

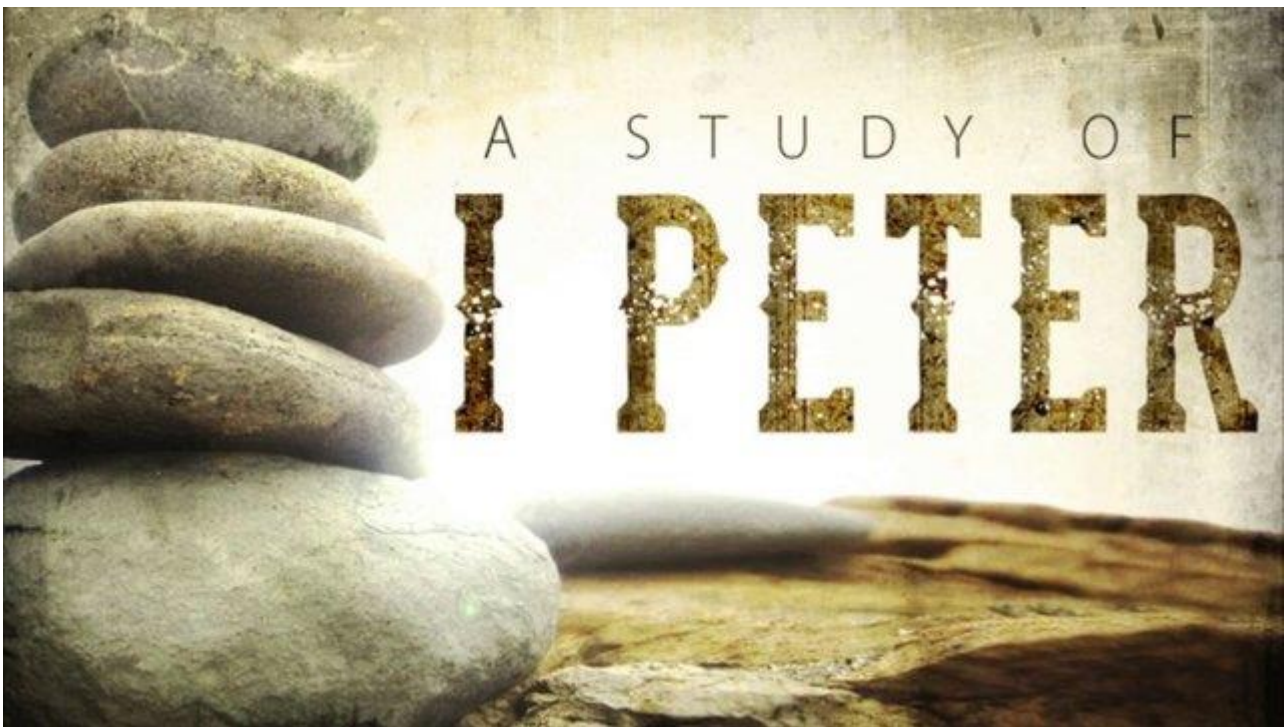


St. John's Wimborne
New Life, Full Life

Home Growth Group

Study Material

Summer 2017



1 Peter: A Call to Stand Fast

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w/c 15 May, 5 June, 19 June, 17 July

additional week: either w/c 3 July or 31 July

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Introduction

Introduction

The Letter of 1 Peter is known as a catholic letter. This simply means that it is a letter addressed to all the Church rather than a particular location. 1 Peter is written “to God’s elect, strangers in the world scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.” (Chap 1. vs.1). All these places can be found today in modern Turkey.

The Author

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ” (Chap.1. vs.1) is the simple way in which the author introduces himself to us, his readers. In Chap.5 vs.1 he addresses the elders as “a fellow elder.” Now we know that Peter was killed between A.D.64 and A.D. 67, so presumably this letter was written in the early sixties of that first century. The letter was most likely sent from Rome, though this is somewhat problematic. The only clue we have is from chapter 5:18 where he speaks of having written it from Babylon, which was probably an alias for Rome.

The Reason for the Letter

To understand the purpose of the letter, we need to begin with 1 Peter 5:12 because it is here that Peter tells us why he wrote it. First of all it is a letter of encouragement. Peter is seeking to encourage us by way of his testimony. He wants to confirm a fact by evidence. In effect, what he is saying is that his testimony does not make something true. But rather, his testimony is confirming what is true! Peter in essence, is seeking to move us away from a form of Christianity that is so experience centred that it misses the truth. At the heart of things, he is saying: “I write to encourage you, to send you ahead by testifying to the truth.” So we need to

ask: “What is the truth?” Peter’s answer is: “The true grace of God.” If it were not for that, there could be nothing to testify to. So Peter does not want us to misunderstand our experience for the grace of God. Rather, he wants our experiences to result from the grace of God and thereby to testify to it!

Analysis

What follows is a breakdown of the First Letter of Peter in outline, so as to give us the main areas in which we can begin to understand 1Peter.

