

1 Peter

Suffering for Christ's
Sake in the Hope of Glory

1 Peter**Background**

The first verse of the Letter lets the readers know its destination. These cities in North Asia Minor were the home of these mostly Jewish Christians who had been scattered by periodic persecutions. That the readership was primarily Jewish seems to be the best fit because of the following: 1) The word "diaspora" in verse 1 is never used of Gentiles elsewhere, 2) Peter was the Apostle to the Jews (Galatians 2:8-9), 3) This best explains 1 Peter 2:9, 4) The Letter contains many Old Testament quotations and allusions which would best be understood by a primarily Jewish audience.

It seems best to assume the recipients are believers who are undergoing persecution. Most would assign the Epistle a date sometime in the early 60s, AD (probably around AD 63). At this time, however, it seems that the persecution was spotty, local, and intermittent. It seems to have originated in two sources: 1) Personal persecution (2:12; 3:16-17; 4:3-4, 14) and 2) Civil or governmental persecution. The purpose of the Letter is given in one of the very last verses (5:12). Here Peter states that he writes in order that the people may be encouraged to stand firm being assured of their future salvation.

1 Peter is a book about how to suffer well as a Christian. In this world we will suffer. Obviously, different people suffer to different degrees. That said, we all still feel the effects of sin in this world. The question is, will we suffer well, or will the suffering knock the wind out of the sails of our faith. Peter's voice is here raised that we should suffer in doing right to the glory of God. He gives a couple of examples that we can follow, but mainly relies on the example of Christ. Entrusting Himself to God, He suffered as an innocent man in the hope of future glory. We can suffer well, too. We can endure whatever comes our way resting on the fact of our future salvation. What better hope could be given to a group of people encountering difficulty? There is a hope that transcends the difficulties we face and carries us through safely to the other side. This is the message of the Gospel.

Having read the book through a couple of times in one sitting, write down some thoughts and reflections that come to mind in the space below.

1 Peter 1:1-12

In this first section of The Epistle, Peter makes some initial remarks about our great salvation. Here he will highlight the hope that we have in our future salvation, the joy that is ours because of our salvation, and the greatness of our salvation. All to encourage these believers (and, by extension, us) to persevere in their salvation regardless of the sufferings they might face.

1. Take a moment to write down some initial thoughts, observations, questions, confusions, etc. that this text causes to arise in your mind and heart.
2. In your mind, and maybe based on previous experience, what is the most comforting thought to entertain in times of difficulty and trial?
3. What does it seem is Peter's goal in this section of chapter 1. How does he go about accomplishing it?
4. How does he describe the readers in verse 1? What images do these descriptions bring to mind?
5. What do you think is meant by the term, "living hope" in verse 3 based on the context? In what ways have you experienced this "living hope"?
6. Paraphrase verses 4-5 in your own words. What is the significance of the phrase in verse 5, "who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed..."?

7. Verse 6 begins, “In this you greatly rejoice...”. In what are they to rejoice even in the face of trials and difficulties? How difficult is it for you to rejoice in the midst of trials? Why do you think it is so difficult given the certainty of the promise God has given us (and them) in the previous verses?

8. What is the end goal of difficulty as given in verse 7? How does that cause you to feel?

9. Sadly, at times it becomes difficult to see the importance of leaning heavily on our faith in future salvation in the midst of trial and difficulty. It seems difficult to maintain focus on this One we have never seen (verse 8). Why is it so important to maintain our faith in our future salvation? How does Peter illustrate this in verses 10-12?

10. Someone once said, speaking of the cost of the restoration that is yet to come, “You can’t have a Garden of Eden without a Garden of Gethsemane.” Have you sensed this idea of “suffering now...glory to come” in this section? How does this tie into the predictions of the Prophets concerning Jesus (see, in particular, verse 11. You can also trace this idea in Hebrews 1:9-18; 5:7-10; 9:11-28; 12:1-3)?

11. So what? How will you apply this text to your life? What are you taking with you? What verse will you memorize for next time?

1 Peter 1:13-25

In this section Peter will deliver some of the products of our salvation. What is it that our salvation produces in us? He will highlight 4 things that are to be evident in our lives based on our salvation. In verse 13 he highlights hope. In 14-16, holiness is addressed. Godly fear is mentioned in 17-21, and love in 22-25. As you meditate on this chapter, hopefully one of these areas will resonate within you as one in which you need the Spirit's help to exemplify.

