

## First Peter: The Beginning

Author:	Peter
To Whom Written:	Christians of Asia Minor
Date:	58-64 AD
Purpose:	To give instruction and comfort to the persecuted Christians of Asia Minor
Covenant:	New Covenant
Today's Text:	1Peter 1:1-16

Peter opens his letter with words of hope and encouragement. He tells his readers that even though they are suffering great persecution for their faith, the reward of their faith was sure, certain and great. He reminds them of their salvation in Jesus Christ, and tells them that their suffering would be short, and a source of great strength; that it would be well worth it. In this, they should take great joy, for the hour was approaching when they would receive their reward.

### Points of Interest

**3-7:** Here we are comforted by the reminder of what Jesus has done for us, and of our heavenly citizenship. (Phil. 3:20; John 14:1-3; 1Thess. 4:17) The people who face troubled times must keep these facts in focus: Jesus has done great things for us: hang on!

**10-12:** The prophets of the Old Testament worked hard to understand this grace which we now have, and to try to understand when these things would come about. Alas, they have come about; the sufferings of Christ which are so great a mystery to the unsaved that they are actually considered foolish! (see 1Corinthians chapter 1) The prophets came to understand that they were serving us, and not themselves. This should be taken to mean that they came to realize that their Messianic prophecies were regarding a time in the future, and not related to their time and circumstance. Peter clearly points out that these prophecies are fulfilled in the church... and that they are not hanging out there to be fulfilled at a future date. Note particularly the end of verse 12: Even the angels wonder at all of this!

Much has been written about and speculated upon in regard to this statement. We should not be surprised, for "Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?" (Heb. 1:14) The most important thing for us to take from this reference to the angels here, as well as from the reference to the prophets is that they took this salvation process *very seriously*. Salvation is a BIG DEAL! Sadly, however, relatively few Christians ever bother to give it much thought, taking it all for granted as most of us do. Our salvation is no mere 'get out of jail free card,' but rather a demonstration of the very love, faithfulness and power of Almighty God.

**13-16:** "Therefore" is there to let you know that the author is summing up and drawing a conclusion from what he has just written. Because of this fabulous salvation (inheritance) that we have in Christ, take action! Yes, we need to do something... Peter follows this up with a list of things; we will make it simple: Get right with God and live your life focused on Jesus Christ. Become a true and proper disciple of His no matter what your circumstances may be.

## How do I Live?

Today's Text: 1Peter 1:17-2:3

### Introduction

Last week's text ended with a call to action: Be Holy! This is where we pick up this week; be Holy!

God judges with impartiality. He doesn't care about the things that affect your reputation here on earth, but rather His judgment derives from what we have done. Be Holy, do what is right in God's eyes and forget about what this world approves of. When you meet God face to face, He is the only one whose opinion counts. Remember that the view of the world is the view of the enemy from God's point of view.

### Points of Interest

**17-20:** 'Live as a stranger while you are here on earth' reflects the thought expressed in our introduction. It doesn't matter what the world thinks of us, for we are citizens of a Heavenly Kingdom. It is not our purpose in this life to please men, in fact if we are concerned about the praise of men we are not servants of Christ! (Gal. 1:10). We were bought by the blood of Christ Himself, and this establishes a higher responsibility than anything this world can claim; live up to it!

**22:** In this verse, we are commanded to love one another. We have here the Greek imperative form: "*you must love one another*". This is one of those cases where the Greek word *agape* is used, which indicates the highest form of godly love. Note that it is commanded to be done. This should indicate to you that it does not involve a mere human emotion, but a choice that must be made; a decision we must make to love one another. Note also that this concept runs counter to the worldly concept of what love is, a feeling or a longing. Godly love is a decision to love one another even if we aren't always 'loveable'; a command that we must keep if we want to be imitators of Christ.

**23:** This verse gives us the "why" for the last one: *Because you have been born again you must do this.* You are no longer 'of man' but instead you are now 'of God'.

