

Exploring 1 Peter

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PREFACE

When we make commitment to follow Jesus, trusting and surrendering our lives to him, God gives us a new life and a new identity as Christians. We are born again to a living hope and to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading kept in heaven for us. With this new life and identity as Christians, God calls us to live a holy life on Earth, preparing ourselves to live with him in holiness in Heaven. God calls all Christians from different cultural and religious backgrounds to be one holy nation and one people of him. God also gives us responsibilities to impact our societies and this world with his love and his gospel. To carry on our responsibilities will inevitably bring suffering to our lives. Just as Christ suffered in this world, carrying on his mission to save us, we will suffer for him as we carry on our mission to impact our societies and this world. We will face our enemies: our own sinful nature, this corrupted world, and the devil. A Christian life is a sacrificial life for the gospel and for the good of others. God will strengthen us in the midst of suffering and he works in all things to sanctify us.

“And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 5:10-11).

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Introduction

1 Peter is a letter written by the Apostle Peter to the churches in several Roman provinces. The letter was written between A.D. 60-68. At that time, Christians faced persecution from the Roman Emperor Nero, who was known to burn Christians alive. Many Christians had died when Peter wrote this letter and others were living in danger. Peter encouraged them to trust God, the Creator and Keeper of their souls. Peter teaches about Christian identity throughout this letter. He explains that Christians are born again to a living hope. Christians have a new life in Christ. Christians have roles and responsibilities in this new life that mark their identity as God's people. The Christian life is a sacrificial life. It is about engaging and impacting the world for Christ.

Lesson 1 – We are Born Again to a Living Hope

Read 1 Peter 1:1-2

What does Peter say about the identity of Christians (v.1)?

First, Christians are the elect people or the chosen people of God. Second, Christians are exiles or strangers in this world. Our home is in heaven. We belong to God and not to this world.

How are we elected or chosen by God (v.2)

There are three descriptions about our election:

1. We are elected according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. God's foreknowledge means God's counsel or purpose. "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son ..." (Romans 8:29). "Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will" (Ephesians 1:4-5). God foreknew us in Jesus Christ, meaning that he knew us intimately, having a personal and loving relationship with us. God chose us so that we will be holy and blameless. God's choosing us in Christ is his grace for us. We do not deserve it.
2. We are elected in the sanctification of the Holy Spirit. Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit in us, renewing our whole being after the image of God, and enabling us more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness. The Holy Spirit sanctifies us and will glorify us one day. He will present us as holy children of God, perfect for living with God in heaven for eternity.
3. We are elected for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with His blood. Sprinkling of the blood of Christ symbolizes that his blood has purified and cleansed us from our sins. The purification ritual using animal's blood in the Old Testament points to the purification of our sins by the blood of Christ. We obey Christ because he has sacrificed his life for us. He is our Savior and Lord.

Why are grace and peace important subjects in the life of Christians (v.2)?

Read 1 Peter 1:3-9

What did God do to us (v.3)?

The reason God makes us being born again is simply out of his great mercy. We are saved by God's grace alone. We were dead in our trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1). Our souls are dead, separated from God. When we are dead spiritually, we are unable to do anything that is good and pleasing to God. All we do comes from a heart that rejects God. God makes us to be born again in Christ out of his great mercy. God awakens our souls, gives us the gift of faith, and enables us to repent and trust Jesus as our Savior by faith. This is what it means by being born again. We can now do things out of love for him.

We are being born again: (1) *to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead* (v.3), and (2) *to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for us* (v.4).

What are the significances of these two?

This world is defiled and will one day perish. Our lives on Earth are fading and we will all die. However, the resurrection of Christ from the dead guarantees our physical resurrection where we will be clothed with imperishable, undefiled, unfading, and glorified body by Christ when he returns. We are spiritually born again to possess what is eternal and holy. This is our living hope—a certainty and reality that we will have.

Who guards our living hope and inheritance (v.5)?

How does our faith play a part in this (v.5)?

God who has saved us from sin and darkness will make our salvation complete when Christ returns (see Philippians 1:6). In this living hope, we are to be joyful (v.6). Joy and happiness are different. Happiness is outward and is a result of pleasant circumstances. Joy does not depend on circumstances, because it is inward. Joy comes from knowing deeply who God is and from having a personal relationship with him.