1. Take a moment to write down some initial thoughts, observations, questions, confusions, etc. that this text causes to arise in your mind and heart.
2. "Therefore" always connects us back to something previously stated in an effort to draw an inference, or conclusion. To what does the "therefore" refer in verse 13?
3. The main verb in verse 13 is "hope completely". To further prepare them, he offers up 2 imperatives: "girding up your minds" and "being self-controlled." What do these mean and why are they important to hope?
4. As the object of our fixed hope, what does Peter mean by this phrase in verse 13: "the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed..."?
5. It seems that we are often prone to take on the characteristics of that which we worship. In other words, we being to look like that which has captured the attention of our hearts. Verses 14-15 offer up a contrasting picture of what our lives should and should not look like based on what is true of us through faith in Christ. Explain the contrast in your own words.¹

¹ "Form" is the outward expression of what is inwardly true. In this verse Peter uses a word that could also be translated as "fashion," and he uses it in a passive sense. He, in effect, says: "do not be fashioned to the evil desires..." essentially because that is not congruent with who you are as believers. In Romans 12:1-2, a similar idea is given. "Do not be conformed (fashioned)...but be transformed." The word "transformed" is the same word used of Jesus in the Gospels when He was transfigured on the mountain. He was outwardly revealing His true form. Peter's exhortation, then, is that our outward lives and behaviour would not be reflective of something we are not (evil and unregenerate), but of our inward position of holiness.

1 Peter 2:1-10

In this section Peter will outline the purposes of salvation. The previous section looked at what our salvation produces in us while this one looks at why it produces it. The first purpose he will outline is growth. We are not saved immediately to perfect maturity. There is a growth process that salvation initiates, whereby we continually mature into the likeness of Christ. Related to this idea, although distinct, is the purpose of priesthood.³ We are saved in order that we might offer sacrifices of praise to God from a pure heart. Finally, we are saved in order that through this transformation and priesthood, we might make declaration to the world of the greatness of God. What a purpose! Don't miss this. Throughout the Epistle, Peter will suggest that the loudest declaration that we can make in this fallen world is made through our lives.

1. Take a moment to write down some initial thoughts, observations, questions, confusions, etc. that this text causes to arise in your mind and heart.
2. Once again Peter begins this chapter with a "therefore." What is the connection here with what has preceded?
3. What does it mean to "long for the pure milk of the Word?"
4. Peter gives the result of such longing in the second part of verse 2. What is the result he gives, and how does it relate to the discussion that follows in verses 4-10?
5. Once again, we are brought back to this notion of God's glory being the foundational goal of all things. In verses 4-5, why is it that we are being built up? What does it mean and look like (see also Romans 12:1-2)? What are some sacrifices that we can make (any Scripture?)?

³ Incidentally, this is one of the chief texts Martin Luther used in arguing for the priesthood of all believers. As a priest we can approach God directly and offer sacrifices of praise to Him. As a "kingdom of priests" we can be priests to each other in the community of faith as we intercede on behalf of one another, carrying each other's burdens into the presence of God.

6. Peter states, quite emphatically, that our acceptability lies in Jesus Christ (verse 5). He then quotes Isaiah 28:16. What does he mean, though, by the phrase, “he who believes in Him will not be disappointed...”?

7. Peter uses several Old Testament quotations to offer up a contrast between the one who has believed and the one who has not. What is the contrast offered in verses 6 through the first half of verse 8?

8. In the second part of verse 8, what does Peter mean by stating that “they stumble because they are disobedient to the Word.”?

9. What contrast does Peter set up in verses 8b-10? What does he identify as the overarching purpose of us who have been saved? Spend some time reflecting on these verses and write down any reflections.

10. So what? How will you apply this text to your life? What are you taking with you? What verse will you memorize for next time?

1 Peter 3:1-12

Peter continues his discussion of submission by talking through submission in the family and in daily ethics. You may want to also read Ephesians 5:22-33. Submission in the home can be a touchy subject. Yet Peter never apologizes for issuing the command. I hope you notice the overarching attitude of humility that is required to submit on any level, to any person. You cannot submit unless you crucify your pride. Humility requires hope because humility demands that we entrust our own well-being to another.

1. Take a moment to write down some initial thoughts, observations, questions, confusions, etc. that this text causes to arise in your mind and heart.
2. Peter begins verse 1 with “In the same way...”. How are we to understand the command to “submit” here?
3. What is the connection between the second half of verse 1 and the previous section (in particular, verses 12 and 15 of chapter 2)?
4. What does Peter mean by “the beauty of a gentle and tranquil spirit...” in verse 4?
5. What is it that removes fear from submission in verse 6?
6. What does Peter have in mind in verse 7 when he refers to wives as “the weaker vessels”?

1 Peter 3:13-22

Peter now moves into a section on suffering that will take us through the rest of the Letter (the term suffering occurs 12 times in this Book, 8 of which are in 3:13-5:14). He has spoken on salvation and submission already. Again, note what I consider to be the theme of the book; suffering for Christ's sake in the hope of glory. We will not submit to the point of suffering unless we have faith and hope in our future salvation. This is Peter's exhortation to these people undergoing persecution. Don't give up in your faith because your salvation will carry you through regardless of what men do.