**24-25:** A quotation of Isaiah 40:6-8 comparing flesh to grass to indicate the temporary nature of life on this earth. Then, the text draws a contrast between the temporary nature of human life to the eternal nature of God's Word. Peter's emphasis is to cite this comparison to illustrate what happened to us when we were born again. Going back to the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve before the Fall would live to serve God forever, but then they rebelled against God and were cut off from the Tree of Life, indicating that they were now mortal and would die. Jesus died and rose again to rule Heaven and Earth forever. When we were baptized into His death, we died with Him and rose again to eternal life. Therefore we are not of this world any longer, but are citizens of Heaven who happen to be stationed here to accomplish a mission for God before returning to "Home Base" which is Heaven, in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. "And this is the word that was preached to you."

**2:1-3:** Here, Peter sums up the first chapter: because of all of this, get rid of all the worldly nonsense and get serious about your new life! He follows this with a comparison of spiritual maturity to physical maturity using the image of a baby's diet. Just as a newborn baby, we should crave the pure milk of God's Word that we may be nourished and grow (rather than the poisonous nonsense of the world). Fill yourself with God's Word until you become one with it. This is the recipe for spiritual growth.

## Living Stones

Today's text: 1Peter 2:4-12

### Introduction

Peter uses some interesting imagery in this text, the idea of believers being living stones, and the one Living Stone; Jesus Christ. The idea is simple: Jesus, the Living Stone is the capstone of God's Temple, and His followers are living stones used to construct God's true Temple. Bear in mind that in the Old Testament, the Temple was the dwelling place of God; the Holy of holies being the innermost part of the Temple at Jerusalem where God's presence dwelt. Thus, Peter's image is that Jesus is the capstone of the new spiritual temple, and all of us are built into it: God's house.

### Points of Interest

**vv. 4-5:** See Isaiah 28:16, quoted in verse 6; Psalm 118:22, quoted in verse 7. Note also Ephesians 2:20-22, 1Corinthians 3:11 and Matthew 16:18. In these verses you will see the contrast between the old Jewish temple and the new house of God; the old being built by stones and mortar and the new being built with living materials. This is a common illustration in the New Testament to show how the church is built up by its members being built together in unity with Christ Himself as the foundation. In Matthew, we see that the rock of its foundation is the declaration of who Christ is: the Son of the living God.

**vv. 7-8:** The Stone which is our capstone and foundation is a stumbling stone to those who refuse to believe, and a source of dismay to those who, like us, are called to son ship- but who refuse to accept it.

**v. 9:** This verse describes what each Christian is: a Royal Priest, part of a Holy Nation and one belonging entirely to God. Remember that Peter wrote this letter to all of the Christians in Galatia, not just to certain ones (1Peter 5:14) This is not a solitary reference; see Gal. 6:13-16, Rev. 1:6, 5:9, Heb. 13:15. Note that a priest is one who intercedes between man and God, offering up sacrifices for sin. In the New Testament, we are all priests in a royal priesthood, with Jesus Christ as our High Priest. (Heb. 4:14-16). As such, we have become a holy nation...

**v. 10:** Peter makes his intent clear in this verse with respect to exactly who he is talking about. Once we were not a people, but now we are, once we were not a nation but now we are. Could he be speaking only to the Jews? No way! The Jews were God's people in the Old Testament, certainly, but they for the most part have not chosen to follow the Messiah God sent to deliver them. The Christians of Galatia were made of of many peoples, including but not limited to Jews. They were Greeks, Romans, Macedonians, Hebrews, Arabs and more... they didn't used to be a people or a nation, but now in Christ they were both: and so are we!

**vv. 11-12:** Here, Peter goes on to remind the people of their responsibility as citizens of a Heavenly Kingdom who live in a foreign land (this world). We are to behave ourselves! Thus, we are to act in a way that does not bring disrepute on our sovereign, and that may in fact be attractive to others who may wish to join us in the cause of Christ.

