

I Peter

Peter's Letter of Encouragement to Christians Sown throughout the Earth

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It is written as five 60-90 minute studies. There is no leader's guide available.

Peter's Letter of Encouragement to Christians Sown Throughout the Earth

Introduction

This first letter of Peter is probably one of the lesser-known writings of Scripture, especially by Christian laity. That is perhaps too bad as it is a wonderful communication by an apostle of Christ himself to “encourage” (5:12) Christ’s followers who are still sojourning here on earth. Peter refers to us as strangers, “scattered” or literally, “sown through” (1:1) the world, and that is what we are. This life isn’t our “real” existence nor is it a goal in or of itself. Rather this life is a journey to our real heavenly home and permanent life which was secured for us by Jesus’ suffering, death, and resurrection.

What is so encouraging is that it’s Peter who, with the writing assistance of Silas (5:12), is the one doing the encouraging:

- Peter, who was full enough of faith to climb out of a boat to join Jesus on the water, only to sink when he looked around to see the waves and danger;
- Peter, who is remembered for his powerful confession of Jesus as **the Christ**, only to follow that confession with an attempt to “*rebuke*” Jesus who’d just explained that the Messiah “*must be killed and on the third day be raised to life;*”
- Peter, who sees Jesus transfigured to his full glory, only to try to restrict and retain that glory here on earth, bypassing the suffering required for permanent glory for all eternity;
- Peter, who vows to die rather than to disown Jesus, only to deny him with oaths and curses hours later;
- Peter, who sees the empty tomb personally but still doesn’t believe Jesus has risen and is alive.

We can understand and identify with this pre-Pentecost Peter.

However, if this were all we knew of him we’d be tempted to conclude; if Peter can’t follow Jesus any better than that, how possibly can I? It’s rather difficult to be encouraged by someone who couldn’t follow through with good intentions himself; someone who could “talk the talk” but

not “walk the walk.” The Peter who writes this letter is a different Peter though. The letter is written about 30 years after the earlier accounts of Peter. The Peter inspired to write this letter has now been strengthened by the Holy Spirit. This Peter doesn’t fear to proclaim the crucified and risen Jesus Christ before the masses on Pentecost, or before the Sanhedrin after calling attention to the truth of Jesus “*in the temple courts,*” healing the crippled beggar and being imprisoned with John. The prayer of the believers after Peter and John’s release (Acts 4:23 ff) is even more striking in that it doesn’t beseech the Lord for protection but for “*boldness.*” It isn’t surprising then, when in answer to that prayer, this Peter isn’t deterred even by flogging when yet again before the “*High Priest and all his associates*” he pointedly states Jesus, the Messiah, was the one “*whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree.*”

As Luke continues to recount the Acts of the Holy Spirit in the early Christian church we see a very different Peter. Now we see a Peter who is not frightened by events on earth into denying his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This Peter serves the church as leader and spokesman, coming to understand that Jesus is for all people, Jew and Gentile alike. This Peter waits uncomplaining and asleep in prison, under Herod Agrippa I, for what would surely be a fate the same as James, “*put to death with the sword,*” only to find himself free and walking in the streets of Jerusalem by a miracle of God. Peter has come *to see Jesus as the Christ*, as worthy of giving up his earthly life, rather than to “*disown*” him. This is the Jesus for whom Peter is envoy. This is the God the “new” Peter now glorifies for the scattered Christians who are losing earthly comfort and security; exchanging them for eternal hope in Jesus Christ.

Purpose and Recipients

The author states the purpose himself, “*I have written you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it*” (1 Peter 5:12). In his opening greeting he identifies the intended readers and their purpose on earth: “*To God’s elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood*” (1 Peter 1:1-2).

Peter is encouraging, not a specific congregation, but Christians in general. Peter takes his position as head of the Christian church seriously and is including all those who are following Jesus Christ. Life on earth for Christians can be a frightening and lonely experience. It’s always

tempting to ask, “Is it worth it?” “Everyone else is having an easier time,” it can appear. This Jesus can cost Christians plenty here on earth; cost them position, cost them family, cost them security, cost them home and country, perhaps cost them life itself. Peter knows all too well how earthly concerns can distract and discourage Christ followers. He knows that what we see can obscure what we know to be true. Therefore he writes to encourage these dispersed Christians to rely on what they know of God and his grace rather than on what they see and fear. He also writes to encourage us all to remember we are anything but alone or powerless. There are Christians throughout the world, a vast army of them. We have the very power of God himself. We know that the fight has already been fought, the victory won, and we are on the winning side. We know how it’s all going to end; with all Christians in heaven with our God and Lord, Jesus Christ, for all eternity.

