

1 PETER



HOW SHOULD WE THEN LIVE?

Bible Studies for Ashfield Presbyterian Church
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1 PETER 1:1-12: GETTING THE BIG PICTURE

In writing to his audience scattered throughout Asia Minor, Peter was concerned with answering the following question for them: In light of their relationship to the Roman government, how should they live? Peter's answer is that as God's elect, strangers in the world, they are to live honourable and holy lives, they are to endure suffering, and to be respectful of outsiders

DEAR STRANGERS,

1. Read the first and last three verses of this letter. 1:1-3 and 5:12-14. Who's the author and who's his helper?

Circle the regions Peter mentions in v1 on the map of modern Turkey. Note, Peter is writing to people within regional areas rather than to towns or cities.



What's the purpose and desired result of the letter (5:12)?

How does the description of the readers (1:1-2) help explain why they were 'strangers in the world'?

What roles do the three persons of the Trinity play in the lives of believers?

The Father

The Son

The Spirit

APPLYING OUR PRIVILEGED POSITION.

2. **Read 1:3-9.** What have Christians been born into with their new birth?

3. What items here would you list under “already available” to a Christian?

What would you list under “not yet, but glad it’s coming”?

Are some on both lists? Why?

4. How is Christian hope different to ordinary hope?

5. What do trials do to genuine faith (v7-9)?

6. What's the purpose and end result of Christian suffering?

How would these truths help you endure suffering?

Is the ‘praise, glory and honour’ for Jesus or the persevering Christian (v7)?

7. How does the future, as described here, offer you hope?

REASSURANCE

8. **Read 1:10-12.** Old Testament prophets spoke about the salvation in Jesus. How does this salvation become ours (v8-12)?
9. In what ways are Christians special – even when compared to Old Testament prophets and angels?
10. What comfort and strengthening is there in the whole passage for you as you face trials?

PRAYER POINTS

1 PETER 1:13-2:3 GROWING INTO THE FAMILY RESEMBLANCE

1. Think of a Christian you admire. In what ways does that person resemble Christ?

2. **Read 1:13-2:3.** List the actions which God does and those which we are commanded to do.

GOD'S ACTIONS	OUR ACTIONS

3. What characteristics of Christians are described in this passage that would make them different from the world, as “strangers here”?

4. From the five commands Peter gives in 13-15, how would you define “holy”?

5. Choose one of these five commands. If you were to make them a priority for your life, what practical changes would you have to make?

6. Write down three things you have to do tomorrow.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How could you begin to tackle that list with the goal of being holy in all you do?

7. What event in the future motivates holy living now (17)?
8. Why are we to live “in reverent fear” (17)?
9. What events from the past would help the recipients of Peter’s letter appreciate God’s concern for them (18-21)?
10. What contrasts can you see in v21-25 between what is temporary and what is enduring?
11. What reason is given for loving the brothers (22-23)? Why does this make a difference?
12. What is the reason we are to rid ourselves of malice and deceit etc (2:1)? How does this work?
13. Peter links the word of God with salvation and new birth (vv10, 12, 23, 25). In what sense is this word living and enduring?
14. How important is God's word in our struggle for holiness (1:23-2:3)?

What does it do? How?

What, practically, is the attitude we are being encouraged to have towards it?

PRAYER POINTS

Choose one area from this passage in which you struggle. Share it with the group. Pray specifically for each other.

1 PETER 2:4-12: THE POSITION OF BELIEVERS

1. **Read 1 Peter 2:4-12.** From the context, what does it mean to “come to him”?
2. What similarities are there between Christ’s experience and that of his readers?
3. How does belief or unbelief influence the way a person understands Jesus, the ‘living stone’ (4-8)?

What are some of the effects of these differing points of view?

4. What, practically, is involved in being built into a spiritual house?

How do we encourage that process among God’s people?

5. What spiritual sacrifices does the NT encourage us to offer to God?

Rom 12:1

Phil 4:18

Heb 13:15

Heb 13:16

6. God accepts our spiritual sacrifices even though they aren’t offered perfectly. On what basis does God do this?

How does this, practically, affect your attitude in daily serving him?