1. Greetings – Chapter 1: 1-2
2. The privileges and responsibilities of salvation – Chapter 1: 3 - Chapter 2: 10
3. A Christian’s submission and God’s honour – Chapter 2: 11 – Chapter 3: 12
4. The suffering and persecution of Christians – Chapter 3: 13 & Chapter 5: 11
5. Final Words – Chapter 5: 12 - 14

We will study the letter following the main chapter divisions.

The Main Themes in 1 Peter

1 Peter is a warm and kind pastoral letter, full of encouragement. Peter’s words are addressed to Christians who are scattered over a wide area. These Christians share a common faith with Christians everywhere and face common problems. Their basic problem is how to live for Christ in the midst of a society that is ignorant of the true God. At once we can see parallels to our own situations. The Christians are often misunderstood and subjected to cruel and harsh treatment. Peter’s pastoral purpose is to help these young believers to see their temporary sufferings in the full light of the coming eternal glory. So in the centre of all these

discouragements, Peter aims to help us focus again on the sovereign God who will uphold them.

Jesus Christ, by his patient suffering and glorious future destiny, has given us an example to follow and is also our living hope. Peter doesn't try to hide from us the difficulties of living in a pagan society and the fact that it will require humility and submission. The picture he paints in this letter is that the immediate future of the church will be one of increased conflict with the world. But also he tells us that God will provide the love that will enable His church to be faithful and to grow into maturity.

Book Recommendations

Below are two books that you may find helpful in the preparation of Bible studies on the First Letter of Peter. I believe that as we read and prepare to lead Bible studies, it is important for us to keep in mind our aim, which is to communicate to others our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The studies should seek to encourage others to have this same goal and aim.

Whenever possible, please use my notes as a guideline. The questions that follow the notes are there in case you do not have time to formulate your own questions and as a check to make sure you have not misunderstood the passage. Please feel at liberty to revise and rewrite these questions in your own words. To this end, the books mentioned below will assist you in your own thinking as you seek to lead a study. So please think about buying one of them as an aid. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses and which type of book you choose will depend on your likes and dislikes as a Bible student. However, I would recommend that you buy at least one commentary on 1 Peter, so

as to assist you and the others who will be preparing and leading Bible studies this summer.

My Recommendations:

1. **1 Peter** by Wayne Grudem. Published by IVP
(Tyndale New Testament Commentaries)

A very thoughtful and scholarly book that will certainly provide you with a thorough analysis of the Bible passages that we will cover. The book may prove particularly helpful when dealing with difficult aspects of this letter. However, its weakness is probably in the area of application.

2. **The Message of 1 Peter** by E. P. Clowney. Published by IVP
(The Bible Speaks Today)

This book has a good balance between analysis of the text and practical application. On balance I would give this very serious consideration if you don't have any commentaries on 1 Peter.

Group Bible Study

The priority of any Bible study is to seek to understand what the Bible is saying to the people to whom it was first written, as well as to understand it for our particular day and generation. So, the top priority is first to understand the text and then to make it meaningful and relevant. Here are some pointers to help you as you study the Bible:

PRAY

Our preparation for any Bible study should begin and end with prayer. We need to ask God, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to guide us as we read the Bible and prepare for a study.

ASK

In order to understand the Bible properly, we need to keep in mind six important questions:

- 1) **Who is speaking?** Everything in the Bible was written by men who were inspired by God. Though every writer of the Bible was inspired by God, sometimes the writers record words which come from the hearts of evil men. So, dealing with the question “Who is speaking?” will help us to know whether the words we are reading are words we should obey today.
- 2) **Who is spoken to?** We need to realise that not every command that comes in the Bible is a command for us today. For example, the command by God to Noah to build an ark is obviously pertinent and relevant for Noah, but not for us.
- 3) **When is the Bible writer speaking?** In answering this question, we will need to make a distinction between those who are living under the law and those who live under the guidelines and principles as outlined to us in the New Testament, The Way of Christ. Therefore, the principles we see with regard to worship in the Old Testament have a relevance to us, but we need to read them in the light of the

New Testament. It is always important to bear in mind that one part of the Bible can often help us to understand another part.

- 4) **What type of language is the writer using?** The language used is usually one of two types: either literal or figurative. Sometimes both will be mixed together in one passage – for example, Jesus is spoken of as the Lamb of God, which is clearly a figurative form of speech. However, He is also described as the one who takes away the sin of the world, which is literally true for those who believe. So, Jesus was not an actual lamb, but He was the one who became the offering for our sins.
- 5) **What are the conditions or circumstances in which this writing is given?** If we can get to grips with the particular circumstances the writer is facing when he writes, it helps us to understand what he is saying.
- 6) **What is the context of the Bible passage?** Think about what has just been said and what is about to be said in the particular book of the Bible, as well as the context of the Bible passage within the whole of the Bible.

The Bible is indeed God's inspired word – it is His revelation to all mankind. So, in order for us to understand the Bible we must seek to study it properly. Only then can we “*correctly handle the word of truth*”. If we keep these six simple questions in mind as we prepare our study, we will find that we can indeed get to grips with God's word.

PLAN

For those who are preparing and leading a study, the following steps should prove helpful:

- 1) Try to break the passage into parts or sections so that you can clearly divide up the passage you are looking at.