## Remember Who You Work For!

Today's Text: 1Peter 2:13-25

### Introduction

In this section, Peter counsels Christians on how to behave. This discourse is divided into three sections, the first being behavior relating to government authority (13-17), the second relating to slaves and masters (18-22) and ending with a summation that deals with the behavior of Jesus as our model. Peter makes this case for good behavior because the Church was constantly under condemnation from its critics as a lawless bunch. Peter's case is that believers should conduct themselves in a way that would make such slander look ridiculous to the general public so that the Gospel of Christ should be held in high regard by everyone. This is of interest to us today because once again, culture often seeks to make Christians out to be crazy, foolish, extreme, dangerous... or to simply marginalize the Gospel so as to encourage people not to listen.

### Points of Interest

**13-15:** Peter is teaching the believers to treat the governing authorities, whether national or local, with respect for the Lord's sake. Even though the believers may not approve of every decision, the Gospel will not gain ground by the church being rebellious against civil authority. By behaving in a manner that is respectable within society, the foolish insinuations of critics will fall on deaf ears.

**16-17:** The text goes on to make an interesting point: Do not use your freedom in Christ to behave badly. Some may think that since sins are forgiven and that since we do not live under the Law (*per se*) that we can do anything we want. Peter's point is that this is not a good idea (not even an accurate one). We should live as servants of God, and God's servants do not behave badly. We should also treat everyone with proper respect: How does it look when a Christian treats other people with less respect than the pagans do? This includes the brotherhood, and the civil authorities... and also the "man on the street".

**18-22:** This message also applies to slaves and masters (and we might say employees and employers). Do your best work without complaining. If the master is harsh, do your best work and suffer in silence for God's sake. By doing this, you bring credit to God. You do not bring credit to God if you get yourself into trouble, even if your master (or boss) is a jerk. We are called to suffer for Christ's sake if necessary because He suffered for ours; He is our example.

**23-25:** This final section is one that sums up the previous two. Jesus gave his life for our sins; He kept His mouth shut and trusted God for His fate, and so should we. As a Christian, we have freedom, but this does not mean that we have the right to mouth off and be disrespectful to anyone, even if they deserve it in our eyes: We represent God. Jesus bought us with a very steep price, and we are His servants, and are called to behave accordingly.

## The Priority of the Gospel

Today's Text: 1Peter 3:1-12

### Introduction

This section continues from last week's text, where Peter was teaching the faithful that they should be submissive to authority; governmental and in employment. In today's text, Peter continues to discuss the role of wives and husbands with the promotion of the Gospel as the greatest priority.

### Points of Interest

**1-6:** In this section, Peter is addressing wives with the message that they should submit themselves to and obey their husbands. Notice that in verses one and two, Peter points out that wives should do this so that their husbands, if they are not believers, might see the Gospel in action rather than by being preached to about it. He then goes on to address a woman's beauty as being inward rather than outward. Consider that if we tell people that Christ provides our all, then it may seem odd if we adorn ourselves with all sorts of worldly "bling". In verse four he cites the inner beauty of a person. This is not mere talk, but rather it is as if he is telling all people that others should see the Gospel of Christ working in their lives, as opposed to our adornments. Finally, in verse six, Peter reminds women of their female examples in Scripture and how they lived.

**7:** This verse is directed at husbands, and its main emphasis is to instruct them that their wives' submission is not an invitation to bad behavior. Note that men are cautioned to regard their wives as co-heirs to all that it means to be in Christ. Although Peter doesn't say so directly, we could take from this that such behavior on the man's part would be helpful in bringing an unbelieving wife to faith. Another note would be the very end of the verse where Peter says that our good behavior will ensure that nothing hinders our prayers. What do you suppose he means by that?

**8-12:** In this final section, Peter gives general instructions for how all of us should live and interact with others: Be loving, compassionate, sympathetic and humble. Would you say that this sort of living would be likely to advance the Gospel?