7. Verses 9-10 remind us of God's purpose for Israel. **Read Exodus 19:5-6.** In what way are God's purposes for the church the same as for Israel?

In what way are they different?

8. How might thinking of themselves in categories of nationhood (9-10) help clarify their identity as Christians and their purpose in living the Christian life?
9. What reasons do the people here have to praise God (vv. 9-10)?

10. In what dark rooms of your life has God turned on a light?

11. "I'm a Christian, but I don't need to go to church. My faith is between God and myself." What do verses 4-10 have to say to the Christian who thinks he can exist as an individual?

12. Verse 11 repeats a now familiar theme in 1 Peter—that Christians are aliens and strangers in the world. How is the new status of these Christians to influence the way they live (11-12)?

13. How might living up to the description of verse 9 cause a Christian to be alienated from the world?

PRAYER POINTS

Ask God to rid you of "all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind."

1 PETER 2:13-3:7: SUBMISSION

Submission is a dirty word. After all, people who submit are "wimps." The world's heroes are guys who won't let anyone push them around - the Rambo types who are ready to take on injustice, who stand up for their rights, who kill, maim and destroy if anyone gets in their way. Businesses run "assertiveness training courses" for their employees that teaches them how to assert themselves instead of being submissive.

As Christians, we're called to be DIFFERENT - especially in the area of submission. The original readers of Peter's letter faced hard times in a number of areas - with many pressures just like the ones we face today. Let's look at Peter's radical advice.

1. In what areas are you most likely to express your opinion or insist on your way? (Politics, social welfare, foreign policy, sporting teams, how to clean the bathroom...)

SUBMITTING TO GOVERNMENT.

2. **Read 1 Peter 2:11-17.** What attitude did Jesus have to human authorities?

What attitude are WE to have to human authorities?

Why? (From verse 13).

3. What is the God-given role of human Governors and Kings?

What is OUR role?

Whose servants are we?

4. How could the teachings of 2:16-17 help the Christian live under an anti-Christian or unjust government?

SUBMITTING TO MASTERS.

5. **Read 1 Peter 2:18-25.** Why are slaves called to submit respectfully even to harsh masters?

Submission is easy with a good and considerate master. But we don't really learn what Christian submission is all about until we're faced, like Jesus, with UNJUST SUFFERING. That's our opportunity to REALLY SHOW THE DIFFERENCE! But note that not all Christian suffering is unjust.

6. What are the connections between Christ's sufferings and a Christian's submission in difficult situations?
7. Verse 23 says that in his suffering, Jesus "entrusted himself to him who judges justly." How might this attitude help you to submit to the necessary suffering that comes?
8. How do you go at submitting in the work place? Be honest!

WOMEN IN MARRIAGE

9. **Read I Peter 3:1-6.** What does Peter refer to in verse 1 when he says "Wives, in the same way, submit to your husbands"? In the same way as WHAT? (hint check out 2:13)

What is the AIM of this wifely submission?

10. Read Peter's description of beauty in verses 3 and 4. Are these the marks of beauty the world teaches us to appreciate?

Are they the marks of beauty that ...

a) you as a man look for? OR

b) you as a woman aim for?

11. Consider verse 5 carefully. What is the connection between putting your hope in God and being submissive to husbands?

Can you see a connection between putting your hope in God and the OTHER areas of submission mentioned in this passage - like our attitude to Government, or to our "masters"?
How can we work this out in practice?

MEN IN MARRIAGE

Husbands need to note carefully that verses 1 to 6 are addressed to wives - don't be tempted to take matters into your own hands and IMPOSE what the passage is saying on your wife, or you'll become one of those "harsh masters" Peter talks about in chapter 2.

12. **Read I Peter 3:7.** How should Christian husbands treat their wives? (look up Ephesians 5:25. Does this answer the question?)

How does the description used of wives help the husband's attitude?

13. What is the usual, sinful, way to treat a "weaker partner"? In what way are Christian husbands to reverse this attitude?