- 2) Think about what you don't understand in the passage and therefore what others might not understand as well. About which parts do you need to gain more background and information? Be ready to deal with puzzles about which people may ask.
- 3) Having broken the passage up into sections, we then come to thinking about questions. You can use those that are in this book. However, you may want to write your own, which of course is perfectly all right. Questions can be one of three types:
 - a. **Understanding.** The first type of question should be aimed at trying to draw out our understanding of what the passage is saying.
 - b. **Significance.** Only once we have begun to understand the passage can we move on to questions that try to highlight the significance of the passage in the light of the particular book or letter, and of course against the backdrop of the whole Bible.
 - c. **Application.** Then we move on to questions which apply to the situations we are facing today.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

- Do make use of clergy, commentaries and other Christians who have a maturity which you can rely upon when you are seeking to tackle Bible passages.
- It will sometimes prove helpful to have more than one translation as this will give you some fresh insights into the verses on which you are focusing.
- As we come to study the Bible we need to keep in mind that all the books of the Bible have one great theme: that is, God's plan to save mankind from its sins through Jesus Christ.

- Fundamentally, make sure that whatever you do, you seek to do it to honour and glorify God.

Let us not forget:

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Study One – Hope Focussed

1 Peter 1: 1-25

God's Plan Of Salvation

Peter begins by using his name in its most common New Testament form. As is common in the other Letters of the New Testament, Peter first identifies himself, then identifies to whom the letter is written and finally gives a word of greeting. As we can see from the opening verse, the letter is addressed to “God’s elect”. (In Biblical teaching election is a central theme and the foundation of spiritual blessing. No believer should ever feel threatened by the doctrine of election because it is always presented in the Bible as a ground of comfort). Peter then announces some basic themes of his letter in verse 2 – “foreknowledge of God the Father”, “sanctifying work of the spirit” and “obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood”. Each of these themes will be expanded and developed later. As you will see, Peter is reminding his readers here that we have a triune faith which is based upon the work of a triune God. (Leaders might find that some of these terms may need to be explained to the group.)

The first opening section of Peter’s letter concerns salvation. This term occurs repeatedly in this opening section (see vss. 5,9 & 10 and chap 2 vs. 2). The basic meaning of the word salvation is either deliverance or preservation. In vs. 3 & 4 Peter talks about the nature of salvation as being new birth according to the mercy of God and this, for the writer, evokes praise for God the Father, who is the source of salvation. Peter not only thinks in terms of the present but also in terms of the future.

God has not made and will not make the Christian life easy (vs.6). However, the trials to which Peter refers are only for a short time

and are through necessity. He then goes on to describe God as a goldsmith who allows the Christian to undergo fiery trials in order that our impurities of self-centeredness, anger etc. will be burned out of our lives, so that we might reflect more fully the Lord Jesus Christ. The norm for the Christian is to be radiant, to be excited about his faith and to have a desire to share that faith with others. This is the way these exiled Christians were and the way that God wants you and me to be.

The “therefore” at the beginning of verse 13 directs us back to the previous section, which is the basis of the commands that now appear in these verses. The general meaning is that salvation must issue in a life of holiness, reverence and love. This section opens with this superb phrase: “prepare your minds for action.” The picture here is of a man gathering up the folds of his long garment and tucking them into his belt, so that he can move freely and quickly. For Peter, the Christian’s lifestyle is not to conform to the desires of our former way of life that have kept us from God. Peter wants us to encourage Christians to control their desires rather than be controlled by them. Peter, in this opening chapter, calls us to be holy because God is holy. The basic idea which underlines holiness in the Bible is that of separation from all that is profane. (Romans 12: 1-2).

In verses 7-21 we are warned that God is both father and judge. For someone to call themselves “a Christian” does not mean that all will be well for them in the judgment. The Christian is a person who is being changed by the love and grace of God as they walk in the good works which are evidence of that love at work in their lives. (Ephesians 2: 10).

Finally, Peter adds to the command to be holy and to have reverence for God, with the command to love! This command is

encouraged in two ways; firstly, “by obeying the truth” and secondly by reminding us that we have been born again. Peter here wants to encourage the Christians to love fellow Christians purely and fervently. Love for non-Christians is not in view here. The section closes with a quotation from Isaiah 40: 6-8, which is there to underline the character of God and Peter has stressed in the statements he has been making.

The passage can be broken into six sections:

1. Greetings – verses 1&2
2. The praise of God for salvation – verses 3-9
3. The prophecy of salvation – verses 10-12
4. A life of hope and holiness – verses 13-16
5. A life of reverence before God - verses 17-21
6. A life of love – verses 22-25

Questions

Opening Up: Helping us to think about real life: God's people have every confidence in our future inheritance. What views do your friends and family have about heaven? How important does heaven seem to be to them? How does it seem to Christians you know?

1. How are God's people described in the letter? Why does Peter choose these terms? (v1) In what sense should the truth of God's election (being chosen by God) be a source of immeasurable comfort to us? (v2)

2. How has new birth come about and what does this new birth lead to? (v3-5) What encouragement do we have from the promise about our future salvation? (v3-5)

3. What is the aim of our faith? What shall we see when we attain it? According to Peter, what is the focus behind some Christians' experience of suffering and persecution? (v6-9)

4. In particular how have trials and temptations you have experienced supported or challenged your faith?

5. In what ways should "hope" make an impact on our current Christian experience? (1:13, 21) What distracts us from our final goal? How does v13 help us to "re-tune" so as to be in step with God and his word?