What is God's purpose of allowing us to go through various trials in this life (v.6-7)?

Our love for Christ, our Savior, brings joy to us. We will obtain our complete salvation when Christ returns. When we see him, we will burst in joy that is inexpressible filled with glory (v.8-9).

Memorize

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:3-4).

Lesson 2 – We are Called to be Holy

Read 1 Peter 1:1-9 for review.

Read 1 Peter 1:10-12

What does it mean by *the grace that was to be yours* (v.10)?

The Old Testament prophets prophesied about the coming of Christ—the Messiah, the Anointed One—to save God’s people from sin and darkness, but they did not know when Christ would actually come. They carefully observed how the Spirit of Christ would reveal it. The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Christ because he is sent by Christ. Through the Holy Spirit, the prophets prophesied the suffering and glories of Christ (v.10-11). For example, Prophet Isaiah says, “Out of the anguish of his [Jesus’] soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities” (Isaiah 53:11).

The Old Testament prophets were actually serving future believers (v.12).

Who sends preachers of the good news—the message of salvation in Christ (v.12)?

The Old Testament prophets were sent by the Holy Spirit. The New Testament apostles and present-day preachers are also sent by the Holy Spirit. The same Holy Spirit inspires, empowers, and sends messengers of the gospel—the good news of salvation in Christ—in the past, in the present, and in the future. Each Christian is a messenger and ambassador of the gospel. “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us” (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Why do you think the angels long to look into the salvation of each of us (v.12)?

Read 1 Peter 1:13-25

What is Peter’s admonition to us (v.13)?

What are the things in this world that can distract our minds from being Christ’s messengers?

What is the grace that will be brought to us at the revelation of Christ and why setting our hope fully on this grace will strengthen us?

What is Peter’s admonition to us (v.14)?

What are *the passions of our former ignorance*?

What is Peter's admonition to us (v.15)?

We are to be holy because God—who has called us—is holy (v.16), and his calling for us is a calling to holiness. God has saved us from darkness and sin, and has brought us into his light and holiness. He is our Father and we are his children (v.17). We are to be like him. His calling for us to be holy and to be like him is a glorious and privilege calling. This is the grace of God for us.

Why do we have to *conduct ourselves with fear throughout the time of our exile* (v.17)?

Fear of God is respect, admiration, and devotion to him. Proverbs 9:10 says “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom ...” Fearing God brings spiritual wisdom to us. Christians who have much spiritual wisdom live their lives with much fear of God—a life of respect, admiration, and devotion to him. We are called to be holy. Holiness can only be accomplished by living with fear of God—respecting him, admiring him, and giving all our devotion to him.

What should we remember about our lives (v.18-19)?

What does Peter teach us about Christ (v.20)?

We are made believers through our faith in Christ. Christ's death is a substitutionary death for us. He died on our behalf. God raised him from the dead and gave him glory. God accepted Christ's sacrifice on the cross bearing the penalty of our sin. This is the basis of our faith and hope in God (v.21). If God has redeemed us by sacrificing his own son for us, he will surely make our salvation complete.

God's truth in his Word, the Bible, is the means of our sanctification. We are to work alongside God in our sanctification by being obedience to his Word (v.22).

What does it look like to *love one another earnestly from a pure heart* (v.22)?

The Greek word used for *love* is *agape*, which means unconditional and sacrificial love. *Agape* love is the center of the Christian life. *Agape* love is the essence of Christians' covenant relationship with God and with one another. We are to love one another with *agape* love because we are all sinners saved by the mercy and grace of God. We have been born again to a new life in Christ (v.23). In this new life, we are to exercise *agape* love and to imitate the *agape* love of Christ for us.

What is the truth about the Word of God (v.23-25)?

Memorize

“As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct” (1 Peter 1:14-15).

Lesson 3 – We are Living Stones and Royal Priests of God

Read 1 Peter 1:10-25 for review.

Read 1 Peter 2:1-3

What is Peter's admonition to us (v.1-2)?