14. What is the result of husbands treating their wives like this?

How does this connection work?

PRAYER POINTS

1 PETER 3:8-22: LIVING WITH SUFFERING

Real life update: Christian persecution is real. Churches are being burnt in Pakistan and Egypt. Christians are imprisoned in North Korea, Burma. There is violence against Christians in Syria. In this study we will be considering the paradox of Christianity. How can a person who suffers for doing the right thing be blessed? It just doesn't seem to make sense.

1. **Read 1 Peter 3:8-22.** Find as many phrases as you can that describe what a Christian ought to be and do.

2. What reasons does Peter suggest for living that way?

3. How does the quote from Ps 34 sum up all that Peter has said in 2:11-3:9?

4. These verses depict the Christian community as a community of humble, loving, compassionate people, who do good in spite of evil. How well do you think we are going in this area?

5. What do you find difficult about this way of life?

What do you find attractive about it?

6. In spite of godly living, Christians may encounter hardship. What counsel does Peter offer for coping with suffering? (13-17)

7. Peter's readers had many good reasons to fear even for their lives, but following on from v12 why should they not fear?

8. How could setting apart Christ as Lord (v15) help you endure suffering?

How will this affect their hopes and fears?

What reasons for hope has Peter already given?

9. What reason does Peter give as to why it is better to suffer for doing the right thing rather than the wrong thing (17-18)?

10. Why might unbelievers be willing to listen to reasons for hope from a person living the way Peter describes (15-17)?

Has this ever happened to you? Were you prepared?

11. Peter puts forward Jesus and Noah as examples of salvation happening in the midst of judgement and hardship. What are some of the similarities between Jesus and Noah?

What was the end result of Jesus' suffering? V22.

12. How was Christ's suffering similar to what Christians can expect?

How can the picture of Christ in this passage bring you hope?

HISTORICAL INSIGHTS.

Following the great fire which destroyed much of Rome in 64AD, the Emperor Nero, to avoid being blamed for the fire himself, put the blame upon the Christians. Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace ...

"Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired." Tacitus. Annals XV, 44.

Pliny the Younger, the appointed governor of Bithynia-Pontus in AD 110/111 wrote to the Emperor Trajan asking whether age, gender or repentance should be considered in punishing those cited for the crime of being Christians. He tells Trajan what his policy was...

"In the case of those who were denounced to me as Christians, I have observed the following procedure: I interrogated these as to whether they were Christians; those who confessed I interrogated a second and a third time, threatening them with punishment; those who persisted I ordered executed. For I had no doubt that, whatever the nature of their creed, stubbornness and inflexible obstinacy surely deserve to be punished."

Trajan, in his reply, approved of Pliny's action.



The Emperor Nero



Pliny the Younger

13. In what ways can we support Christians in the world today who are struggling to hold up under similar kinds of persecution?

PRAYER POINTS

1 PETER 4: CONTINUE TO DO GOOD

1. **Read section 4:1-11.** The “Therefore” in v1 refers back to 3:18. What was Jesus' attitude towards suffering that we are to imitate? See 2:22-23.

How does such an attitude help us cope with suffering?

2. The logic of v1 is most likely this: Christians steel themselves for persecution by taking the same attitude to it as Christ. Then, as a result of suffering by persecution, they learn to be done with sin. What does it mean to be done with sin according to v2?

How might suffering produce this result?

3. In a society where Christians are not persecuted a great deal, what form does suffering for Christ take?

How have you suffered? How has suffering purified, changed, moulded or matured you?

4. From 4:1-6, how is a Christian to be different from a pagan?
5. Our doubts may sometimes taunt us, “Of what use is your faith? God doesn’t protect you. When your time comes, you lie like the rest.” How might 4:4-6 help us deal with those doubts?
6. List the things Peter urges us to do in vv7-11.

In what areas are you doing well?

What connection do they have to the truth that the end of all things is near (7)?

7. How are the realities of judgment (5-7) and Christ’s glory (11) to influence the Christian’s daily behaviour?
8. Spiritual gifts are given for us to serve each other (10). What is a gift you think another member of your group has? How do they use it to serve you?