6. Peter describes a greater longing for the Christian. How might our daily lives reflect this? (v14-16) What does a life imitating God's holiness look like? (see Lev 19:2ff.) And how might the Christian fear God? (v17-19)

7. How have God's people been released from God's judgment? At what cost? How are we encouraged? (v18-20) Take time to consider the cost. How should this impact the way in which we live? (v17-20)

8. What has happened to believers in 1:22? And what is Peter looking for in their life together? How does v22 relate to v23-25? Is there a relationship between the Spirit of God and the word of God? (1:12, 23-25)

9. What are the main features of God's word revealed in v23-25? Why does Peter include them? What new things do we discover through the Old Testament quote in v23-25?

Study Two – Somebody Up There Likes Me

1 Peter 2: 1-25

Growth in Salvation

In this study we find out how Peter's thoughts flow progressively through the section. Peter uses a variety of images to describe the Christian life. He begins by speaking about stripping off old habits like garments and then compares Christians to babies. Finally, he compares them to living stones in God's temple, a chosen and holy priesthood.

Peter, in the previous section, had spoken of the gift of salvation, which is ours if we believe. This gift of salvation we have but tasted, and we will only know its fullness when Jesus comes again. Consequently, he has called us to rise above the values and standards of the world in which we find ourselves.

Peter describes a new Christian as a new-born baby. The baby is a picture that belongs to a family. Most of this section teaches us about the church. Peter uses many different pictures to describe the church. They are all pictures used in the Old Testament to describe the Jewish people. The Christian church, we will see, is the true successor to the Jewish nation. We are the new Israel!

The picture used here by Peter contrasts considerably with most people's idea of what a church is! Peter gives us the picture of a fellowship to which every true Christian belongs and to which God intends all to be active members (verses 9 and 12).

This section (verses 11-15) deals with some practical implications of what it means to be God's people in a hostile world. Christians are only in the world - they are not of it. Therefore, they are not to derive their values from what is transitory. Instead, Christians are

to have a noble lifestyle in the non-Christian world. In verses 13&14, submission becomes the key theme. The reason for this submission is expressed in the phrase: “because of the Lord.”

In v16 Peter addresses Christians as free because the service of God is freedom. Here, Peter picks up what Christ himself said: “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin”. (John 8:34) Then Peter sums up the social obligations of the Christians in four commands:

1. Honour all men
2. Love the brotherhood
3. Fear God
4. Honour the King

In these last two commands; Peter has in mind the confrontation that took place in Acts 5v29 when he said we must obey God rather than men.

The suffering referred to in verses 19&20 is probably not specifically persecution. Peter is reminding Christians that if they do suffer, they ask to suffer for what is right. The great example is Christ himself – v21, who suffered for you. Peter concludes by telling us that the purpose of the death of Christ is to produce new life in the believer. By the means of Christ’s death on the cross, whoever comes to him ends his old life and begins a new one devoted to righteousness.

Analysis of the passage:

1. Growth through the pure milk – Chapter 2 verses 1-3
2. Participation in the temple and priesthood – verses 4-10
 - a) Christ the rock and the Christian living stones – verses 4-8
 - b) The nation of royal priests – verses 9&10
3. The noble life and God’s glory – verses 11&12
4. Submission to civil authority – verses 13-17

5. The submission of household slaves – verses 18-20
6. The example of Christ's submission – verses 21-25

Questions

Opening Up: This next chapter helps us think about the role and resolve of God's people so that we see our meaning and purpose. How do we use "labels" unfairly or unkindly today? How do Christians often get "labelled" by the world? Christians should stand out in society as lights in the darkness. In what ways can we do this? What are the challenges in being a Holy People?

1. What delays growth in the Christian life? What does Peter encourage as a Christian response? (v1) Thinking about the end of the last study what do you think "pure spiritual milk" (1:22-2:3) is referring to?

2. What could loving one another "deeply from the heart" mean? (1:22, 2:1) How can we encourage one another to feast on God's word? (2: 2,3)

3. Why is Jesus described as a "living stone"? (1:4, 6) What sort of building is God constructing and what is its purpose? (v4-6) What different reactions do people have to this stone? (v6-8)

4. Why are different titles given to God's people in the passage? What is the significance of every Christian being part of a holy and royal priesthood? (v5, 9) Does "declaring God's praises" refer to singing, evangelism or something else? (1:9-10)

5. In what way do we see a contrast between the way in which God's people are described in 2:9-10 and 2:11-12? In particular describe the types of activities Christians ought to be linked with? (2: 11-12)

6. To whom should Christians submit? What should our attitude be to national and local government? (2: 13, 14) In what ways can Christians be better at impacting our society? (2: 15,16)

7. How might this passage help our church family make more of a gospel impact on our surrounding society?

8. What is to be the basic attitude of servants to their masters? (2: 18-20) How might teaching to first century household servants apply to twenty-first century employees? (2: 18-20)

9. In what ways is Christ to be an example to us? (2: 21-23) Why does Peter preach the message of the cross to Christians? (2: 21-25)

Study Three – Skin Deep

1 Peter 3: 1-22

Introduction

In this section we deal with a point of great contention in the 21st Century church. Namely, husbands and wives and their relationships. The Biblical understanding of the relationship between men and women continues to be at the heart of a great debate. Our challenge is to listen carefully to God's word. It is important that, as Christians, we do not pass over difficult parts or commands given in the Bible that do not seem to fit in with today's current fashions. As Christians, we must try to submit ourselves, our relationships and our church to the authority of God's word.

