpose, and integrity to our faith journey.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

8. What is the believer's source of "truth?" (2:3)

We must not fill our lives with cheap substitutes so that we lose our craving for the truth contained in God's word. It is the only truth that transforms us.

9. The experience of God's goodness serves as a motivation for believers to do what?

continue growing spiritually

10. What is the phrase that defines being in the presence of God?

Coram Deo

LIFE APPLICATION

Think about it—

- Stay connected to Jesus through regular communion with Him—reading scripture, praying, and worshipping. Recognize that your strength and ability to bear spiritual fruit come from your relationship with Him. (John 15:5)
- Begin to view your spiritual journey as a disciplined race. Set spiritual goals, practice self-control, and persevere through challenges, keeping your eyes on the ultimate prize of eternal life with Christ. (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

RESOURCES

Adult Questions for LESSONMaker, LOGOS Bible Software.

Anchor Bible Dictionary.

Barnes' Notes on the New Testament.

Life Application New Testament Commentary.

Moody Theological Dictionary.

Augustine of Hippo References:

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