

First Peter: Introduction

Preface to the Study

This study was done in preparation for teaching a Men's group that met weekly. Only the first three chapters of Peter have been completed thusfar, however, there are plans to finish the study through chapter 5 in the future. The primary sources used in preparing these notes were *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 Peter* (Scot McKnight), *First Peter: An Introduction and Commentary* (Wayne Grudem), and *The First Epistle of Peter* (Peter H. Davids). Many of the insights in this study were gleaned from these sources and, where correspondence in thought occurs with those sources, all credit goes to them.

Audience

Peter's readers were "strangers" (NIV) or "pilgrims" (NKJV) or "exiles" (see also, 2:11 "aliens"). These terms were used not so much to denote any "spiritual" status, but mainly their social status. In first-century Rome these expressions indicated one was a "resident alien" who was classified near the bottom rung of the social ladder. Although they were not slaves, a resident alien was below a citizen and, therefore, did not have voting rights, rights to own property, restricted on whom they could marry, subject to higher taxes, and more severe forms of civil punishment.

As such, those who fell under this classification were often viewed as threats to society and regularly bore the brunt of criticism and every kind of discrimination. Essentially, Peter's audience consisted of socially, politically, economically, and geographically ("scattered" 1:1 indicates anywhere outside of Judea, see John 7:35) disenfranchised and marginalized Gentile believers who were constantly sneered at by most.

Consequently, Peter wrote to encourage his readers that God, in his mercy, had chosen them (1:1) as a "royal priesthood" (2:9). Their primary social group was not merely their human family but also God's family who they are to love deeply (1:22; 2:17; 3:8-12; 4:8-9; 5:14) and serve faithfully (4:10-11). Their circumstances are not hopeless, but are full of hope as they demonstrate God's salvation to outsiders (2:11-25; 3:1-6) and declare the praises of his glory (2:9).

Three Relationships Believers Encounter

Peter discusses three types of relationships that we encounter - our relationship to:

1. God in salvation.
2. Other believers as family members.
3. Social/political structures that make our lives difficult because we are Christian.

How do these three types of relationships help define your functional identity?

Themes

One of the main themes 1 Peter addresses is how the hope of salvation bears upon living in society today. Read Hebrews 12:2, 1 John 3:2-3, and 2 Peter 3:11-12a. How should the future impact your present living? Exactly how does the future have a bearing upon the way you live your life and the choices you make in your career, finances, marriage, etc.?

Peter insists that because God judges justly in the end (1:7, 9, 17; 2:12; 4:5, 17-19) and Christ's life is an example of endurance (2:21-23; 4:1), we have every reason to cast our cares on Him (5:7). In so doing we will be restored, made strong, firm, and steadfast in our faith (5:10). Can you think of a time when you were rejected or discriminated against because you were Christian? How did that strengthen you?

Kinds of suffering that we are all subject to:

Suffering related to the Fall

Nowhere does Scripture promise exemption from natural disasters, birth defects, nor painful, prolonged terminal illnesses (Jn. 9:1ff; Rom 8:19-22; Philip. 2:27).

Jesus reminds us that the vulnerabilities of life should drive us all to repentance (Lk. 13:1-5).

Suffering related to personal sin

Jesus clearly says that some suffering is related to personal sin (Jn. 5:1-15, see especially v. 14)

- AIDS contracted because of sexual promiscuity
- Cancer from smoking
- Heart attacks related to undisciplined eating habits and lack of exercise

Suffering related to the purposes of God

All suffering will ultimately bring God glory (Jn. 9:3; Jn. 11:4; Rom. 9:22-23).

God directly causes the good that results from suffering, while he indirectly permits evil and suffering (Rom. 8:28).

2 Cor. 1:3-7 says that God comforts us in our sufferings so we can better empathize with those who are undergoing similar afflictions.

1 Cor. 10:13, 2 Cor. 12:9 say that God's power to withstand temptation is displayed when we suffer.

The glory God will reveal in us far outweighs any trouble we encounter in our pilgrimage here (2 Cor. 4:17; Rom. 8:18; Rev. 21:4).

The delay in Christ's return, regardless of how difficult it may be living in a fallen world, is related to his purpose in bringing others into the kingdom (2 Pt. 3:8-10).

Suggested Passages for Memorization:

1 Pt. 1:14-16

1 Pt. 1:22

1 Pt. 2:2-3

1 Pt. 2:16-17

1 Pt. 3:7

1 Pt. 3:9-11

1 Pt. 3:18

1 Pt. 4:7

1 Pt. 5:8-9