## Supremacy of the Gospel II

Today's Text: 1Peter 3:13-22

### Introduction

Peter wraps up chapter 3 with a continuation of his theme of the supremacy of the Gospel. You will recall that in our last two sessions, Peter was calling upon all believers to be submissive for the sake of the Gospel. He spoke of submission to civil authority, to masters and to husbands, all for the sake of our love for Christ. In this section, he continues with this theme by reminding people that they should not fear from doing good; even if it should lead to suffering. He also reminds them that it is better to suffer now for doing right than it is to suffer later for doing evil. This is followed by a remedial session relating to the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and how this relates to Baptism; our hope.

### Points of Interest

**15-16:** Notice that Peter calls upon the faithful to always be ready to tell people the source of our hope and joy: the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Think about it; if we live right, people will notice. If we live in accord with our Lord, and in a way that is pleasing to Him, we will stand out as 'different'. If our difference results in peace, hope and joy this difference will be attractive to many and they will ask about it. This is the perfect environment to share the Gospel. This sharing, however, must be done with gentleness and respect, as opposed to with condemnation and snobbishness.

**18-20:** There are many scholars who would say that in this section Peter is recounting the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, and further telling us that while Jesus was dead He preached the Gospel to those who had died previously and were now awaiting (or receiving) their eternal fate. The grammar here suggests otherwise. Following the time frames in the grammar it is more likely that Peter is telling them that the Spirit, through Noah proclaimed righteousness to them (as in fact we know that he did). Whichever position you prefer to take, make sure that you don't lose sight of what Peter is really trying to teach here, and that follows...

**21-22:** Noah and his family responded to God's message and they were saved from judgment through water. In the same way, those who respond to the message of God through Christ (Gospel) will be saved from judgment through the waters of Baptism. Notice the quote: verse 21a "and this waters symbolizes baptism that now saves you also" This is said to cause the reader to remember how they came into relationship with Christ: through Baptism. It is sad to note how many Christians overlook this fact today. This is the reason for the preceding section calling upon us to be submissive and well behaved in a messed up world:

1. To be true to God's righteousness.
2. To give a good testimony about what it means to be a Christian.
3. To live in a way that will give us a hearing from those who need to hear the Gospel of Christ.

## Put Aside the Old Ways

Today's Text: 1Peter 4:1-11

### Introduction

The Apostle has just told the believers that it was better to suffer for doing good than for doing evil, and has indicated that the glory and power bestowed upon Jesus was reward for His willingness to suffer death for the sake of the Gospel. So will it be for us, if we are willing to suffer death if necessary for the Gospel of Christ. Therefore...

### Pints of Interest

**1-2:** Jesus suffered in His body, and we should take upon ourselves the same willingness to suffer. This is a matter of priority; if we shrink from adversity to remain comfortable, then we have not taken on the attitude of Christ. If we follow Him to the point of suffering even death, then we will have shifted our life's focus away from the sinful things and onto the things of God. This is necessary for spiritual growth.

**3-5:** Peter is reminding us how much of our lives have been wasted in the silliness of this earth. Our old friends will be irritated that we have discontinued in reverie and carrying on and will heap abuse upon us for it. Just remember that the day is coming when they will have to give account, and their punishment will be far worse than any abuse we might receive on earth.

**6:** "...those who are now dead..." refers to our 'old friends' who reject the Gospel and continue to live according to the ways of this world. They are dead in their slavery to sin. When the day comes, they will be judged accordingly.

**7-9:** Since all things will soon conclude, keep sober-minded and under control so that you can focus your life on your relationship with Christ. Thus, love one another, behave like Christ and don't hesitate to be generous with your hospitality. These are things by which all can see the love of Jesus Christ in action.

**10-11:** These verses continue with what Peter wrote in the last few verses; he is showing us how we should live. Notice that all of the things he mentions here are things that result from our understanding that we are God's humble servants. These are things which do not result from our living as the pagans do. Our focus on relationship with Christ begins as an inward thing, but the result is always our love for others and service to God.

