

1 Peter

February, 2006

I Peter

Introduction

Peter was a key figure during the earthly ministry of Christ and in the early days of the church. He preached the bold sermon at Pentecost and had great influence. He wrote this letter to Christians who had been scattered from their homes throughout Roman provinces in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). He was probably addressing mainly Jewish Christians in this letter, but that Gentiles were also in the audience is likely.

Peter's main theme is to encourage believers in Christian suffering. It seems that they were facing opposition to and persecution for their faith. Peter exhorted them to suffer as Christians, pointing to the greatest example for suffering, Jesus Christ. Many scholars place the date for the writing in the 60s A.D., others put it in the 40s. It was written from Babylon (1Pe 5:13). There are differences of opinion on what this Babylon is. Some say it is the actual city of Babylon, other believe it is a code word for Rome.

Chapter-by-Chapter

1Peter 1-Peter reminds these sufferings saints of their standing before God. They are elect, sanctified, and washed in the blood of Christ. They have an inheritance reserved for them in heaven. They are preserved and guarded by the power of God. Though they greatly rejoice in this salvation, they are still suffering right now. Peter reminds them that this suffering is a test of faith, that purifies and makes it more glorious unto the Lord. Peter also reminds the readers of the work of the Old Testament prophets. These prophets longed to know more of this salvation they were prophesying of. We are told that these prophets were ministering to us. We not only can read their prophecies, but also read their fulfillment. In view of this great salvation, Peter instructs us to live holy lives, even as God is holy. We are to love one another from a pure heart. He also reminds us that we believe in God through the power of Christ and His word in our hearts.

1Peter 2-Peter instructs to desire the word of God, as newborn babes would desire milk. This is how the Christian grows. He speaks of Christ, the chosen of God, who was rejected by men. The promise is given that whoever believes on Him will not be ashamed. Christ is precious to those who trust in Him. Peter reminds us that we are a chosen generation, we are royal priests with the task of offering up spiritual sacrifices to God. With our position of being God's priests, we have the responsibility of living lives separate from sin. As part of this holy life, Peter instructs us to submit to government authorities, to honor all men, and to submit to those over us in employment. Peter says it is not a good thing if we suffer for our wrongdoing. But, if we suffer for righteousness' sake, we are to bear it patiently. Peter points out Christ as our example. He suffered terrible wrongdoing, but never lashed back in sinful revenge. He committed judgment to His Father. When we are wronged, we are not to make things even. We commit the situation in

faith to the Righteous Judge.

1Peter 3-Continuing with exhortation for a holy life, Peter gives instructions to husbands and wives. Wives are to adorn themselves, not focusing on outward beauty, but inner beauty. They are to submit to their husbands. Husbands are to dwell with their wives with knowledge, knowing their needs and meeting them. Peter again addresses the issue of suffering, commanding the readers not to be troubled and afraid of their suffering. They are to have a good conscience in suffering, again looking to Christ as the example.

1Peter 4-Peter addressed some who were encountering difficulty with former friends. Their old friends wondered why they didn't engage in the same sinful activities as they used to. This illustrates the change in one's life when they are encountered by God. Peter exhorted the believers to have great love to each other; love covers a multitude of sins. Part of this love is ministering to each other. We have all received gifts from God and we are to use these gifts to benefit each other. Again, Peter gives encouragement to those who are suffering. He told them not to rejoice in their sufferings, because they were partakers of Christ's sufferings. It is an honor to suffer for Christ's sake. There is no better cause to suffer for. We are not to suffer for our own evil doing, but for Christ's sake. The world sometimes tries to make us feel inferior or even guilty for our Christian beliefs and practices, but we are not to feel badly or be ashamed for this suffering. If we suffer in such a way, Peter instructs us to glorify God.

1Peter 5-Peter begins this last chapter instructing the elders. The elders are to feed the flock of God, which speaks not only of preaching the word but tending to their spiritual needs. They are to take the leadership role in the church, not being dictators but good examples to the flock. All are to be clothed with humility, submitting to each other. We are to cast our cares, burdens, and concerns on God, knowing that He cares for us. Peter also warns that we should be sober and vigilant, because the devil roams about looking for someone to devour. We are to resist him with steadfastness in the faith. In closing this book on suffering, Peter promises that the God of all grace will, after they have suffered for a time, make them complete, establish, strengthened, and settled. Suffering is a tool in the hand of an all-wise, all-loving God to benefit and better His people. That must have been a cheering message to a group of suffering saints.

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