

## Lesson 3

### **Lesson 3: 1 Peter 1:20-25**

One thing students may notice is that this lesson overlaps slightly with some of the verses we looked at previously. The reason for that is because Peter's argument does not really stop at verse 21. In order to understand his command in verses 22-25, we need to remember what he has already said about Christ and salvation.

Peter begins by reminding believers that Christ was foreknown before the foundation of the world and revealed in these last times for our sake. This means that the cross was never God's backup plan. Before creation existed, God already knew how He would redeem His people through Jesus Christ. Peter wants believers to understand that their faith and hope are resting in a God who has planned their salvation from eternity and who demonstrated His power by raising Christ from the dead. This is a pattern we see often throughout Scripture. Before God tells believers what they should do, He reminds them of what He has done. Grace comes before obedience. Peter grounds everything he is about to command in the reality of the gospel. The Christian life is never about earning God's favor. It is about living in response to the favor God has already shown us in Christ.

Because of what God has done, Peter then calls believers to love one another earnestly from a pure heart. This is much stronger than simply being nice to one another, but the idea is one of sincere, intentional, and persistent love. Peter is writing to believers who are facing difficulty, uncertainty, and hardship and in situations like these, it is very easy to become consumed with our own struggles and needs. Yet Peter reminds believers that the gospel should move them outward rather than inward. Because God has shown them grace and love, they should extend grace and love to others. One of our top priorities as believers in our attempt to reflect Christ to the world around us is to love and show grace to the believers around us. We do not merely share common interests, similar personalities, or the same life experiences, we share a common Savior, Lord, and Father. The gospel does not simply change our relationship with God; it changes our relationship with God's people. We are united together through Christ.

Peter then explains why this kind of love is possible. He says that believers have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable seed through the living and abiding word of God. Christians are not simply people who have adopted a new worldview or a new set of moral values. They are people who have received new life and purpose of existence, because he "has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.... So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you

are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure being joined, together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.” (Ephesians 2:14-22) We are not united by things such as hobbies or interests or cultures or social classes or preferences, but we are to be blocks that are fused together by the mortar of the Gospel in the temple of God.

Just as there could be no greater purpose for the stones that were hewn into blocks that built the temple there is no greater purpose we can have in this life than to be a part of the temple of God. This means we now share something deeper than hobbies, interests, backgrounds, politics, culture, or personal preferences. We have all been given life through the same gospel and belong to the same family. Peter's point is that people who have been made alive by the same eternal Word should love one another deeply.

To explain this further, Peter quotes Isaiah 40. Isaiah draws a sharp contrast between mankind and God.

Human beings are like grass.

Human glory is like the flower of grass.

Grass flourishes for a season and then withers. Flowers bloom beautifully for a time but eventually fade away. Peter wants believers to recognize that the same is true of everything this world values. Wealth fades. Beauty fades. Success fades. Popularity fades. Accomplishments fade. Even our earthly lives are temporary.

This is not meant to discourage believers but to give them perspective. One of the great dangers we face is spending our lives chasing things that cannot last. We are constantly tempted to build our identities on things that are fading.

A helpful question to ask ourselves is:

What am I building my life upon right now? Is it success? Popularity? Sports? Achievements? Possessions? Relationships?

None of these things are inherently bad, but all of them are temporary. Peter reminds us that the things most people spend their lives pursuing are ultimately like grass. They flourish for a moment and then disappear.

The amazing thing about the passage in Isaiah is that it does not stop at the weakness of man. If you would turn with your group to Isaiah and read from verse 6 through the end of the chapter you will see that the author makes a great deal about how powerful and competent God is. While everything in this world fades, the word of the Lord remains forever. Human strength

fails, but God's promises do not. Human glory disappears, but God's glory remains. Human life is temporary, but God's Word endures forever. The same God who sees the nations as dust on the scales is also the God who comforts His people and fulfills His saving promises. Peter uses Isaiah's words because he wants us to find our confidence not in themselves but in the God whose promises never fail.

This should be deeply encouraging to us. Despite the enormous difference between who God is and who we are, God has chosen to act on behalf of people who are fading like grass. The eternal God has spoken life into those who were spiritually dead. The God whose Word endures forever has caused believers to be born again through that very Word.

Peter closes by reminding his readers that this enduring Word is the gospel that was preached to them. The good news of Jesus Christ is not built upon human wisdom, cultural trends, popular opinions, or passing philosophies. It is anchored in the eternal Word of God. Because the gospel endures forever, the life it gives endures forever as well.

That is why Peter can confidently call believers to love one another earnestly. The same Christ who redeemed them, the same gospel that gave them life, and the same eternal Word that will never pass away have joined them together into one family. Christian love is not merely a nice idea. It is the natural response of people who have been transformed by the everlasting grace of God.

### **Main Point**

**Because believers have been given new life through the eternal Word of God, they are called to love one another earnestly, recognizing that while human life is temporary, the gospel, the Word of God, and the Christ who saves endure forever.**

### **Questions for Reflection**

- Why do you think Peter reminds believers what God has done before telling them what they should do?
- How does the gospel change the way Christians should treat one another?
- What does it mean to love one another "earnestly"?
- Why does Peter connect being born again with loving other believers?
- What are some things people often build their identities on that eventually fade away?
- What are you most tempted to place your confidence in besides Christ?
- How does Isaiah's picture of grass challenge the way we think about success, popularity, and achievements?

- Why is it comforting that God's Word endures forever?
- How does the greatness of God make His grace even more amazing?
- If everything temporary in your life disappeared tomorrow, what would still remain because of the gospel?