It is likely that in Peter's day there were more women in the church than men, and more women with non-Christian husbands than men with non-Christian wives. So, with this background we can see why Peter spent far more time addressing wives than husbands.

(verses 1-6) The godly wife will **be submissive** to her husband. These are challenging words for the 21st century. This teaching by Peter on submission is not a reward for the husband's good conduct; but rather it is a command from God. This teaching about submission was appropriate to a first century married woman who had just become a Christian. Unsurprisingly she had questions about her faith. Like "Should I leave my husband?" or "Must I change my behaviour to him?" or "Am I better than him because I am a Christian?" In the first century it would have been an outrageous thought for a wife to have a different faith to her

husband. Women who became Christians before their husbands needed guidance and help in how to live.

Peter makes it plain that submission in the home would shadow the same principles of submission already covered regarding our relationships towards government and our employers. Peter is explaining that submission must impact our actions and our hearts as a demonstration that we have surrendered our heart to Jesus (1 Peter 2:21-25).

The call for submission is not only a call for love and thoughtful action. It is a call to submit to authority. The ancient Greek word translated *submission* was used outside the New Testament to describe the submission and obedience of soldiers in an army to those of superior rank. It literally means, 'to order under'. Yet submission to authority can be completely harmonious with *equality* in regard to importance, self-respect, and honour. Jesus was subject to both his parents and to God the Father but was not lower than either of them. So let me say plainly the command that wives are to be subject to their husbands must never be used to imply inferiority in personhood or spiritually. Therefore submission in marriage shadows the same principles as submission in other aspects of life. We submit to God's appointed authority as our duty before God, unless that authority leads us to sin. In that case it is right to obey God rather than men (Acts 4:19-20).

The phrase "in the same way" in both vs. 1 and vs. 7 points us back to Chapter 2: 13. Christian wives are not to be in subjection like slaves, but rather the principle of Christian subjection to God's word relates to every class and every situation. One of his main themes here in this passage is that of Peter wanting the witness of a Christian to have such an impact as to win their partner over for

Christ. For this manner of life to be effective, Peter sees that it must be inward rather than outward. Mankind constantly makes superficial judgements but the Lord looks at the heart. When Peter says that a woman's beauty should not be from outward adornment, he is not condemning fashion, makeup etc. but merely pointing out that a woman should be attractive chiefly because of her beautiful inward nature. (See Proverbs 11: 22). To underline his teaching, Peter turns to the Old Testament and gives us the example of Sarah. The chief characteristic of this woman was that she was holy because she was set apart by God.

Peter's instructions in verse 7 to Christian husbands are brief. Within their relationships, Peter wants Christian husbands to do everything possible to foster the spiritual life of the home. A harsh or unthinking Christian husband could cause a hindrance to a family's spiritual growth. The woman is called "the weaker partner" and this simply means that the woman has less physical strength.

The "finally" shows that verses 8-12 are a summary of the teaching so far given but the ideas it contains leads Peter to go on to further teaching. The summary contains five charges for Christians:

1. Like-minded
2. Suffering together
3. Loving towards fellow Christians
4. Tender hearted
5. Of a humble mind

In verse 9, we are called to have a forgiving spirit. Note the reciprocal arrangement Peter speaks of. If we forgive those who insult us and do evil against us, so bestowing a blessing upon them, God will bless us in like manner. If we refuse to forgive, God will not forgive us. Peter's major emphasis in this letter is on the

Christian response in the face of persecution. Peter longs to encourage our inner life as he covered earlier in the chapter (3: 4-8). This is now Peter's chief concern. The challenge that Peter presents to us is that of standing up for our faith. We should be prepared at any time to give an account of the faith that we have within us. When we define our faith we should do so with self-control and gentleness (verse 16). This is hard because our antagonists will usually do their best to upset us. It may be God's will that you suffer for your faith. When it happens we must remember that it is better to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. The first brings God's blessing, the second his judgement! Peter talks about Noah and his Ark and uses here a picture of Christ's plan for salvation and his return.

Noah and Preaching to the Spirits

Introduction

Between these two calls to suffer come verses 18–22. The main point is to help us get ready to suffer with Jesus for doing what is right, not for doing what is wrong. Peter's intention is to help us equip ourselves with the faith to suffer for Christ and his kingdom. Now v19 raises the important topic of what happened to Jesus after his death. What we see is that Jesus went and preached! As we read these verses a number of questions may well come into our mind:

- 1. Who are the imprisoned spirits?*
- 2. What is their condition?*
- 3. What was said and proclaimed?*

When we reflect on these verses we can see there are a number of different approaches to how they may be understood. At this stage allow me to offer you some different approaches:

There are some writers who believe that this is a description of the preexistent Christ preaching through Noah to those imprisoned in their sin in the time of Noah's generation. This places the passage firmly into the past!

