

I Peter 1.  
“Faith More Precious than Gold.”

Kumon Hikaru

Today we will study together from the First Epistle to Peter.

Today’s passage deals with the grand theme of “the plan of salvation for mankind”. If we divide the content into two parts, we can divide it into “how God accomplishes the salvation of mankind” and “how it relates to the personal lives of Christians and each individual”. As we will see later, the two themes of “how God accomplishes the salvation of humankind” and “how it relates to the personal lives of Christians and each individual” are mentioned alternately.

If you think about it, we don’t often think about God’s salvation of humankind and how it came about. However, I think that perspective is very important.

There are several reasons for this, but the first is that Peter thought about salvation from that perspective, and by extension, each one’s personal life. Peter’s perspective as a biblical writer should naturally be valued.

At the same time, there is the point that it fits in with the theme of salvation. In the first place, I believe that it is not because of a narrow infatuation with the affairs of one’s own life that a Christian becomes eager to believe in Christ. In most cases, it is most likely that they no longer find meaning in it and have come to think more broadly about the world and about God.

Therefore, I would say that when a Christian lives, nor should he or she think only about that narrow life of his or her own. Rather, we can say that we should begin by thinking about the broader “how God saves mankind,” and within that context, we should think what exactly is our own life and how should we live it?

However, as is the habit of sinners, once we come to know God, we quickly return to our old lives. The sinner forgets God, and his own life and worldly pleasures become the center of his life, and he begins to think of God as a “guardian god” who protects his life.

I believe that such a habit of sinners has not changed from Peter’s time to the present. To those with such sinful habits, Peter reminds once again of the great theme of human salvation. What is our daily life in the grand plan of God’s

salvation? What is of value in this world? What should we pay attention to in our lives?

Some may think that it is unnatural to have such a broad perspective. However, I believe that it is much more unnatural to live a life that is obsessed with one's own life and the small things of this world.

We need to wake up and live without being distracted by the busyness, relationships, and temptations of this world. With this in mind, let's read on.

### **Verses 1-2**

**1 To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, 2 who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.**

The area to which Peter sent his letter is modern-day Turkey, but it is central and northwestern Turkey, excluding the southern coastal areas facing the Mediterranean Sea. The letter is said to have been sent to all the churches in the area to be read in a circuit. It is likely that the churches were churches whose members consisted mostly of Gentiles.

At this point, I would like to draw your attention to the first part of this second verse, which reads, "who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood". This section touches on all the major themes of this letter. If you will notice the wording, you will see that it speaks only of God's work and that the human side is passive. The church is presented as a person who has been incorporated into God's plan. It is expected that we listen to the contents of the letter not from the narrow perspective of "those who have believed in God on their own," but from the broader perspective of "those who have been entrusted with the grace of being incorporated into God's plan".

3-5

**3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus**

**Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.**

Peter begins his letter by praising God. Although the salvation of Christians was not yet complete, there was already ample reason to praise God for His saving work.

Look at verse 3. The praise of God begins with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now look at the second half of verse 5. The praise extends into the future, when people's faith will be manifested in the end times. They are praising God as if the future is already fixed. We are expected to have faith in the second coming of Christ.

Christians are placed in the time between the resurrection and the second coming of Christ. The resurrection of Christ represents God's victory over the empty reality of this world and the sinful reality of the world. There is a manifestation of God's will that He will give us a world beyond this world. Thus, we can have hope, which is what the latter half of verse 3 seems to be referring to when it says, "He has given us a new birth and a hope of life".

In the following verse 4, we are told that this hope is not of this world, but of an asset that will never perish. Moreover, this asset is already stored up in heaven. The fact that it is already stored up is a manifestation of God's hope and love for mankind.

In verse 5, we are told that God will protect our lives until the end times. However, this does not go so far as to say that the Christian cannot fall away. The condition is that one continues to have faith in God. We will consider this again later, but what do you think? I think this passage makes it clear that salvation is entirely the work of God. However, there is a side of us that forgets to praise God, quickly forgets the fact of salvation, gets lost in our own lives, and falls away from salvation.

But it seems that the Christians to whom Peter sent the letter did not forget.

6-7

**6 In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have**

had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

This local church congregation seemed to literally rejoice in God's saving work. There must have been real joy, not just verbal joy.

In retrospect, the churches to which Peter and Paul wrote seem to have been completely different in quality from the churches to which Peter wrote. Paul had to point out one problem after another, and we can see that the church was in turmoil. Put another way, Paul seems to have been the type of person who was gentle and persistent in dealing with those who were helpless. On the other hand, if we look at Peter's two letters, there is little mention of problems within the church. On the contrary, they bring to mind a man of faith whose faith was passionate.

However, it was not all optimistic. Still that faith had to be tested through trials. Since they were to be "tested," naturally there would be dropouts.