1. Take a moment to write down some initial thoughts, observations, questions, confusions, etc. that this text causes to arise in your mind and heart.
2. Verses 13-14 are great for our faith. They remind me of Luke 12:4, Romans 8:31, and Hebrews 13:6. Whom should we fear as Christians? What do you think Peter means when he says that "you are blessed" when you suffer?
3. If our attitude should not be characterized by fear (verses 13-14), what should it be characterized by according to verses 15-17?
4. What does Peter mean by "set apart Christ as Lord...?"
5. How do we apply verses 15-16 to personal evangelism? Again, note what it is that causes non-believers to be interested in listening to the words we say? What is it that really wins non-believers?
6. According to verse 17, how are we to think about suffering as it relates to God?

7. Once again, we are drawn to remember the pattern that Christ offered us as an example in how to suffer well (verses 18-22). Given the previous discussion, what relevance does verse 18 have? What point is Peter trying to make by drawing a comparison to the pattern of Christ?
8. There has been a lot of discussion regarding the meaning of verses 19-22. The discussion particularly surrounds two main questions. The first is what it means that Jesus “preached to the spirits in prison.” The second has to do with the meaning of the phrase, “which now saves you” in reference to baptism. After an initial reading, what are your thoughts on these two points?
9. Regarding the identity of the imprisoned spirits in verse 19, there have traditionally been 4 solutions offered. They are as follows: 1) This was a proclamation of the Gospel by the Lord through the Apostles to men of their time lost in the prison house of sin (Ephesians 2:14, 17). This view identifies Jesus as speaking through those who came after Him (Apostles) and the spirits in prison as humans in a present prison of sin.⁵ 2) The pre-incarnate Christ preached to men through Noah in Noah’s day. Because they ignored this preaching, they are now spirit’s in prison (1:11).⁶ 3) Between His death and resurrection, Christ visited the realm of the dead and preached to human spirits in that realm. There are many variations in this interpretation. Some say He proclaimed a second chance, others victory, others that He led Old Testament saints to Heaven (Luke 16:19-31; Ephesians 4:8).⁷ 4) After His death Christ visited the realm of imprisoned angels who sinned in Genesis 6 (Tartarus) and proclaimed victory over the bound angels there.⁸

⁵ The problems with this view are twofold: 1) living people are never referred to as spirits and 2) it doesn’t fit with the allusion to Noah in the next verse (verse 20).

⁶ This view also is presented with two problems: 1) the order does not make sense. Verse 18 states that Christ died, then He preached (verse 19), then was glorified in Heaven (verse 22). 2) “In which” is a bad translation. The referent of the pronoun that begins verse 19 is the *glorified* Spirit of Christ, not the pre-incarnate Christ.

⁷ The main problem with this view is, again, the reference to Noah. In some sense it seems that the people/spirits in view are connected with Noah’s day.

⁸ Without getting bogged down in the details, this view seems to fit with Genesis 6:1-4 (Incidentally, this Genesis text is one of the most difficult passages in Scripture to interpret. There are two main ways of understanding it and both are acceptable. My own understanding is reflected here as it relates to the 1 Peter text in question.); 2 Peter 2:4-5; and Jude 6. It sees the spirits in view here as the “sons of God” who sinned and were punished by being imprisoned in Tartarus. Spirits, used in this way, is normally a reference to angels in the New Testament. The word for preach can easily be thought of as “proclaim” or “announce.” It wasn’t that Christ was preaching salvation to these spirits, but, rather, announcing victory. This idea also appears in the Apostle’s Creed.

10. Assuming that the fourth view is to be understood, why does Peter refer to Noah in verse 20?
What is it about Noah that distinguishes him from the “spirits” and what point does it make here?

11. The deliverance that Noah experienced through the waters of judgment by faith is the anti-type of our baptism today. Noah was delivered by trusting in God, just as we are delivered through faith. As Noah’s faith delivered him through the waters of the flood, so his coming up out of the water (surviving the judgment of the flood) was a picture of his faith. In the same way, our baptism is a picture of our own deliverance through faith; our coming up out of the waters of baptism pictures the faith that has saved us. How does this connect to the rest of this section?

12. Can you sum up the point of this section as it relates to the rest of the Book? What is the point of the illustration in verses 20-21? Do you see the pattern as evidenced in Christ and Noah as it has been described here?

13. So what? How will you apply this text to your life? What are you taking with you? What verse will you memorize for next time?

1 Peter 4:1-11

In 4:1-11 Peter is going to outline the purpose of our suffering. It is our suffering that identifies us with Christ as a declaration to the world that we belong to Him. As He suffered to purify us, so we suffer as a demonstration that we are His purified ones. It is in this sense that we are supposed to look different from those in the world. We follow after a different Master. Incidentally, many times (as was probably the case for the recipients of this Letter) this is precisely why we suffer.