A different group of writers believe that it refers to the time between Christ's death and resurrection and that Christ went to a place of the dead (or to hell/hades) where he preached to Noah's generation imprisoned there. Another group of writers believe the statement concerns the preaching to the fallen Angels, who are closely linked with Noah's generation in Genesis 6: 1-3 (where the sons of God are understood as angels). It is further picked up in 2 Peter 2: 4-6. The preaching may have been during the three days or during the Ascension.

All approaches have problems and there is no simple answer that fits. It seems that in the New Testament Greek there was no idea of the spirits being spoken of in these kinds of terms; that is as dead people. And nowhere is it used in this way across the New Testament. Normally references are either to good or bad angels. (Matthew 12:45, Hebrews 1:14).

I must say that at this stage it seems unlikely that prison is referring to bondage as a result of sin. This would seem unlikely as it would introduce a rather different subject from the one of encouragement and victory which is Peter's focus. What also seems odd at this stage is why would Noah's generation be singled out? However, if it refers to the fallen Angels, then it may be a further example of Christ's total power (v22) over those who break the law and cause the people of God to suffer. However, the conclusion we come to about prison will determine our understanding of what was preached.

If the preaching referenced here is a reference to preaching the gospel to bring salvation then two issues arise:

Were the souls of the dead the recipients of the proclamation, then that would imply there is a second chance to turn to Christ! This would be contrary to what the rest of the Bible teaches. (Luke 16: 25 & Hebrews 9:27).

Why would it be relevant for the fallen angels if they are not the recipients of the grace of Christ's atoning death. (Hebrews 2: 16).

Rather than this being the gracious offer of the gospel to the spirits, I think it's more likely that this preaching is to be understood in the straightforward way of proclaiming, that is preaching the Word, the fact that Christ is Lord and is at the right hand of God and has all power (v22).

It's certainly not possible to be dogmatic when interpreting this section of the Bible. The most generally accepted view, and the one which most easily fits the context of encouragement, is that in Christ's resurrected state he proclaimed his victory and power to the fallen Angels.

What then is the connection of Baptism to the flood? As the flood waters manifested God's judgment in the days of Noah, so too is the water of baptism a visible reminder of God's judgment today. If we were to face this judgment alone, we would be destroyed. But if by faith we are linked with Christ, we will pass through it safely just as Noah's family did by identifying with him and entering the ark. For most of history it has not been safe to be a believer. Being a Christian means suffering and Baptism links us with his suffering.

Five things to take away:

Remember that Christ suffered

Christ won and brought us safe to God

Recall the days of Noah and God's saving work

Look to Jesus Christ at God's right hand ruling with power

It reminds us that Baptism saves because of faith in Christ

The analysis of the passage:

1. The submission of Christian wives- verses 1-6
2. The responsibility of Christian husbands – verse 7
3. A call to righteous living – verses 8-12
4. The blessing of suffering for righteousness – verses 13-17
5. A pattern of Christ's suffering and exultation – verses 18-22

Questions

Opening Up: What do most women want in our world? What do most men want in our world? What might a Christian woman with a non-Christian husband be likely to want?

1. What sort of behaviour or character is Peter looking for amongst these women? (3:1-4) How might we give worth to the qualities described in v4 as better than those in v3?
2. In particular how might "a gentle and quiet spirit" be of "great worth in God's sight"? (v4)
3. How does the story from Genesis of Sarah in v5-6 support Peter's argument? In particular what two factors should husbands consider about their wives? How should they be affected practically by this?
4. In what ways might v7 be describing the equal but different characteristics of a husband and wife? In what ways might inconsiderate behaviour hinder the husband's prayers? (v:7,12) How does Peter's guidance clash with modern views in our society?

5. Peter quotes from the Old Testament Scriptures about the importance of keeping our tongues from evil. (see James 3) When and how are you tempted into evil talk?

6. What is evil? How does Peter want Christians to respond to evil? What does he want them to avoid and what does he want them to do? (v9-11)

7. What sort of opposition were these Christians facing? (v14-16) How does Peter support Christians so as not to be overcome with fear when facing oppression? (v14,15)

8. What happened to Christ after His death? Where did He go? What did He do? (v18-19) In the context of persecution, why is it helpful to hear of Christ's work after His death (resurrection?) in v19, 22? In the context of suffering, why is it helpful to be given the example of Noah? (3:20-21)

9. What have we learnt from this passage to help us to face persecution with confidence? When do you find it tempting to join in ungodly behaviour? How does going to church help us?

Study Four – Two ways to Live

1 Peter 4: 1-19

Death and Life

In this letter, the death and suffering of Christ are seen as the motivation to right conduct. Peter here compares the pre-conversion behaviour of Christians to what it should be now. He reminds us of different gifts that God has given us as manifestations of “His love”, to help us as a community to live up to our calling.