Now, the word "trial" appears here, but what exactly were the trials of the church? Some interpreters say that there was a great persecution and that this was a trial. The use of such strong language as "being refined by fire" suggests that they were imagining intense persecution. However, there is little mention of persecution in this letter, and there is no history of persecution in this time period.

I suspect that the trials described in this letter are not dramatic trials, but rather "normal life" trials. The Greek word "anastrophase" appears frequently in Peter's letter and can be translated as "life," "way of living," or "behavior". It can be said that we are being tested as to how we will "live" and "behave" in our daily lives.

More specifically, we are taught about our relationships with Gentiles, with our parents, with our spouses, and with our past. I think it is clear that such relationships are a test. In relationships, intense emotions collide. Sometimes hatred, sometimes adhesion, sometimes frustration. Intense uncontrollable emotions take over people. It seems to me that those everyday emotions are

described as fire refining.

Then, I would say that such daily friction in relationships is intentionally given by God. It would mean that the soul is refined like refining gold with fire. It can be said that we are being tested to see whether pure faith or a worldly mind is born in the course of daily training. It is worth noting that if pure faith is born in that training, it is more expensive than gold. At least, that is how it seems to God. In any case, we should not see the friction in our daily relationships as a mere source of stress, but as an opportunity to re-evaluate ourselves in order to become right before God.

So what does that pure faith look like?

### 8-9

**8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, 9 for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.**

The church to which the letter was addressed had faith without seeing God, and as a result they were filled with joy unspeakable. Since it says "unspeakable," I think there must have been a genuine joy there that they had never experienced before. It seems that those who genuinely believe in and love God have such an experience. That is the proof of having faith that is more precious than gold.

Again, it seems that the Christians to whom Peter was writing had genuine faith and were of a very high level.

We are told here how God's plan affected the believers, and now we return to the theme of God's plan of salvation.

### 10-12

**10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, 11 trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving**

**themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.**

The words of men are full of falsehood, and words do not accompany reality. It is not consistent with what we say and do. But God's words are always done, and they manifest reality itself. When God says, "Let there be light," there is light.

The prophets were very interested in what God would say about the salvation of mankind. For if God says he will destroy a man, he will surely destroy him, and if he says he will save his soul, he will surely save it. God spoke of sending Christ through the prophets, but in very vague terms. What is being said here is that the prophets wanted to know something more definite about Christ, but they could not know it, because it was knowledge reserved for future generations.

Verse 12 says, "Even angels long to look into these things." What is known about the angels is limited, but Luke's Gospel tells us, for example, that they greatly rejoice in man's salvation. Knowing the hopelessness of man's condition, the angel may know that his salvation is miraculous and that it will reveal the glory of God. However, the angels do not seem to see the future. They, like the prophet, seem to want to know how God's salvation will unfold.

Then we can say that both the angel and the prophet are greatly interested in the plan of salvation for mankind in Christ, but only the sinner is indifferent. It is the sinner who has a very narrow perspective and is forever fixated on the inconsequential things of his private life.

The next verse, verse 13, begins with the word "therefore". Instead of God's plan centering on man's private life, man is expected to center on God's plan and transform his way of life on that basis.

13 (my translation)

**13 Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. (my translation)**

The gospel should not be ambiguous. The original word translated "awake" here means "sober". In other words, the concern is that the gospel be understood in a blurred, drunken way.

What state is that more specifically? If you will look at the second half of the verse, it says, "set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming." If this is pure faith, then ambiguous faith is faith that places its hope in more than one thing. A double-minded faith that places its hope in Christ as well as in one's family, one's children, the politics of this world, people, and so on, is a bad one. But that is the reality of most people's faith.

For example, sometimes a person who has hope in God but also in man is given a bad relationship that tests him or her to realize how foolish he or she was to have hope in man. Through such a process, one can say that one learns to wake up and gain faith, which is more expensive than gold.

The process requires trust in parents like a child, not in human techniques.

**14**

**14 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.**

Even if it means that when you come to realize that you are attracted to the desires of the past, you should trust God and pray and ask for wisdom on what to do, for example.

Finally, you will no longer be attached to your past in this world, and you will be in a state of complete trust in God alone. That is the state of "holiness".

**15-17**

**15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." 17 Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear.**

Jesus said that not all who say, "Lord, Lord," will enter the Kingdom, and verse 17 seems to say something similar. God does not favoritism; He will test a

person to see if he or she has actually lived a holy life in his or her life. We are told that it is good to keep in mind that God does not favoritism and to live with the fear that comes as a result.

Here once again Peter speaks from the broader perspective of God's plan of salvation.

### **18-21**

**18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. 20 He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. 21 Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.**

The redemption of man was not something taken for granted. There was Christ's sacrifice, and it was all the best God could give by grace. To forget that and return to the way of life in this world is insulting to God, as if you were choosing a meaningless life, forsaking Christ, who is worth more than gold. It means that you acknowledge no value at all.