Place and Date of Writing

Even though “*Babylon*” (5:12) is identified as the place of writing, it doesn’t tell us exactly where the letter was written. Ancient Babylon isn’t really a possible location having been conquered first by the Persians, later obliterated by ensuing civilizations in fulfillment of multiple OT prophecies. Most likely “*Babylon*” is a figure of speech referring to any place where God’s people are “held captive” waiting for deliverance from the enemy, reunion with God, worship in the LORD’s temple, and gathering of all God’s people. Babylon could therefore be a reference to Rome, Jerusalem, Egypt Babylon, or anywhere in the world where Christians are “in captivity” awaiting deliverance to eternal life and hope in heaven. Most conservative Bible commentators tend to conclude that Peter was writing from Rome.

The date of writing is also difficult to pinpoint exactly. It would appear to have been written sometime between 62 and 65 AD. Nero would already be in power in Rome and the persecution of Christians is spreading throughout the Roman Empire. The actual martyrdom of Christians seems to have been pretty well confined to Rome itself. One wonders if Paul is already in prison awaiting execution or has he perhaps already been martyred? Or, is Paul in Spain, between his first and second imprisonments? Mark is mentioned as being with Peter. We know Paul requested Mark’s presence in Rome shortly before Paul’s earthly life was ended. Peter was writing with the assistance of Silas who was another co-worker of Paul’s. Why was Silas free to be with Peter? One thing can be concluded; Peter was writing at a time in which the Christian

church was coming under siege and would be facing truly harrowing days in the very near future. This church needed encouragement and reassurance that Jesus was indeed the Christ.

Author

While Peter begins with the words, “*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,*” he also writes in chapter 5, “*With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written,*” Remembering that Peter is more of a talker than a writer, as well as noting a markedly different writing style in II Peter as compared to I Peter, it appears Silas expressed Peter’s thoughts, not unlike John Mark did in the Gospel of Mark.

Outline

This letter, like many letters isn’t easy to outline. Each commentary seems to have its own outline. The following incorporates Peter’s own stated purpose and is a combination of a number of suggested outlines. The purpose of the outline is merely to help the reader put the reading into context to aid in understanding. If another outline works better, go ahead and use it.

- I. Greetings to God’s chosen (1:1-2)
- II. Jesus, the Living Hope (1:3-2:3)
 - A. Testimony—Living hope through Jesus’ resurrection (1:3-5)
 - B. Stand firm—purpose of suffering (1:4-12)
 - C. Encouragement—let the Living Hope shape your attitude and life (1:13-2:3)
- III. Jesus, the Living Stone (2:4-3:14)
 - A. Testimony—the Living Stone – Jesus – the cornerstone of the temple of believers
 - B. Encouragement—the temple made of living stones
 - C. Encouragement—let the Living Stone determine the actions of your life – submission is the Christ-like attitude
 1. toward the government/authorities

2. toward your employer
3. within your family, physical or spiritual

D. Stand firm—in suffering

IV. Set apart Christ as Lord (3:15-4:19)

A. Encouragement—in your heart set apart Christ as LORD

B. Testimony—Christ is worthy of it

C. Encouragement—live for him who redeemed you rather than to live for yourself

D. Encouragement—work together with the other Christians to accomplish the work Christ has ordained for you

E. Stand firm—righteous suffering is part of a Christian's earthly life

V. Encouragement—stand firm **together** – special instructions to church leaders (5:1-11)

A. Elders

B. Young men

C. Christians in general

VI. Purpose of the letter; encouragement, testimony, stand firm! (5:12)

VII. Closing greetings (5:13-14)

Introduction to Peter's First Epistle

Questions for Review

1. To whom is Peter writing and why?
2. What relevance can this letter have for us in our day and lives?
3. List experiences from Peter's life before Pentecost and explain what we can learn from them.
4. List experiences from Peter's life after Pentecost and explain the difference.
5. What can we learn from the "two Peters?"
6. Why did Peter **have to** write this epistle **at this time**?
7. Did Peter actually do the writing? So what?
8. Why is this letter so important that the Holy Spirit has preserved it through the ages?
9. What are the main points of the letter?

For Next Time

Read the entire letter once or twice a day.

Study chapter 1 using the study notes, the Bible, and one other commentary.

Peter's Letter of Encouragement to Christians Sown Throughout the Earth

Greetings to God's Chosen (1Peter 1:1-2) and Jesus-the Living Hope (1Peter 1:3-2:3)

Peter opens the letter in the customary manner of the day, introducing himself as author. More than that, he states his qualification for writing. Peter then addresses the recipients of the letter in a manner which immediately sets the tone for what follows. This is a letter of testimony and encouragement. From the beginning Peter is testifying that Jesus is the source of hope and life as well as encouraging his readers to “stick with” him in all earthly circumstances.