Peter now gives a twofold purpose for Christians arming themselves with Christ’s attitude. In v 2 – firstly “he does not live the rest of his earthly life for human desires” and secondly, “for the Will of God.” Here the ruling principle is the Will of God. Notice how these two commands are both positive and negative. See also that Christ is the doer of God’s will. He always sought to please his Father. In verses 4 and 5, the Christian lifestyle of sober, godly living, is a condemnation of the values of pagan society. (See Luke 15: 13 and following). The Christian today is supported in his stand against the ungodly life by the basic truth which Peter reveals here, namely that of the coming judgement.

In the second part of this passage, verses 7-11, Peter goes on to speak about life. In common with the rest of the New Testament the end, or final salvation, is set before Christians to stimulate us to faith and also to encourage us when we face adversity or difficulty. In verse 8, Peter goes on to speak about agape love. Agape love is capable of being commanded, because it is not primarily an emotion but rather a decision of the will leading to action. For this, Peter leads us on in verses 10 and 11 to hospitality. Hospitality is not a one-way virtue. Every Christian is in

some way capable of ministering to others. As Christians, we need to be exploring the gifts that God has given us. This might be a useful area of exploration for your group. The purpose of mutual Christian service is that through Jesus Christ God will be glorified. Serving our fellow Christians seeks to glorify God, because people will praise him for His love coming to us through Jesus and through His followers. Peter closes this section by adding a beautiful doxology which Peter adds.

The next part of the chapter begins with “Dear Friends.” This marks the beginning of a new section. This is a phrase that Peter uses in 2 Peter. (See 2 Peter 3: 1). In this section, Peter turns to the theme of suffering. Suffering is not to be regarded as something unusual to Christian experience but rather a refining test. This is a theme that Peter has picked up from an earlier chapter – Chapter 1. In Verse 13 Peter tells us that the usual response of a Christian confronted with suffering and persecution, is sorrow and shock. But Peter tells us that the Christian is to rejoice because he is participating in Christ’s suffering. (See Acts 5 : 41 and following). In verse 14 he moves on to link us up with Jesus. Jesus said: “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad.” (Matthew 5: 11 - 12.) Here Peter is showing us how the Lord’s words are being fulfilled. To underline this he points us to turn and think about Stephen the Martyr. He is described as a “man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 6: 5 and following).

However, the promise of the blessing of the Spirit resting on believers is not universal. Not all who suffer are sharing in Christ’s suffering. Much suffering is the punishment or consequence of sin. In vs. 16 we are told that to suffer as a Christian is not to be put to shame. Here Peter is recalling his own shame at his betrayal

of Jesus. (Mark 14: 66-72.) In verses 17 and 18, Peter moves us on to the theme of judgement, contrasting the judgement of believers with that of unbelievers. The judgement of believers, of course, is not the punishment of their sins, which have already been dealt with by Jesus. Rather, the preliminary judgement relates to Christian suffering in the 'here and now'. The final doom of those who have been disobedient, we are told, is certain to follow. The conclusion to this section is that Christians who are suffering according to the divine will (Chapter 1: 6 and 3: 17) are to commit themselves to God.

The analysis of the passage:

1. Death to the Old Life - verses 1-6
2. Life for Glory of God – verses 7-11
3. Comfort – verses 12-19

Questions

Opening Up: What advice would you give to someone about to enter a marathon or climb a mountain? We are all living lives under pressure. How might we encourage one another not to get caught up in this world's pressures? What stops you praying? Reading your Bible or coming to Church or sharing your faith?

1. How is the example of Jesus a model for us in these circumstances? (4: 1-2) How do you compare the experience of the Lord Jesus (3:18 & 4:1) and the suffering Christian (4:6)

2. What sort of opposition were these Christians facing according to this passage? (v3-4) What assurance do these

words in v5 give to Christians under pressure? In our society, are you more likely to come under pressure because of what you believe as a Christian or how you behave as a Christian? (4:3-4)

3. In what ways can keeping an eternal perspective enable us to deal with these present sufferings? (4:5-6)

4. According to 4v5-8, of what things about the end should we be mindful?

5. Are there areas in your church life where there could be greater depth of love for one another? (v8-9) Why might Peter see the need to encourage the exercise of hospitality without grumbling? (v9)

6. What is the purpose of using God's gift(s) to serve others? How might we identify gifts of speaking and serving in the church family (4:10-11)? In what ways does Peter envisage God's grace being administered to other believers? What is the outcome of using gifts in the church family (v11)?
7. In what ways is the whole Christian life simply a matter of following Christ? (v12-13) On what grounds can Peter encourage suffering Christians to rejoice? (v13)

8. How does knowing the ending help us keep suffering in perspective? (v13,17-18) How should Christians respond to suffering when it comes? How might we endure it? (v19

Study Five – Because... Because...