We have tasted that the Lord is good (v.3). God has saved us from sin and darkness, and has caused us to be born again according to his great mercy. He has called us to be holy and obedient children. We must put away all sinfulness from our thoughts, words, and actions. We need to grow in holiness by consuming our spiritual food, the Word of God.

Read 1 Peter 2:4-8

What does Peter say about Jesus (v.4)?

How was Jesus rejected?

What does Peter say about Christians (v.5)?

God is constructing a spiritual house (spiritual temple, church, or kingdom) in which we are the living stones of this house. God is drawing Christians from different nations and making us into one spiritual house. Each of us is a living stone. We are not dead stones, but living stones. This means God uses us to bring other people to Christ and become living stones, added to the construction of his spiritual house.

God also appoints us to be a holy priesthood. Each of us is God's holy priest in his spiritual house. Unlike the Old Testament priests, whose responsibility was to offer animal sacrifices to God, our responsibility is to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ.

What are spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ?

Just as the Old Testament priests who were the mediators between God and the people of Israel, we are also mediators between God and the people in this world. We pray for them and serve their needs with love and with the gospel of Christ. By doing these things, we offer spiritual sacrifices to God and bring people to Christ. Each day, God's spiritual house is growing bigger. God keeps bringing people to be his living stones. This is the reality of history; God's story, his story.

A cornerstone is a stone that constructors put as a foundation and all other stones will be set in reference to this stone. The cornerstone shapes the position of the entire structure. Jesus is the cornerstone of God's spiritual house, and all other living stones (Christ's followers) are set in reference to him (v.6).

How does Peter contrast those who believe in Jesus with those who do not believe in him (v.6-8)?

To believe in Jesus means to trust and surrender our lives to him by faith. If we have Jesus as the cornerstone of our lives, we will not fall down or be destroyed, because Jesus holds our lives. If we put our lives on any other foundations—false gods including money, career, etc.,—we will fall down and be destroyed.

Read 1 Peter 2:9-12

How does Peter describe Christians (v.9-10)?

Regardless the differences we have in our nationality, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, we have the same identity in Christ. We are one race, one holy nation, and one people of God. We are one royal priesthood of God's kingdom. We are all God's holy and royal priests. Our responsibility as citizens and priests of God's kingdom is to *proclaim the excellencies of God who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light*. We are God's witnesses to bring good news of his excellencies to other people.

What are the excellencies of God?

How does Peter describe Christians (v.11)?

When we decide to believe in Jesus, trusting and surrendering our lives to him by faith, we become Christians, sojourners, and exiles. We see that we are not of this world, but of the kingdom of God. We belong to him. In this world, we are sojourners and exiles. Sojourners mean permanent residents and not temporary tourists. The significance of our new identity in Christ is that God does not want us to assimilate and be like the world in sinful living. Neither God wants us to separate ourselves from the world—not being friends with people who do not believe in our God. God wants us to engage and impact the world for him—to be friends with people who do not believe in our God and to impact their lives. We are to meet their needs with love and with the gospel. We are God's witnesses, living stones, and royal priests. This is our identity in Christ. We are to bring others to God's spiritual house. This is how we offer spiritual sacrifices to God.

What is Peter's admonition to us (v.11-12)?

The Christian life is about glorifying God and doing good deeds to others; loving God and loving others.

Memorize

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light”
(1 Peter 2:9).

Lesson 4 – We are Called to Be Submissive to Authority

Read 1 Peter 2:1-12 for review.

Read 1 Peter 2:13-17

What should our attitude be toward the government (v.13-14)?

God has instituted civil government with authority to punish evil doers and to protect the citizens. Government is God's representative in this world. The power of government is given directly by God. Without government, there will be chaos. Government preserves our lives. Our duty is to obey and be submissive to government, including to unjust government. The Roman Emperor Nero was known to persecute and burn Christians. Peter asked Christians to be submissive regardless.

Why (v.15)?

In Acts 5:29, Peter says, "We must obey God rather than men." We need to be submissive to unjust government as God has commanded. We also need to be submissive to God as the Supreme Ruler. If our submission to government hinders us from obeying God's command, we must choose to obey God rather than government. This is the biblical principle for the Christian life.

What is Peter's admonition to us (v.16)?