- 1:1 “Petros,” the pebble, “*an apostle*,” one who has been sent out as an ambassador or envoy, of Jesus Christ himself. Not only was he the known and accepted leader of the Christian church, Peter was “*an apostle of Jesus Christ*.” While the word “apostle” is often distinguished from the word “disciple,” frequently both apply. Disciple simply is someone who has been taught by someone else, while apostle carries with it the concept of being sent by... Peter here is saying he was personally sent by Jesus as Jesus’ envoy or representative. He of course, had also been personally taught by Jesus for three years.
- 1:2 Peter gets right to the point in his address. Those to whom he’s writing are “*elect*,” (lit. “chosen” or “strangers”). They are not “at home” where they are currently residing. “*Scattered*” literally means “sown through” reminding us of the parables of the kingdom of heaven and the “sowing” of the word. In other words, the recipients of this letter aren’t where they are by happenstance, rather, they were deliberately “sown.” What comfort it must have been to read these words. Not only had they been “sown” but they’d been chosen for a purpose long ago. Peter is here echoing the LORD’s comfort to Jeremiah, “*Before I formed you in the womb, I chose you, before you were born, I set you apart;*” (Jer. 1:5), as well as Paul’s encouragement to the congregation at Ephesus, “*For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do*” (Eph. 2:10). Furthermore, you^r having been set aside for God’s purpose was also his work, through the Holy Spirit,

who made it possible for you to say “Yes!” to his call. This cleansing is yours through the shedding of Jesus’ own blood just as the blood of animals was required for cleansing in the OT church. In other words, Peter is telling his readers, “You being a Christian is not an accident. It’s the result of careful planning and a lot of work on the part of your Creator. This is the purpose for which you’ve been created!”

Because Peter’s readers had just been reminded of why they found themselves in their current situation, they could relax and take renewed comfort in God’s indescribable love for them and in the knowledge they were no longer God’s enemies but his dearly loved children. As such they had true peace with God because of his grace.

1:3-5 Peter can’t help but burst into a *te deum* in response to God’s grace. He immediately looks to the future blessings which await each and every Christian. Because of Jesus’ resurrection, we have a **sure hope** of resurrection. Our hope is as alive and sure as Jesus’ resurrection! While Peter can’t tell his readers what heaven will be like, he can reassure them of what it will not be; no perishing, spoiling, or fading which is inevitable in all things on earth. And, once again, it’s God’s power which has secured all of this for us.

Because the most frequent use of the word “hope” in the English language is as a verb it’s easy for us to attach a changing, uncertain quality to it. In this passage and most often in Scripture the word “hope” is used as a noun. *Baker-Encyclopedia of the Bible* gives the definition of hope as, “An expectation or belief in the fulfillment of something desired.”

It could be argued that the concept of Christian hope has been deliberately attacked by Satan. *Baker-Encyclopedia of the Bible* goes on: “In the early centuries of church history stress on the disparity between this world and the next seemed to create an attitude of escapism, futility, or indifference toward the problems and pains of human existence....Frederick Nietzsche (1844-1900) claimed that Christianity makes people cowards because it taught that whatever happened was God’s will, thus discouraging efforts to change the world. Karl Marx (1818-83) said that Christianity was the ‘opiate of the people.’ For Marx religion kept people from rising against those who oppressed them.” It would appear that when Christians understand “hope” and keep their eyes

on eternity they don't make very good revolutionaries. This would appear to be a godly attitude and just what Peter was encouraging.

- 1:6-9 Peter goes on to encourage his readers: Knowing what has been secured for your future, don't fret about the present. Rejoice! Think again of all that's been won for you. The present suffering is also under God's control and it's his plan that your faith be even stronger than it is now. The more you exercise that faith, the stronger it will become. After all, you've already received your salvation. The goal is waiting for you in heaven, remember? It's your **sure** hope, remember? We can almost hear the writer to the Hebrews, "*Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see*" (Heb. 11:1).

The sermon study book, *Sermon Studies on the Epistles, Series A*, includes a number of sermons on 1 Peter 1. The commentator writes as follows on this section: "Our 'living hope' is that Christ, who has conquered sin and death, has given us the promise of eternal life. It is true, most religions hold out hope to their followers, the hope of blessings here and perhaps even of blessings in the hereafter. But the acquisition of these blessings invariably depends upon whether the individual has earned them or not. Therefore, such a 'believer' can never be sure....Indeed, there is an anonymous saying which reads, 'Life with Christ in an endless hope, without him a hopeless end.'"

Peter concludes by reminding us that our eternal life has already begun, "for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls."

- 1:10-12 Do you know how you can be so sure? Peter continues with an illustration. Through recounting a very brief history of God's promises through his OT prophets and fulfillment of them, he assures his readers they can count on the Lord to be as faithful to his promises in the future as he's been in the past. Even the angels long (lit. "bend over") to intently watch what the Lord is doing. The wording reminds us of Easter Sunday morning and the way Peter and John are described as they look into the empty tomb. This isn't just a glance but a studying in awe and wonder.

1 *Sermon Studies on the Epistles, Series A*, E H Wendland, ed., NPH, 1986

1:13-15 “Therefore”... In view of the preceding hope, Peter begins a list of imperatives that doesn’t stop until the concluding passages of the letter. These are interspersed with Gospel motivation for living the Christ-like life he’s encouraging us all to pursue. While hope gives us our focus on eternity, we still have a purpose for being on earth. We have earthly lives to live and work, God’s work, to do.