Peter probably says this because the church that received the letter was also a sinner, albeit a good one. Sinners quickly forget grace, love worldly life, and become double-minded. The characteristic of such a person is that everything is half-hearted and ambiguous. His love is also half-hearted.

### **22 (my translation)**

**22 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart.  
(my translation)**

As long as you love the world, brotherly love without falsehood is impossible. Therefore, it is possible to love only after one has first purified his soul.

I would like to add a few words. Love itself is there for everyone. But that love is almost always limited love. It depends on one's own mood, on the attitude of the other person, and on how quickly one hates the other person when the



other person does something wrong, etc. That is not the love of a good heart. Such a person's disobedient love will not last long. It is somewhat uncomfortable and looks hypocritical. However, in many cases, the person may think that he or she has love.

Straightforward and pure love always remains the same, and there is no hypocrisy in it. Peter tells us to treat our brothers with that kind of love. This is a very high level that is required. It is not something that can be done with small techniques. As it says here, it is impossible unless we are purified at the level of the soul. However, when a person is able to genuinely love others, his/her state is the very state of "holiness," and we can say that he/she has attained salvation of the soul.

At the end of chapter 1, Peter encourages us to know the power of the Word of God.

### **23-25**

**23 For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. 24 For, "All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, 25 but the word of the Lord endures forever." And this is the word that was preached to you.**

Verse 24 and the first half of verse 25 in parentheses are quoted from Isaiah. These words compare the prosperity of man with the Word of God. It is not completely negative about human flourishing. It is likened to a flower, and flowers are beautiful. That is why human flourishing can be a temptation. However, there is always the weakness that the glory is momentary and will disappear someday.

On the other hand, the Word of God is not visible like a flower, but it stands forever.

What Peter is saying here is that we have been given the Word of God, the gospel, which stands forever. That gospel was prophesied in the prophetic books, and it has finally been given. God is a God of action. The efficacy of His

Word cannot be stopped by human beings. Though we may reject it as individuals, the gospel continues to provide salvation to many others, and its truth will always remain.

That true and everlasting Word is the gospel, which gives people the opportunity to be born again. If one values the living Word of God and feeds on it, one can be born again with life. Peter's argument seems to be that the point that the Word has already been spoken and given to us is more important than whether we accept it or not. It is up to each one of us to decide whether or not we consider it true and take it as our sustenance.

Today we have been studying from the first letter of Peter, and as I said at the beginning, it is important to first take a broad perspective. God's salvation has a long history, dating back thousands of years, or more specifically, God's plan of salvation even before the creation of the world. And that plan will one day come to an end with the second coming of Christ.

We who live in Christ's time must first remember that God sent Christ, that Christ rose from the dead, and that He gives us hope through Him. Living in such a historical context, it is clear what we must do. We are to imitate Christ and be holy in all of our lives. Work, family, and marriage are only secondary and tertiary things. We are to be refined through the trials of daily life and be prepared for God's fair judgment. But even in those activities, we have the protection of the Spirit if we seek them.

As an application of this, we must first change the way we think about our ordinary lives. If one lives, there will always be much suffering in human relationships. Man is like a ravenous beast with a huge body like a bison, very stubborn and immobile. People will always bump into such beastly people at some point, and even if they don't like it and try to avoid it, they will feel pain and intense suffering.

But it is a good thing, and there is an aspect of humility that leads to humility and the salvation of the soul when one begins to bow down in defeat. It is not in the dramatic things that people gain salvation, but in the everyday things that people gain salvation.

However, there are two pitfalls that Christians tend to fall into. The first is the danger that they will not see the everyday as a test, but instead will try to find meaning in it, and eventually form a system of thought in their churches that centers on rejoicing in life. Such a church is a church that has forgotten salvation and loves the world. The characteristics of such a church are that it has no intrinsic hope in the gospel, it has only false joy, it does not feel that it loves Christ, and it is not filled with hope.

The second pitfall is indifference to trials. This is the path of living in a daze, not seeing the various emotions that come up in relationships as a time to reflect on one's own way of being. Such a Christian can only be described as being extremely irresponsible. Even though they have no love for themselves, they don't make an issue of it. They take their salvation for granted, and they think that Christ is a convenient God, and they are only "thankful".

We should avoid these two pitfalls and face our daily trials. Through such trials, we can remember the emptiness of the world and learn what it means to live with hope in God. We want to be the ones who, at the end of such trials, gain faith that leads to the salvation of our souls. Refined faith that leads to salvation is more precious than gold, for inexpressible joy abides in the believer.

Prayer: Father God

Today we have reflected on your saving work and have learned about your mighty work of salvation.

Please help us to face our daily trials so that we may reach Your Kingdom. Also, please guide us to respond to your saving work and to be obedient to you like little children.

We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.