When we believe in Jesus, trusting and surrendering our lives to him by faith, he sets us free from the power of sin. Now, we have freedom to obey and please God, which we did not have while living under the power of sin. Christian freedom is the ability to say *no* to unrighteousness and to say *yes* to righteousness and pleasing God. As servants of God, we are able to obey him, to do things out of love for him, and not to give in to our self-centeredness and sinfulness.

What is Peter's admonition to us (v.17)?

Fearing God is the core biblical principle for the Christian life. It means living a life of devotion to him.

Read 1 Peter 2:18-25

Peter did not support nor condemn slavery in this passage. He simply tells Christians how they should live their lives in the society as God's people. He gives practical help for slaves as Christian workers in particular, but the principles are applied to all Christian employees in general.

What should our attitude be toward our employers (v.18)?

Just as we need to be submissive to unjust government, we also need to be submissive to unjust employers. The same biblical principle also applies in the work place. If our submission to our employers hinders us from obeying God’s command, then we must choose to obey God rather than our employers.

When working for unjust employers, we may experience suffering. God wants us to persevere and remain as faithful Christian workers.

Why (v.19)?

To be *mindful of God* means to live with a God-centered mindset. It is to fear God and to live out of reverence for him.

Why is suffering for doing good things *a gracious thing in the sight of God* (v.20-21)?

Suffering is a calling for Christians. Peter will discuss more about suffering as a Christian in chapter 4. To be a Christian—a follower of Christ—is to suffer, just as Christ suffered in this world.

What happened to Christ (v.22-23)?

Just as Christ trusted God who judges justly, we must trust God for all things that happen to us, while remaining faithful to him.

What did Christ do for us (v.24)?

Christ died on the cross on our behalf. He died for the penalty of our sin, in order that we do not need to bear God’s judgment upon our sin. When we believe in Christ, trusting and surrendering our lives to him by faith, God forgives and gives us the righteousness of Christ. He sets us free from the power of sin, so we can live to righteousness.

What was once the condition of Christians (v.25)?

Who is the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls? What is the significance for our lives?

Shepherd is an Old-Testament image of God’s care for his covenant people. Christ is our true Shepherd. He watches and oversees our souls. Nothing can happen to us without his permission. What Christ permits to happen in our lives—including suffering—he uses all for our good (Romans 8:28). We should keep our faith in him.

Memorize

“... But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God” (1 Peter 2:20).

Lesson 5 – Christ-Centered and Spouse-Oriented Christians

Read 1 Peter 2:13-25 for review.

Read 1 Peter 3:1-7

What should Christian wives' attitude be toward their husbands? Why (v.1-2)?

It is common for married men and women to become Christians while their spouses still remain in skepticism or unbelief. When a married woman becomes a Christian, God wants her to be submissive and to have a respectful and pure conduct toward her husband, even if her husband is not a Christian. She may win her unbelieving husband to Christ by her conduct. God calls all married Christians to be Christ-centered and spouse-oriented in their conduct, as opposed to be self-centered and self-oriented. Our life-style should bring glory to Christ and should attract others to him.

A biblical definition of true love is in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, "Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

Married people who become Christians are able to love their spouse better than before they become Christians, because God has changed their hearts. God continuously purifies their hearts. God empowers them to love their spouse genuinely, to trust everything to him, and to endure all things.

Where should Christian women not look for their beauty (v.3)?

Where should they look for their beauty (v.4)?

God wants us to look after internal and not external beauty. The beauty of our hearts is what matters in God's sight. Our bodies will get older and uglier, but our souls are eternal. Gold and clothes will get dirtier and fading, but our character will continue to grow into spiritual maturity.

Why are we often times drawn to look for external beauty more than internal beauty?

A mark of growing Christians is that they look for God's praise and not people's praise. What God thinks about them is more important than what other people think about them.

Who is the example Peter gives from an Old-Testament figure (v.5-6)?

Both Christian men and women can learn from the examples of others in the history of God's people. Sarah was not a perfect woman. She made many mistakes and God forgave her. God has made her a role model for Christian women, regardless of her flaws. God has done the same to Abraham and David. God forgives our flaws and takes notice of our obedience to him.