He begins rather abruptly with a call to pay attention, be ready (lit. “gird up” as one would with long robes if work or running was necessary). Be single minded, rather than to have your thoughts under the influence of something else. In this case specifically, stop thinking like the world. Just as God has been wholly focused on you and your redemption, be wholly focused on him.

Peter quotes a verse from Leviticus to substantiate what he has just said about being holy. The concept of being holy, set apart for God, plus the fact that the holiness God calls for is also the holiness that Jesus earned for us by his active obedience and that God imparts to us in his gospel promise.

1:17-21 The world and its values are empty. You were made for more than that! You are strangers in this world. You’ll never “fit in” with them or act like them again. You were created to be a child of God for all eternity. It cost Jesus his life. That’s how important you are to the Lord of heaven and earth. Just as God made you for eternal life, he made his Son to redeem you with his own life.

1:22-25 Now, live together with fellow believers and understand they are your real family. Peter encourages the persecuted to love one another like brothers, like family and go even further than that. Be ready to give your life for your fellow believers. Don’t be deterred by the thought of death. All men die. But the word of the Lord, which has given you new life, will never die. You don’t need to fear the inevitable earthly death because your eternal life has already begun.

2:1-3 The world lives by slander, hypocrisy, and deceit. You don’t have to do that anymore. Those are the dirty clothes of the ones who don’t know the purpose for which the Lord has made them. Remove them. Rather, crave and seek all which will bring you closer to your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Seek it the way a newborn always seeks its mother’s milk to live and grow.

Jesus, the Living Hope

(1 Peter 1:1-2:3)

Questions for Review

1. Peter or “Petros” means “pebble.” When Jesus renamed Peter, (see Mt. 16:13-20) why would he say, “You will now be known as Pebble?”

Is this applicable to us? Explain!

2. When many Christians read this section of 1 Peter, it begins a discussion about the doctrine of election. What is that all about?

Many fine Christians get rather upset by the doctrine of election. Why is that?

What point was Peter making to the recipients of this letter and to us?

Why is it helpful for us to keep that point in front of us as we study 1 Peter?

3. How does Scripture use the word “hope”? Look at your concordance. Notice how often and where the word is used in the OT.

How does our world use the word “hope”?

Why can this be confusing in our attempts to understand its use in Scripture?

Define the word “hope” for yourself.

4. Comment on the following: Agree or disagree—

It could be argued that the concept of Christian hope has been deliberately attacked by Satan. *Baker-Encyclopedia of the Bible* goes on: “In the early centuries of church history stress on the disparity between this world and the next seemed to create an attitude of escapism, futility, or indifference toward the problems and pains of human existence....Frederick Nietzsche (1844-1900) claimed that Christianity makes people cowards because it taught that whatever happened was God’s will, thus discouraging efforts to change the world. Karl Marx (1818-83) said that Christianity was the ‘opiate of the people.’ For Marx religion kept people from rising against those who oppressed them.” It would appear that when Christians understand “hope” and keep their eyes on eternity they don’t make very good revolutionaries. This would appear to be a godly attitude and just what Peter was encouraging.

What do you think?

5. Summarize Peter’s argument about Jesus as the “sure Hope” beginning with the future, evidenced in the present, and validated by the past.
6. So what did this mean in the lives of the believers?

So what does this mean in our lives?

7. Why does Peter encourage us to alter our earthly behavior?

8. What does he encourage the people to seek instead? How does that apply in our lives? (Come on, let's have some concrete examples here!)

For Next Time

Read the entire letter of 1st Peter at least once a day.

Study 1 Peter 2:4-3:14 – Jesus, the Living Stone

Jesus, the Living Stone

(1 Peter 2:4-3:14)

- 2:4-5 Peter returns to Jesus... As you come face to face or “adhere” to this living Stone... Peter begins to draw on the picture of the temple, the house of the LORD, which was built of incredible, magnificent stones, some of them measured 37' x 12' x 18'. This temple had a few stones which determined the position of all the rest. Peter then goes from the physical temple to the spiritual temple, a holy priesthood, with spiritual sacrifices. Understanding the role and purpose of the temple in OT worship brings the significance of this section to light.
- 2:6-8 Peter now quotes 3 OT passages which point to Jesus as the cornerstone or the capstone. The Hebrew word can mean either. One was the stone which set the pattern for the rest of the building. It had to be a perfect stone or the entire building would be askew. The capstone was the one over an archway, in this case it was the stone which every other one rested upon. It kept the building from collapsing.
- This was a stone which would also cause those who reject him, fail to see him, to trip, stumble, and fall. Prof. David Valleskey, in his seminary lecture notes on this passage, suggests a better translation: “they stumble because they are disobedient to the Word.” Those who reject “the rock” are destined for eternal separation from the LORD.
- 2:9-10 The Concordia Study Bible notes describe the purpose of the priesthood as to: “1) reflect the holiness of God and that of their high priest, 2) offer spiritual sacrifices, 3) intercede for man before God and 4) represent God before man.” NT believers are all referred to as a “*royal priesthood*.” One of the pillars of the Reformation was the teaching that all Christians are to be acting in the role of priests. They’ve been chosen and are sanctified for the purpose of serving the LORD.