1 Peter 5: 1-14

The People of God

The “Elders” are the leaders of the local congregations. This particular passage is specifically directed to elders. However it is still relevant to all Christians today. The basis of Peter’s encouragement to the elders is threefold:

1. He is their fellow-elder (John 21: 15-19)
2. He is a witness of Christ’s suffering
3. He is a sharer of the coming glory

In verses 2 & 3, Peter’s command is to “shepherd” God’s flock. The comparison of God’s people to a flock of sheep and a Lord to a shepherd is a recurring picture in the Bible. God has given us, brothers and sisters in Christ, a special duty to help feed, protect, love and lead them. This is especially true to those of us who lead a small group or undertake ministry in the church family. In Verse 4, Peter tells us that the reward for elders who are faithful is that they will receive a crown of glory that does not fade away. Here we find Peter using a comparison between the crown that Christ received and the crown the elders will receive on that day.

Verse 5. When Peter speaks of young men, this may well be referring to young members or to all young people, (spiritually) in the congregation. These young Christians are called to imitate their Lord by clothing themselves like him. (John 13: 4-17). Therefore in verse 6 Christians should submit themselves to God’s mighty hand. Peter then goes on to encourage us “to cast all our anxiety on him.” We can see, as Christians, how difficult it is to apply this to our lives. A believer wants to live a godly life but living in a fallen world puts him under pressure.

Our belief in the sovereignty of God and in His fatherly love for us, does not, however, allow us to sit back and do nothing. We are to work out our salvation because it is God who works in us. Peter shows that the Christian faces a great enemy in Satan. He is compared to a roaring lion. Peter concludes the letter as he began. He directs us, his readers, to the God of grace. This God of grace now calls his people to a sure and certain inheritance. He himself will look after them and care for them, strengthening them and encouraging them for the work of his kingdom. So here we see that ultimately the purpose of God was to bring His children to Himself; that they might share in His glory. (John 17: 22&24 and Romans 8: 30 and following).

Analysis of the passage:

1. The elder and the suffering flock – verses 1-4
2. Humility and watchfulness in suffering – verses 5-9
3. The Grace of God at work – verses 10-11
4. Final words - verses 12-14

Questions

Opening Up: Ask the group to draw up requirements of what the world looks for in a leader? Which of these qualities do we want to see in a church leader?

Read 1 Peter 5:1-4.

1. In what ways is Peter a model to the elders/leaders to whom he writes? How is Peter's own life modelled on Christ's? (v1)
What were some of the big events in Peter's life that shaped him and his ministry? (Luke 5: 1-11)

2. What are the particular temptations to which leaders might be susceptible? (v2-3) In these areas, how does Peter encourage church leaders to imitate the Good Shepherd? (v2-3, see also John 10:11-18)

3. To whom do the sheep belong? What value is placed on the flock? (5:2, cf. Acts 20:28) Why does Peter emphasise the character over the ability of a church leader to handle and teach the word of God? (5:2-3)

4. Think of ways in which you can support, encourage and pray for your ministers. How does this passage encourage us all to follow Christ more seriously? And what rewards can the faithful leader look forward to? (5 verse 4). In what sort of ways do you find your growth in Christian maturity is hindered?

5. How is humility to be shown within the church family? (v5) How is humility to be shown towards God? (v6-7) Why do we find acting humbly before others and God so difficult? (v5-7)

6. How is the devil seen, by Peter, as attacking Christians? (verses 8-9)

7. In the context of Christians suffering (4: 12-17), why can they have confidence in God? (verses 10-11) What does God promise to do for believers, especially for those who have suffered? (verses 10-11)
8. What does this passage teach us about God's character? How might this be a means of both comfort and encouragement? (verses 5-11) Why is the prospect of "eternal glory" helpful to give us perspective? (6: 10-11) How does the example and the person of the Lord Jesus shape our Christian life?

Notes

Notes

Bournemouth & Poole Convention

3-7 July 2017



MORNING PRESENTATIONS

Speaker:	Alasdair Paine
Venue:	Christ Church Westbourne, Alumhurst Road, Bournemouth BH4 8ER
Days/Dates	Wednesday 5th to Friday 7th July 2017
Times:	10.30 am to 11.45 am each day
Main Topic:	Series of three presentations from the book of 2 Kings
Wednesday 5th July	"Where is the Lord?" 2 Kings Chapter 2
Thursday 6th July	"Your God is too small!" 2 Kings Chapter 3
Friday 7th July	"Tragedy and triumph" 2 Kings Chapter 4

EVENING PRESENTATIONS

Speaker:	Dr Tim Chester
Venue:	Citygate Church and Community Centre, 138A Holdenhurst Road, Bournemouth, BH8 8AS
Days/Dates	Monday 3rd to Friday 7th July inclusive
Times:	7.45 pm to 9.15 pm each evening
Topic:	"Rediscovered Joy" - NT Talks from Galatians Exploring the Power of the Reformation in Galatians
Monday 3rd July	Galatians 1 - How to hear God's voice Reformation Link: Scripture Alone
Tuesday 4th July	Galatians 2 - How to win God's approval Reformation Link: Justification by faith alone through Christ alone
Wednesday 5th July	Galatians 3 & 4 v 21-31 - How to recognise God's people Reformation Link: The marks of a true church
Thursday 6th July	Galatians 4 - How to enjoy God's love Reformation Link: The work of the Spirit
Friday 7th July	Galatians 5-6 - How to do God's will Reformation Link: Gospel Living

More details at: www.bournemouthandpooleconvention.org