What should Christian husbands' attitude be toward their wives? Why (v.7)?

When God instituted marriage, he says, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). A Christian husband is not to live separately from his wife. He must live with his wife alone and no others. God warns Christian husbands against committing adultery.

How do *living in an understanding way* and *showing honor* look like?

There are three reasons for Christian husbands to honor their wives.

1. Women are weaker than men physically. Therefore, men need to protect women. A godly Christian husband protects his wife. This is aligned with the biblical teaching about the church as one body of Christ. "... But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together" (1 Corinthians 12:24-26). In the body of Christ, the stronger ones always protect the weaker ones. The weaker ones get greater honor. There is harmony and unity in Christ.

2. Just as Christian men, Christian women are also heirs of the Kingdom of God. We are all elected, justified, adopted, sanctified, and will be glorified by God when Christ returns.

3. In order their prayers may not be hindered. If a Christian husband is not being a godly husband, his prayers will be hindered by his own acts of sinfulness and disobedience to Christ.

There is a general biblical principle for all Christians. If we live in disobedience to Christ, our prayers are hindered. We cannot pray smoothly while living in sin and disobedience. When our hearts are not right with God, it will hinder us from having a close relationship with him. There is conflict in the relationship. Often times, the reason our relationship with others is not right is because our relationship with God is not right either. Get right with God, and he will help us in our relationship with others that bring honor and glory to him.

Memorize

"Do not let your adorning be external ... but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart ..."
(1 Peter 3:3-4).

Lesson 6 – Suffering for Christ

Read 1 Peter 3:1-7 for review.

Read 1 Peter 3:8-17

What should Christians persevere to do (v.8)?

What does it look like to demonstrate those behaviors in daily life?

What else should we do (v.9)?

Christ has called us to be the light of this world. He wants us to forgive and bless those who do evil to us or who are unkind to us. Christ has commanded us, “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44).

In verses 10-12, Peter quoted Psalm 34:12-16 written by David.

What is Peter’s admonition to us (v.10-11)?

Not only we are to avoid evil and sin, but we are also to be intentional to do good to others and to pursue peace. As living stones, sojourners, and God’s royal priests, God has called us to engage and impact the world for Christ. We are to meet the needs of others with love and with the gospel.

What blessing and assurance do we have from God (v.12)?

In general, people appreciate the goodness others do for them. They may even return with goodness. However, if we do good and suffer for righteousness, we will be blessed by God. We should have no fear, nor be troubled (v.14). “For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous ...” (v.12). God watches over us and he blesses us.

What is Peter’s admonition to us (v.15)?

What should we do to be more prepared to make a defense for our faith and hope in Christ?

What impact may our good behavior bring (v.16)? How?

What is Peter’s admonition to us (v.17)?

Read 1 Peter 3:18-22

Peter gives us an example from Christ, who suffered for doing good and for our sake.

What has Christ done for us (v.18)?

For those who believe in Christ, trusting and surrendering their lives to him, have been made alive in Christ.

Verses 19-20 can mean:

1. Christ went to the spirits (souls) of unbelievers—who rejected God in the time of Noah and who were destroyed by God—and Christ proclaimed his judgment upon their rebellion.
2. Christ went to the evil spirits (demons)—who were corrupting mankind in the time of Noah—and Christ proclaimed his victory and judgment over them (v.22).

Though Christ suffered and died on the cross, his death and resurrection is a victory for him and us.

Baptism is a sign and seal of our union with Christ in his crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection. It signifies that we have trusted and surrendered our lives to Christ and that we are saved from sin and darkness. The water symbolizes the cleansing of our sins (v.21).

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:3-11).

Where is Christ now (v.22)?

How is Christ present with us?

Memorize

“For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil” (1 Peter 3:17).

Lesson 7 – Growing as Stewards of God’s Grace

Read 1 Peter 3:8-17 for review.

Read 1 Peter 4:1-6

In chapter 4, Peter continues the subjects of Christian suffering and Christians’ union with Christ. God has united us with Christ in his crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection. Christ has suffered and died for the penalty of our sin. When we suffer for Christ, it demonstrates that we are true followers of Christ. God has set us free from the penalty of sin and has made us holy people of him (2:9).