The Sermon Study Book reads, “Martin Luther brought this great scriptural truth to light at the time of the Reformation. He writes, ‘Consequently, since he (Jesus) is the Priest and we are his bothers, all Christians have the authority, the command and the obligation to preach (i.e. proclaim the message of Jesus Christ), to come before God, to pray for one another and to offer themselves as a sacrifice to God” (*Luther’s Works*, Vol. 30, American Edition, p. 54).

A reference to Hosea reminds the readers that it’s the LORD who decides who will be his chosen people not based on works, but on his choosing alone. As the LORD’s chosen, every believer has a purpose, “*to declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*” Peter goes on to add a word about the miraculous transformation that takes place in our lives when God calls us to be his own: not a people of God but now a people of God, people who had not received his mercy but now a people who have received mercy.

2:11-12 This special choosing and grace will have an effect on the earthly life of the chosen. Not only do they recognize they are no longer like everyone else, but they have a godly purpose for their sojourn. This royal priesthood is to glorify God, make him visible to all those around them.

Prof. Valleskey comments: “If 1 Peter is written during Neronian persecution, Christianity is beginning to no longer be regarded as a part of Judaism, and thus not *religio licita* (a legitimate religion) but *religio illicita* (unlawful religion). Thus Christians would be finding themselves on the receiving end of slander, false accusations, etc. Examples of such slander at Peter’s time (and later): 1) a Jewish sect (anti-Semitism); 2) cannibalism; 3) damaging trade...; 4) tampering with family relationships...; 5) turning slaves vs. their master; 6) disloyalty to Caesar (worshiped only 1 God); 7) or could simply be their withdrawing from the pagan practices of their neighbors.”

2:13-17 Peter now instructs these Christians on how to silence the false accusations with their lives. The first category is how to treat the authorities. The word submission is repeated again and again in this section. It’s helpful to understand that “submission” is a concept best explained by Paul in Philippians 2:5 ff. Submission is about putting “rights” aside to follow the LORD’s direction.

Believer, do what is right before the LORD! Silence the accusations with your actions and attitude. The earthly authority is in its place by the hand of God. To show a lack of respect to the government and its representatives is to show a lack of respect to the LORD himself. Respect everyone, even those who are against you. The brotherhood of believers deserves special love.

Prof. Valleskey makes the point that while, in Christian freedom, we don't HAVE to pay taxes, we will. If the government is misappropriating that money, they will have to answer to the LORD for their actions. Don't use Christian freedom as an excuse to satisfy sinful desires (antinomianism).

vs. 17 Summarizes the previous 5 verses. Peter's exhortation to "honor the king" is especially noteworthy in our times when slander is so prominent in political campaigns.

2:18-20 Altering society structure is not the purpose of Christianity. You live as a Christian in your "old" role. Slaves were often mistreated. Some estimates indicate that almost 50% of the people of the day were slaves. This instruction was to a large group of people. Again, submission to the master is urged. It's not Christ-like to deserve mistreatment. A Christian carries an extra burden to demonstrate Christian behavior and attitude in situations where that may be very difficult indeed.

2:21-25 Look to Jesus if you feel mistreated. There was no one who was repaid evil for good like Jesus was. This was God himself who deserved honor, glory, and adoration. Yet he allowed himself to be beaten in our place. Let this be an encouragement to follow Jesus' example of obedience to the Father's will regardless of earthly consequence. The word example is better translated "pattern." The sermon study book explains it this way, "Christ is the Christians' example (lit. "pattern") ... As beginning students learned the alphabet by tracing over a pattern beneath their paper, so Christians are to pattern themselves after Christ. He is the original. We are called to be duplicates in our behavior." (cf. Eph 5:1-2)

3:1-6 “...in the same way” refers to 2:13. Within the family structure, the wife is to submit to her husband “for the LORD’s sake.” This applies even when her husband doesn’t deserve it. Weak and unbelieving husbands may also be brought to Christ through the behavior of a godly woman. Wives should remember that the submissiveness Peter advocates does not imply inferiority any more than submissiveness to a teacher in a classroom implies inferiority. Beauty is not as the world defines in outward appearance, but in a “gentle and quiet spirit....For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their **hope** in God used to make themselves beautiful.”

vs. 6 is the only place in the Bible which uses the word “obey” in the marital relationship context. It would appear that Sarah was an example in that she went over and above submission in the way she honored her husband Abraham. Therefore, she is worthy of being identified as the “mother” of believers as Abraham is the “father.”

3:7 Attention is now turned to the one in the family relationship who has the power and strength to force his will on others, specifically his wife. This is not how a Christian husband behaves. He is considerate and sees his wife as a joint heir. Women of the day were second class citizens with no claim to an inheritance. This is not unlike non-Christian cultures in today’s world. Peter says the husband is to treat his wife as an equal; he should not misuse his strength. Failure to follow this instruction, which is true of all of the Lord’s instructions, will result in a fractured relationship with the Lord.