1. Take a moment to write down some initial thoughts, observations, questions, confusions, etc. that this text causes to arise in your mind and heart.
2. Verse 1 begins with “Therefore.” What is the connection to the previous section?
3. In verse 1 what does Peter mean by “ceased from sin”? List some possibilities and determine which option is most likely.
4. Peter argues (verses 3-4) that we once lived in sin like everyone else but that we have now moved to something more. He states, however, that the world won't understand this and will vilify/attack us. In what ways have you seen this at work in your own life?
5. In what do we place our confidence when this happens (see also Psalm 73)?
6. Verse 6 is difficult. There are three common ways of understanding to whom “those who are now dead” is a reference to in verse 6. 1) Those who are dead spiritually have the Gospel preached to them. The problem here is that “dead” in verse 5 is a reference to physical death, not spiritual death. 2) It is a reference to the heathen who has never heard the Gospel. That is, they get a second chance to respond. The problem here is that the tense of the verb doesn't allow for a translation that could be interpreted as a second chance. The preaching mentioned takes place in

1 Peter

Suffering for Christ's Sake in the Hope of Glory

past time. 3) It is a reference to those who were physically alive, believed in the Gospel message, and are now dead. The judgment they experienced “in the flesh as men” is a reference to the final effect sin has on those who have trusted in the Gospel; physical death. What do you think he means?

7. Verses 7-11 look at the consummation of suffering in the life of the saint. It is the reason why we should continue in faith despite suffering at the hands of a harsh world. In many ways, verse 7-8 offer a summary of what has been said so far regarding our conduct as believers. What is the basis for our continuing to suffer for Christ's sake? What is the hope outlined in verse 7a?
8. How difficult are verses 8-11 to put into practice? What is the overarching characteristic attitude that is needed in order to practice these the way Peter intends?
9. So what? How will you apply this text to your life? What are you taking with you? What verse will you memorize for next time?

1 Peter 4:12-19

Peter now gives us a consolation in suffering. It is hard, if not impossible, to suffer well without a clear perspective of where it will lead us. Peter seeks now to encourage the fainthearted by challenging them to think of their suffering as blessing. Remember, throughout this Letter, Peter has encouraged them to follow the example of Christ when it comes to their response to suffering. Christ was blessed for His faithfulness. In the same way, Peter encourages these people to persevere in their faith by considering their suffering as blessing. What an honor to suffer alongside Christ in this world.

1. Take a moment to write down some initial thoughts, observations, questions, confusions, etc. that this text causes to arise in your mind and heart.

2. When you encounter trials, do you ever feel like you're the only one who has had to endure that kind of difficulty? What does that do to your attitude/perspective? How does Peter say we should think of our trials in verses 12-13?

3. What does Peter mean when he states in verse 14 that "If you are reviled...you are blessed?"

4. How difficult is it to glorify God in the midst of suffering as Peter prescribes in verses 15-16?

5. What does Peter mean in verse 17-18?

6. What do you think it means that the righteous will be saved with difficulty (verse 18)? Does this raise any questions in your mind?

1 Peter 5:1-14

Peter concludes the Letter with a discussion of how we are to suffer as servants in the Body of Christ and as soldiers in God's hands. Humility, again, is brought to fore as the chief characteristic of a godly life. We are to pursue humility in the community and before God, by casting our concerns on Him. The reason we can do this (and should do it) is because He cares about us. We demonstrate our humility by leaning heavily on Him in prayer.

1. Take a moment to write down some initial thoughts, observations, questions, confusions, etc. that this text causes to arise in your mind and heart.
2. How does Peter understand the function of the "elders" in verse 1?
3. How are the under-shepherds to behave in the community according to verses 1-3? What is their motivation in serving?
4. What is their reward in serving in this way according to verse 4?
5. What is the command given in verse 5? In what sense is this command the key to community life in the Body of Christ?
6. What do you think Peter means in verse 5b when he quotes Proverbs 3:34, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."?

7. Having instructed his readers to humble themselves in the community, he turns in verses 6-7 to instruct them/us to be humble before God as well. According to these verses, what does humility before God look like? What is the reason given for humbling ourselves before God?

8. What is the exhortation given in verses 8-10? How is this a comfort?

9. Peter ends the book with the overall purpose in writing. In verse 12, what is the reason he gives? How is knowing that the ground you are standing on is solid encourage you to keep going?

10. So what? How will you apply this text to your life? What are you taking with you? What verse will you memorize for next time?

11. What will you take with you from this study? Can you give a one sentence synopsis of the Book that will help you remember the general exhortation?