Has ceased from sin can mean: (1) we are no longer under the penalty of sin; or (2) our perseverance in suffering helps us to be more Christ-centered and stop sinning—stop being self-centered, or (3) if we die due to persecution, we are free from our sinful body and this sinful world.

How should we arm ourselves (v.1, see also Ephesians 6:10-20)?

How should we live our lives in this temporary body (v.2)?

How did the Gentiles (pagan foreigners) live their lives (v.3)?

They were surprised—thinking it was strange—to see the Christians did not join in their sinful behaviors. They even maligned (slandered or harmed) the Christians (v.4).

Have you ever been maligned or considered strange by your non-Christian friends, when you refuse to join a sinful act with them?

What would be the end of all evil doers (v.5)?

When Peter wrote this letter, many Christians were already dead because of persecution. They were *judged in the flesh*. Although they were dead in the flesh, they lived in the spirit just as God lives, because they believed in Christ when the gospel was preached to them (v.6). When Christians die, their souls return to God. “The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection” (Westminster Shorter Catechism Q&A 37).

Read 1 Peter 4:7-11

What should we do and why (v.7)?

Once, Jesus instructed Peter and other disciples, “Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:41).

What else should we do and why (v.8)?

What else should we do and why (v.9)?

The Greek word *philoxenia* is translated *hospitality*. *Philoxenia* literally means *to love strangers*. In the time of the Bible, entertaining and inviting strangers or travelers to one's home was very important.

How can we practice biblical hospitality—loving strangers—in our modern time?

Spiritual gifts are gifts of the Holy Spirit given to us at the moment we are spiritually born in Christ. Every Christian is given at least one spiritual gift by the Holy Spirit (v.10).

How should we use our spiritual gifts (v.10)?

The purpose of spiritual gifts is to build up the church of Christ—the spiritual house of Christ (2:5). Each of us is a living stone and a royal priest bestowed with spiritual gifts to serve and build up one another in the church. Christians can be ignorant by not knowing what their spiritual gifts are, by not understanding the purpose of their spiritual gifts, or by not using their spiritual gifts properly.

Do you constantly exercise your spiritual gifts for the building up of your church or are you somehow ignorant?

If we are ignorant, what are the consequences to us personally and to the church as a covenant community corporately?

By exercising our spiritual gifts and serving one another, we bring glory to God (v.11). When we serve God and other people, we grow to be more like Jesus. We grow in love for our Savior and his kingdom. We grow to be effective living stones and royal priests. We grow as stewards of God's grace.

Memorize

“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace” (1 Peter 4:10).

Lesson 8 – Faithful Christians

Read 1 Peter 4:1-11 for review.

Read 1 Peter 4:12-19

Is it possible for a Christian to experience a fiery trial (v.12)?

Why should we not be surprised when a fiery trial comes to us?

There is a false teaching in many churches—usually in non-denominational churches—that teach Christians will never experience suffering, because Christians are God’s children and God will protect them and make them prosper. God guarantees their well-being of life, including security and prosperity. This false teaching is called *prosperity gospel*.

What should our attitude be when we experience a fiery trial (v.13)?

Why?

Suffering for Christ produces spiritual joy in us. This joy is internal and given directly by Christ. Jesus says in John 15:11, “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”

When Jesus returns, he will judge all people according to what they have done. It is the Day of Judgment and the Day of Glory, when he will reveal his glory and glorify us. The vision of glorification has been the strength and the joy to many Christians. Many are not afraid to face death in the midst of persecution.

“More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Romans 5:3-5).

Why are we blessed when we suffer for Christ (v.14)?

The Holy Spirit of God is also called the Spirit of glory. When we suffer for our faith in Christ, it means what we do is for the glory of God. God is glorified in our suffering. The Holy Spirit rests upon us and he is glorified in us. It is a privilege for us to experience God glorified in us. We are blessed when God is glorified in us. God blesses us with spiritual and heavenly blessings

What should we not suffer for? Why (v.15)?

What should our attitude be when we suffer for Christ (v.16)?

Paul says, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith’” (Romans 1:16-17).