3:8-14 Lest the believers think living godly lives will protect them from slander or persecution, they are warned it will not be the case. Psalm 34 is quoted to illustrate this is not new for the people of God. As God’s chosen, they don’t have to fear the same things, earthly consequences, they used to fear. We now have a “living Hope” in Jesus to sustain us in all earthly situations!

Jesus, the Living Stone

(1 Peter 2:4 – 3:14)

Questions for Review

1. Why was the temple so important to OT believers?
2. Who determined of what the OT temple would be constructed?

When was it determined and so what???

3. Why is it so important that **Jesus** is identified as the “Living Stone” and the “cornerstone.”? i.e. What is Peter trying to say here?
4. What was the role of the priest in the OT?

How does that apply to Christians today?

5. When thinking back to the Old Testament Bible studies we remember that there were four types of bloody sacrifices. Each one was teaching a truth about restoring our broken relationship with the LORD. Each one was also foreshadowing an aspect of Jesus redeeming work on our behalf on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. The "olah" was the sacrifice which was the one completely burned on the altar. It's translated in the NIV as the "burnt offering." It did however at times refer to other offerings such as the drink offering or the disposal of the spoils of war for the

Israelites. The "olah" was the sacrifice which was offered to the LORD in a manner in which it **could not** be taken back, the lamb would be completely burned up, the drink offering poured on the ground. It represented the irrevocable giving of something to the LORD.

How does that help us understand what "spiritual sacrifices" are? Cf. Ro 12:1, Ph 4:18, Heb 13:15-16

6. What is it that makes Jesus a "stumbling block" to some?
7. What is the contrast to those who stumble?
8. What does this mean to us?
9. How do Christians distinguish themselves in the pagan world?
10. Why do we want to stick out?
11. What does the word "submit" mean?
12. Why do we submit to government authorities?
13. HOW do we submit to government authorities?

14. Is being arrested for a good cause justified?

Give some examples and explain!

15. According to Peter, would the US Revolutionary War have been justified?

What do YOU think?

16. How do vs. 18-20 apply in our lives?

17. How should we “pattern” our lives after Jesus?

What does that mean right here at home?

18. Do we women have a hard time submitting to our husbands?

Explain and give examples...

What can we do about it?

19. Why can it be especially difficult for a Christian wife to submit to a pagan spouse?

20. What advice does Peter give on this issue?

21. What does this mean for those who aren't yet married?

22. What does it mean to have a “*gentle and quiet spirit*”?

Does that come easily to most of us?

What can we do about that?

23. What's the fear Peter is talking about in vs. 6?

How does it apply to us?

24. Do Christian husbands have a greater or lesser responsibility?

What's the instruction to them?

25. Finally, how are we to treat fellow Christians?

How easy is this?

26. How are we to live our lives?

27. What if we suffer for doing good?

How does this apply in our lives?

For Next Time

Read and study 1 Peter 3:15 through chapter 4.

“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord.”

In Your Hearts Set Apart Christ as LORD

(1 Peter 3:15-4:19)

3:15-17 After exhorting his readers to do good in spite of suffering for it, to not fear what others fear who have their sights only fastened on earthly goals, Peter now gives positive direction. “*But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord.*” This is similar to his earlier encouragement to be wholly dedicated to the Lord as the Lord has been wholly focused on the redemption of mankind. In this case though, the Greek conveys an ongoing activity. Setting one’s heart apart for Christ is an ongoing activity.

We should always be ready to defend our steadfast hope in Jesus Christ. The instruction to do this with gentleness and respect is often forgotten. It’s not real easy to win someone to faith in Jesus by insulting him or being rude. By responding with gentleness we rather make them aware of their own slander.

3:18 A wonderful statement of objective justification! Jesus died for the sins of the world, the righteous (singular in the original) for the unrighteous (plural in the original). Peter asks us to bear in mind that this was accomplished even though his earthly body had been put to death. Additionally Jesus then, “*in the spirit*” or with the breath of God, by which he was made alive again, goes to hell and proclaims his victory. No one is exempt from judgment, not even those who were destroyed by the flood thousands of years before Jesus came in the flesh.

3:19-22 In this aside, Peter again comforts his readers by assuring them that just as water was the agent which saved Noah from the judgment on the unbelieving world, so baptism (cleansing) is the agent which saves us from the judgment for our sins. (Noah believed what God said and did as God instructed him, even when it made no sense to the world around him.) Now, whenever our sins trouble our consciences, we can look to our baptism which washed all of those sins away forever. It was for this reason that Martin Luther suggested that we should say “I am baptized” rather than “I was baptized.” We know this to be true because Jesus rose from the dead, his victory

over Satan complete; Satan's power destroyed. This is the same Jesus who has all power and is at God's right hand, waiting for his followers, you and me, to join him.

4:1 The “*therefore*” refers to 3:18. This suffering in the body is not something to be feared. Our earthly bodies are just that, earthly bodies. Just as Jesus' spirit continued after the death of his body, so will ours. BUT those who have been baptized i.e. cleansed of their sins, will be “*done with*” those sins.