## Suffering for Christ

Today's Text: 1Peter 4:12-19

### Introduction

Note the similarity between this section and 1:6-9; 2:19-25; 3:17-18; 4:1-2.

In this section, Peter is giving comfort and understanding to those who are facing trial and suffering for their faith. Remember that in that place and time, a Christian could be called upon to suffer to the point of death for his faith, but they could also be persecuted in lesser ways. They could be beaten, harassed, and excluded from employment, business and buying necessary goods including food for their families.

**12:** This verse may be the most important for us to understand, as Peter approaches the topic as something that we should have expected all along. You might first think that they should have expected it because of the place and times in which they lived... which would be true. Yet, the real reason for this expectation is much deeper than culture and country! For this reason, we too should expect some form of opposition. The key component is the fact that we live in a world that is altogether in opposition to Christ. This is not simply because the world isn't Christian and doesn't want to hear the Gospel... these are only symptoms; not the disease itself. The disease is rebellion against God, which has existed in humanity since the rebellion of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and before that amongst the fallen angels of Satan. When people heap insult and revision upon Christians, they are not simply reacting to our message or our way, but rather they are fighting (unwittingly in most cases) a spiritual war between God and Satan. This is the front line of battle.

**13-16:** If you are attacked because you have modeled the behavior and life of Jesus, then you should be glad; you have done something right. When Jesus returns, those who suffer for His cause will be the most joyous of all. You should not be ashamed or hang your head if this happens, but rather you should be thanking God for seeing fit to allow you to share in His suffering for a time.

**17-19:** God will allow His people to be tried and tested, this is true. Consider that if it is difficult for those in God's own household, how much worse it will be for those who refuse to follow Him. Count it a blessing that we receive trial and testing now, rather than eternal punishment later.

## The Shepherd and the Flock

Today's Text: 1Peter 5

### Introduction

In a difficult and challenging, not to mention dangerous time, the quality of leadership within the church is critical. Peter begins this last chapter by addressing the quality of leadership within the church. Here, using the Greek word *presbuteros* meaning presbyter or elder. There are other words used to refer to this position in the New Testament, and they are used interchangeably. Bishop or overseer come from the Greek word *episkopos* and shepherd and pastor come from the Greek word *poimen*. Thus we can say that an elder is an older man who oversees, shepherds, pastors and guides the flock. In short, these words were used interchangeably to refer to a different aspect of the task of the leader. Also, please note that the older man or elder may not necessarily refer to a man's age, but rather to his level of spiritual maturity in Christ, thus a man of lesser age may be a leader in the church while a man who is older may not be ready to serve in this fashion.

### Points of Interest

**1-4:** Elders should shepherd and oversee the flock (note they are interchangeable here) because they have the will from God to do so. This means that they are led by the Spirit to lead, and that they have proper motivation. One must not want to lead for their own benefit, either in terms of money or fame or praise or power; they should desire to serve God by serving His people. As a side note, they will not receive the praise of their flock, but more likely they will be criticized by their flock!

**5:** 'Young men' are those who are not ready, able and or willing to lead. They must submit themselves to the leadership of the elders. All must clothe themselves with humility. Bear in mind that humility is the opposite of pride, and pride is the source of mankind's continued rebellion against God. It is opposed to God, and God is opposed to it.

**6:** Humble yourself under God's mighty hand the he may lift you up to a position of maturity in Christ. If we cannot humble ourselves in this way, we will never grow spiritually. Of course, another way of saying this is to say: Get over yourself!

**8-11:** Be alert for the enemy is near! The devil is waiting to strike, so we must be under control. We may find ourselves in spiritual combat, and we may suffer from it; but take heart for our God will see us through the trials, and we will come out of them stronger and more forceful in the Lord's service. Remain steadfast in your faith at all times and at all costs.