The Day of God’s Judgment is the Day of Glorification for God’s people. God will glorify us. God wants us to persevere and be faithful until the end of our lives. There are many Christians who do not persevere in faithfulness. God will complete their salvation as well, but his judgment will also come upon them. His judgment for those Christians is not a condemning judgment—because there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ (Romans 8:1)—but a disciplined judgment that brings purification and leads to holiness. Indeed, a holy and loving God does discipline his children. If God’s judgment upon his children is certain, his judgment upon those who reject him is more certain. Surely the outcome of God’s judgment for unbelievers is obvious (v.17-18). God has prepared a place for those who reject him, where they will be separated from God and all his goodness for eternity. Jesus says, “... the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 25:30).

Christian salvation is certain, because it is the work of God in us. However, God also wants us to persevere and be faithful to him. To suffer for Christ is a mark of a true Christian.

What is Peter’s admonition to us when we suffer for Christ (v.19)?

Our God is a faithful God and Father. Nothing happens in our lives without his permission. Therefore, if we suffer for Christ, it is according to his good will. “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified” (Romans 8:28-30).

God never promises to prevent fiery trials from coming to our lives, but God promises to be with us in our suffering. He will give us spiritual joy and strength. He will never leave us. He is always with us.

Memorize

“Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good” (1 Peter 4:19).

Lesson 9 – Shepherding the Flock of Christ

Read 1 Peter 4:12-19 for review.

Read 1 Peter 5:1-6

The primary responsibility of elders in a local church is to shepherd the church members. Jesus has commanded Peter to *feed his lambs, tend his sheep, and feed his sheep* (John 21:15-17). Peter passes this command to all church leaders, especially elders.

Peter reminds elders of the suffering of Christ and of the glory that they are going to partake when Christ returns (v.1). Christ has suffered for his people. He has redeemed them by sacrificing his own life. Shepherding the flock of Christ requires patience, energy, and sacrifice. Christ wants those who shepherd his flock to shepherd like he does. He will surely reward them. They will partake in his glory.

What are Peter’s exhortations to the elders (v.2-3)?

1. Shepherding the flock requires feeding them. A good shepherd feeds his flock with good food. Shepherds need to give the Word of God to the flock. The Word of God is our primary spiritual nutrition. We cannot grow spiritually without consuming the Word of God.
2. Exercising oversight means carefully watch over the people and supervise them. This requires much patience and wisdom. As lambs grow into sheep, new Christians need time to grow in spiritual maturity. Parents need time to raise their children to become adults. Shepherds need much patience and wisdom to shepherd and raise the flock of Christ. Shepherds also need to protect the flock from harm, such as false teachings, immoral and godless culture, and bad influences from others.
3. Shepherds also need to be good examples for the flock. Shepherds need to live in faithfulness, godliness, and obedience to the Lord, so that the flock can see and learn from them.

Who is the Chief Shepherd (v.4)?

As elders shepherd the flock of Christ, Christ will shepherd them. Christ will give guidance, wisdom, and strength to those who shepherd his people.

What will Christ give to those who shepherd his people (v.4)?

What is Peter’s exhortation to the church members (v.5)?

The word “younger” can mean those who are young in age or to all church members in general, who are generally younger than the elders.

How eager are you in pursuing humility?

What will God do to those who are humble (v.5-6)?

Read 1 Peter 5:7-13

What else should we do (v.7)?

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).

What else should we do (v.8)?

What does the devil do?

What else should we do (v.9)?

What can strengthen us to be firm in our faith and resist the devil’s temptations daily?

What is God’s promise for us (v.10)?

To be a Christian is to suffer and fight against the devil every day. Our spiritual battles are in every morning, every afternoon, and every night. When we struggle and suffer, remember that God—the God of all grace, who has called us to his eternal glory in Christ—will himself restore us, confirm us as his children, strengthen us in the midst of our struggle and suffering, and establish us in his kingdom. This is the true grace of God and that we should stand firm in it (v.12).

Christ has won the war against the devil. He has accomplished his mission to deliver us from the power of darkness. We can win our daily spiritual battles against the devil and his demons because Christ is with us. “To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen” (v.11).

Memorize

“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.” (1 Peter 5:6-9).

Resources

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