For what other significant purpose does God give gifts (11)?

How does this happen as you use your gifts?

9. According to 4:12-19, what are some right and wrong ways for a Christian to suffer?
10. In what sense is a Christian's suffering participating in Christ's suffering? (See Jn 15:18-20; Acts 9:4; Mt 25:41-44)
11. How is it possible to rejoice in the midst of suffering?
12. The term *Christian* is only used three times in the New Testament – here in 4:16 and Acts 11:26 & 26:28. Used by outsiders, the word was probably a term of contempt, but to believers it meant *adopted into the family of Christ*. Why might a Christian expect sometimes to encounter suffering because of that name?
13. The conclusion of this section is that the believers should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good (19). What reasons are given for living like this?

PRAYER POINTS

I PETER 5: PERSEVERANCE PAYS

In this last chapter Peter takes the time to address the leaders of the church and impress upon them the importance of their role as example setters. Leadership in any organisation is crucial for a number of reasons. Leaders set the behavioural standard. Their emotional disposition whether happy, moody, serious or otherwise, affects all who are under them. Leaders set the goals. Quality leadership has a defined purpose and heads in the direction most likely to attain its purpose. However leadership is open to misuse, and sadly this misuse of position can often be detected both within the Church and in the community.

1. **Read I Peter 5:1-4.** Peter speaks, in verse 1, to his fellow elders. In what ways did Peter see himself as like the elders he was writing to (vv. 1-4)?
2. From the verses below, what does a literal shepherd's job description consist of?

Psalms. 23:2. You have bedded me down in lush meadows, you find me quiet pools to drink from.

Amos. 3:12. In the same way that a shepherd trying to save a lamb from a lion manages to recover just a pair of legs or the scrap of an ear, So will little be saved of the Israelites who live in Samaria

Ezekiel. 34:8. As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, because my flock lacks a shepherd and so has been plundered and has become food for all the wild animals, and because my shepherds did not search for my flock but cared for themselves rather than for my flock,

3. How should quality Christian leadership go about fulfilling this list in the church?
4. From 5:2-4 complete the comparisons Peter draws between good and bad leaders in the table below. What stands out?

Good leaders	Bad leaders
Serve willingly	Serve out of duty

Christian leadership is not about power or prestige in this life. Leadership is a spiritual gift and as such is to be used for the good of the Christian community.

5. **Read I Peter 5:5-14.** How would you describe humility in twenty five words or less?

6. Humility, like all virtues, can be simulated, and the result is false humility or disguised pride. How can we avoid, and help each other to avoid this attractive substitute?
7. What reasons did Peter give for following each of the commands in verses 5-9?
8. Can you see any connection between submission, humility and anxiety (6-7)?
9. What would replace the fears of Peter's readers as they followed 6-7?
10. The reward of true humility is God lifting you up. Jesus is the best example of someone who was humble and then exalted. Look back at 3:22. But humility doesn't mean we sit back and do nothing. What are some of the actions we should be engaging in, vv8-10?
11. V8 gives us an interesting take on the devil. How is he described?

What does vv8-10 tell us about the devil's power and God's sovereign control?

12. What sources of opposition has Peter already spoken of (2:12, 13-14, 18; 3:1, 16; 4:3-4)?

How do these relate to 5:8?

What is the Christian's defense in this battle? His hope?

13. V9 gives us further advice regarding the devil. By reading between the lines, can you discover one strategy he uses when trying to attack us?
14. Peter's purpose in this letter was to bring encouragement to suffering Christians. He has done this by, 1) constantly comparing our life on earth with eternity to get suffering in perspective, and, 2) by setting before our eyes the example of Jesus, His attitude toward suffering and His glory. The trouble is defining what sort of persecution we Christians in Australia are suffering from. In what ways would direct persecution make living the Christian life easier?

In what ways are wealth and relative security actually harmful to effective Christian living?

15. How does Peter's benediction (10-11) encourage and strengthen you as you seek to live for him this week?

PRAYER POINTS