The apostle Paul writes, “ You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness” (Ro 6:18), and, “The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God...Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, since the Spirit of God lives in you...” (Romans 8:6 ff).

The hymn writer, H. A. Brorson, puts it this way:

“God's Son has made me free
From Satan's tyranny,
From fear of death and bonds of sin,
From all that plagues my soul within...”

Before our baptism we were slaves to sin, completely unable to follow the Lord and his ways. Since our baptism we are free from the control of sin and now we can try to lead God-pleasing lives. So, Peter encourages us to DO SO!

4:2-3 Peter goes on to explain specifically what changes will occur in our daily lives, now that we've been cleansed of sin. We no longer live as the world does. We now want to follow the example of Jesus. We no longer live as pagans, defined by their preoccupation with self-gratification, indulging selfish fleshly lusts and pleasures.

4:4-6 Once again, Christ-like behavior will alienate you from the world. Don't be surprised. Those who are indulging their bodies will be judged as enemies of God because they

reject Jesus. Even those who lived before Jesus was bodily on earth heard the message and will be held responsible for rejecting that message.

- 4:7-11 In contrast to the pagan, the Christian will be self-controlled and keep his thoughts on the Father's will for his life. Our purpose is no longer self-gratification but love, i.e. agape, and serving others with the gifts the Lord has given each of us. In all things we want to glorify the sovereign God who made us and loves us
- 4:12-16 Again, suffering because you are a child of God is not a shameful or a bad thing. It's the example Jesus set for us. God has a purpose in what he allows each of us. It's always to increase our faith in him, to draw us closer to him. If you suffer because you deserve it, there's no honor in that. Our cross bearing and suffering for Christ's sake also make us more credible witnesses to the gospel. People are more impressed by the testimony of a cheerful sufferer than they are by the testimony of health and wealth advocates. That's what Paul has in mind when he speaks about "the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings" in Philippians 3:10, and again in 2 Corinthians 12:8-10.
- 4:17-18 If God allows this type of controlled suffering among his chosen, to purify them and bring them closer to him, can you just imagine what it will be like for those who choose to remain his enemies for all eternity? Thinking back a minute to the comparison to Noah; it must have been very unpleasant to be building an ark alone for 120 years, to say nothing of collecting all of the animals and living with them for months and months. Think then of how much worse it was for those who perished in the flood. Horror for all eternity!
- 4:19 So, those of you who are suffering for being Christian, turn it over to God and continue to live godly lives.

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(1 Peter 3:15-4:19)

Questions for Review

1. What is Peter saying when he writes, “in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord.”?

This means an on-going activity. How will we make setting apart Christ as Lord in our hearts an on-going activity?

2. Remembering what “hope” is, in what circumstances could the readers of Peter’s letter be asked to defend their hope?

In what similar circumstances could we be asked to “defend” our hope?

3. Why did Peter include the qualifier, “But do this with gentleness and respect...”?

Let’s discuss HOW we, in our own day, can defend our hope with gentleness and respect:

4. What is “objective justification”?

Professor Paul Kelm states in a video lecture series on “Mission and Ministry,” that the reason that Christians WANT to do evangelism, in fact are compelled to do evangelism work, is objective justification. Cf. 2 Co 5:14-6:2 and explain what you understand the points being made by both Professor Kelm and Paul.

5. How is Peter encouraging his readers, including us today, with 3:19-22?

What exactly is, “the pledge of a good conscience”?

6. We are to “*arm*” ourselves with the “*same attitude*” as Jesus. What exactly is that attitude?

7. How will Jesus’ attitude/resurrection then equip us to live different lives?

8. How will our “new” earthly lives now appear?

9. This “new” life will result in a “*heap*” of “*abuse*” on us. How does Peter encourage his readers, including us, to continue in spite of the abuse?

10. Why is it necessary to be “*clear-minded and self-controlled?*”

How does this help us pray?

11. How does love, i.e. agape, cover a multitude of sins? (There are two main applications here; one on our behalf and one on behalf of fellow Christians.)

12. To “*offer hospitality*” literally means to “love strangers.”

To whom does it apply?

How does it apply in our day?

13. One more time, what’s the purpose of RIGHTEOUS suffering?

14. Explain what 4:17-19 means in your life as a Christian today.

For Next Time

Read and study chapter 5 of 1st Peter. Be sure to read the entire letter a couple of times to put these instructions into context. It’ll be a lot easier for us to apply them in our own day then.

Encouragement; Stand Firm, TOGETHER!

(1 Peter 5)

5:1-4 Peter now turns his attention to the church as a whole and to her leaders. Christians were headed for some very difficult times and good leaders would be essential to keep the flock together. It's no mere coincidence that Peter calls to mind the picture of a shepherd with a flock. The people of the day understood the need for good shepherds to lead the sheep to safety. Peter is calling to mind Jesus' description of himself as the Good Shepherd in contrast to the bad shepherds, similar to the contrast described in Ezekiel 34. These leaders have been given a special measure of blessing and are being exhorted to use that blessing in a manner consistent with being a Christian. Follow Christ's example of shepherding! This position isn't about personal gain. Rather it's about serving. It isn't about "lording over." Rather it's about ruling in love as Christ rules. It's about being a Christ-like example to the entire flock.

