

Intro to *1 PETER*

Authorship and Readership: The author of both of these letters is the Apostle Peter. Peter was known for his somewhat overzealous and outspoken personality while he followed the earthly ministry of Jesus. After Pentecost, the combination of his personality with the Spirit of God made for a bold, dynamic, and powerful spokesman for the cause of Christ. Upon the completion of his Pentecost sermon, 3,000 were added to the church that same day. Here, Peter writes to the “strangers scattered,” or literally, the “sojourners of dispersion.” These were Christians who, like Israel of old, were scattered throughout the world, though the readers of these epistles were primarily Gentile, not Jewish, in nature. The sufferings referred to are those which often come to Christians as they live faithfully in a pagan and hostile society.

Greeting / Hope In Suffering (1:1-12)

Peter writes this to a cross section of believers who were undergoing persecution for their faith—a very common occurrence in the early stages of Christianity. He reminds them that the salvation that they have is an inheritance that can never perish and that the temporary season of trial is a time where they are being refined by fire. And that though they have not actually seen Christ, they love Him, and because of the hope that comes from Him, they can be filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy even in the middle of suffering.

A Call to Holiness (1:13-2:3)

To recap Wednesday night’s lesson, the path to holiness first begins with a genuine faith which translates into obedience of the truth and the Gospel. That faith and obedience is manifested in a genuine and sincere love for the brethren which transcends the casual and superficial. True holiness then expands into a non-conformity of the former lifestyle, characterized by negative character traits, such as, malice, deceit, hypocrisy, and envy. In a practical application, Peter encouraged us to “gird up the loins of our minds,” which means to prepare our minds, or to get our minds in gear...mental discipline. The second step is to practice self control, and the third is to live in the hope that we have in Christ Jesus.

A Chip Off Of The ‘Ol Block (2:4-12)

In a bit of theological teaching, Peter establishes the fact that Jesus Christ had become the chief cornerstone. The concept of the cornerstone is derived from the ancient practice of setting the first stone for a structure, and then building a celebration around it. The significance of the cornerstone was that it was the first stone laid, and the reference point from which all other stones would be set. The position of the entire structure was dependent on the position of the cornerstone. Peter calls Christ the living cornerstone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him. And he calls us living stones—hewn from the precious cornerstone—that are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood. We are part of the great big house of God with Christ being that significant chief cornerstone. Our significance is that we are a royal priesthood, a chosen people, a holy nation, a people belonging to God.

Submissive Servanthood (2:13-25)

Despite our high position in the kingdom of God, Peter knew that here on earth, we would always be subject to authorities that we would not always agree with in theory. His word to the body of Christ was to submit ourselves to them for the Lord’s sake. “For it is God’s will that by doing good, you should silence the ignorant talk of free men.” Our character as believers should be that, even in the midst of an oppressive government, we should be submissive servants for the kingdom’s sake.

A Word to the Married (3:1-7)

This idea of submissive servanthood, according to Peter, should even extend to the households. In ancient times, husbands did rule and lord over the women. With the birth of Christianity, writers like Paul and Peter urged husbands and wives to see their roles as one married unit, with each being mutually subject to one another, “heirs with each other” in the bigger picture of God’s kingdom. Also in that context, he encourages that pure beauty should be more inner than outer...that what truly adorns is the “unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in the sight of God.” In the same way that Paul challenged husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church, Peter instructs husbands to show their wives consideration and respect.

Another Word On Suffering (3:8-4:19)

Here Peter gives the persecuted believers a practical word of instruction as to how they are to act, or react, in terms of their treatment. "Do not repay evil for evil, or insult with insult...but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing." And furthermore, to do it with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience. He reinforces this teaching in chapter 4 with a reminder of the sufferings of Christ, and then he gives a final word of instruction, in terms of the practical teaching, with, "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins."

The Young and the Old (5:1-13)

Peter ends this first letter with an exhortation to the older congregation to be shepherds of the flock of God, and he instructs the younger members to respect and to be submissive to those who are older. He instructs all to be clothed with humility, because "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

Intro to II PETER

Building on Faith (1:3-11)

The premise of Peter's second letter is that God, through His divine power, has given us everything that we need for life..." For that reason, Peter encourages us to build some character upon this faith that we profess. Among those character traits he encourages us to work into our lives are goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. And he ends with a promise: "For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

A Reminder (1:12-21)

We have talked in recent weeks at how much of this teaching has been repetitious. It is repetitious for a reason. Peter says, "I will always remind you of these things...because I think it is right to refresh your memory..." These are principles that govern our Christian walk and are important to our daily lives. Until we master them, they all bear repeating. And they are not arbitrary principles, or cleverly invented stories. They came straight from the mouth of God, himself.

Self Destruction of Evil Doers (2:1-22)

One of the certainties of life, Peter says, is the presence of false teachers and deceivers. There will always be those people who will exploit the Gospel and the people of God for their own personal gain. There will always be those who will distort and alter the Word to suit their own motives and greedy desires, and will have no regard for the things of God. Peter says that they will be paid back for the harm that they have done. "These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. They promise freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity."

The Day of the Lord (3:1-18)

Peter ends his two volume dissertation with a discourse on the return of Christ. First, he says scoffers will come. There will be an age of skepticism and apathy, much as their was in the time of Noah. The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, the heavens will disappear with a roar, and the world will experience destruction by fire.

But in the middle of this prophecy, Peter gives us some encouraging practical words. God, he says, is a patient God and not wanting any to perish, but that all would come to repentance. And he instructs the people of God to love Holy and godly lives, as we look forward to this day and pray for its speedy coming. His final word is that you and I grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.