When your Shepherd appears, (i.e. when you see him in heaven), you'll have the crown that never fades, unlike the earthly Olympic crown made of living foliage which faded within days. Christian leaders too need to keep their eyes on eternity rather than on temporary earthly enticements.

5:5a Young men seem to need a specific warning and call to submissiveness. Is Peter remembering his own less than submissive days while Jesus was still on earth? Who was the one who said Jesus should never suffer and die? Who seemed to have a real hard time understanding that God's means of salvation were not going to be easy for Jesus? Young men tend to pull out swords and try to become the "alpha wolf." Christians of all ages need to learn submissiveness to the Father's will.

5:5b-7 Peter now turns his attention to all Christians. Humility, a detested quality among the Greeks, is a mark of being a Christ follower. Humility is opposite of being proud. Humility is recognizing that all we have and are is a gift from God. Moses referred to himself as the humblest man in the nation. Why? Because he was more aware of

anyone else how powerless he was, how powerful the LORD is. The proud want to take credit in some way for whatever good occurs in their lives.

Recognize that you don't control what suffering comes your way, nor can you control when that suffering will end. God himself will lift you up and sustain you in his time. Whatever worries and cares you have, and we all have plenty of them, let the all powerful Creator God and LORD take care of them. When these worries and cares have served **his** purpose they will end.

5:8-9 *“Be self-controlled and alert.”* Keep your wits about you. Don't be preoccupied with the cares of the world. Keep your mind clear. Peter is using words similar to the ones Jesus used before Peter fell into temptation and denied his Savior three times; *“Watch and pray, so that you will not fall into temptation...”* (Mt 26:41).

Peter goes on to explain why self-control and alertness are necessary, *“Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”* Peter had been devoured (lit. “drunk down”), and knew what he was warning against. In this passage the word translated as “devil” is the one translated elsewhere as “Satan.” It's significant in that “Satan” means “accuser.”

Peter is warning his readers about the *modus operandi* the evil one uses so effectively, when he's *“like a roaring lion”*.

The meaning of this passage became much clearer when we think of lions hunting in Africa. It's not so much the hunting skill of the lion, as the prey the lion targets, that seems to be the focus of Peter's warning. Roaring lions, most often the males, don't do much killing. They rely on the silent females to single out the young, the old, the weak or injured, those who can't quite keep up, those who are distracted by the greener grass; in short those straying from the herd for one reason or another.

In this context then, when Peter calls to “resist him, stand firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings,” I hear him encouraging me to stay with the herd and know it's a large herd which will provide safety. I also hear him saying, “Don't run away from this enemy! He's trying to scare you into much worse danger. Stand and face him. He's like a male lion, all roar, waiting for lionesses to make the kill for him.” James, the

brother of Jesus encourages believers with similar words, “Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

It’s also no mere coincidence that the evil one is here referred to as “the accuser.” We need to ask, “Who is he accusing, and of what?”

5:10-11 Peter answers that question for us in the next verses when he reassures us yet again, “And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm, and steadfast. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.” This God, the source of our hope, is a loving, all powerful God, who is **on our side!** It’s HIS undeserved love for each of us, HIS unmatched strength working for us and through us, and HIS victory over Satan which assures us of the ultimate outcome. We truly have nothing to fear.

5:12-13 These verses, Peter’s closing, were discussed in the introduction. They tell us of Silas, who was Paul’s companion on his second missionary journey and one of the “*leaders among the brothers.*” Also, he was one of those sent from Jerusalem to Antioch with the results of the Council at Jerusalem, and was involved in the writing, and perhaps distribution, of this letter.

These verses also give us the purpose of this letter in Peter’s own words, “*encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.*” After studying the letter more closely and in segments it is recommended to reread it now as one would read any letter, from beginning to end.

The final words remind us one more time of our “chosen” status, our “displaced person” status as long as we’re on earth, and the “peace” which we enjoy with one another and with God, won for us through Jesus’ suffering, death, and resurrection.

Encouragement; Stand Firm, TOGETHER!

(1 Peter 5)

Questions for Review

1. In this last section of the letter why does Peter turn his attention to the church as a whole?
2. Where does he begin?
3. What can we learn from the instructions to the elders:
 - a. about the qualities and qualifications of our leaders?
 - b. about how we, as lay people, should regard and treat them?
 - c. about the heavy responsibility this position carries with it?
4. Why is humility so important among Christians?
5. How does this both comfort and warn us?

6. Just exactly who is the accuser accusing, and of what is he accusing him?
7. How do verses 8-9 apply in our lives?
8. Why, and how do we stand firm against the accuser?
9. With what words of encouragement does Peter close his letter?
10. Why do we need to read these words often?
11. How was the study of 1st Peter helpful to you in your Christian life?