

Notes & Outlines

1 PETER

Dr. J. Vernon McGee

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WRITER: Simon Peter (1 Peter 1:1). Peter has been called the ignorant fisherman, but no man who had spent three years in the school of Jesus could be called ignorant, and the epistles of Peter confirm this.

A great change is seen in the life of Peter from these epistles. He had been impetuous, but now he is patient. The transforming power of the gospel has wrought this change in his life.

DATE: A.D. 64-67. Peter wrote his two epistles and was put to death sometime during this period. First Peter was written, evidently, around A.D. 64 and 2 Peter a short time later.

PLACE: Although the place from which it was written has been the preeminent problem of this epistle, it is given as Babylon (1 Peter 5:13). Many treat this in a metaphorical sense as meaning Rome. However, the legend that Peter was in Rome for 25 years preceding his martyrdom is grounded in the apocryphal writings of the heretical Ebionites.

The list of countries in 1 Peter 1:1 is from east to west, which suggests that the writer was in the East at the time of writing. Furthermore, Babylon is directly mentioned as the origin, and this epistle was written before Rome was called Babylon in a symbolic way in the Book of Revelation. Also, the direct manner of Peter's writing, to the extent of bluntness, contradicts the theory that he used Babylon in a symbolic way. If Peter had meant Rome, the chances are that he would have said *Rome*. There was at this time a large colony of Jews in ancient Babylon who had fled Rome due to severe persecution under Claudius, and at the time of writing bloody Nero was on the throne. This is in harmony with the theme of the epistle. In spite of the fact that Papias mentions the death of Peter as occurring in Rome, there is no substantial historical basis for this supposition.

THEME: Christian hope in the time of trial.

Peter deals with doctrine and handles weighty subjects. This is seen in his treatment of the great words of the gospel, many of which are gathered together at the outset (1 Peter 1:2) — elect, foreknowledge, sanctification, obedience, blood, and the Trinity. He used some of these words several times. Added to these are: salvation (used three times), revelation (with cognate words, used five times), glory (with cognate words, used sixteen times), faith (five times), and hope (four times).

Peter has been called the *apostle of hope*; Paul, the *apostle of faith*;

John, the *apostle of love*.

The word that conveys the theme, however, is *suffering* (which, with cognate words, occurs sixteen times). The word *hope* is tied to it — the Christian hope in the time of trial.

OUTLINE:

- I. **Suffering and the security of believers produces joy**, Chapter 1:1-9
- II. **Suffering and the Scriptures produces holiness**, Chapter 1:10-25
- III. **Suffering and the suffering of Christ**, Chapters 2 — 4
 - A. **Produces separation**, Chapter 2
 - B. **Produces Christian conduct**, Chapter 3
 - 1. Conduct in the home, vv. 1-7
 - 2. Conduct in the church, vv. 8-17
 - 3. Christ's suffering preached by the Spirit in Noah's day, vv. 18-22
 - C. **Produces obedience to the will of God**, Chapter 4
- IV. **Suffering and the Second Coming of Christ**, Chapter 5
 - A. **Produces service and hope**, vv. 1-4
 - B. **Produces humility and patience**, vv. 5-14

COMMENT:

I. **Suffering and the security of believers produces joy**, Chapter 1:1-9

v. 1 — “Peter”— his name was Simon, but the Lord gave him a new name. It is appropriate that he use it. (Also, Saul of Tarsus became Paul.)

“Sojourners scattered” is properly *elect who are sojourners*. This epistle is directed to Jews out of Palestine, located in Asia Minor.

v. 2 — “Elect ”— John 6:37 is the test of your election.

“Foreknowledge” is God's side of salvation. Here we have the work of the Trinity in salvation:

- “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God” — God the Father;
- “Sanctification of the Spirit” (practical sanctification) — God the Holy Spirit;
- “Blood of Jesus Christ” (proof of election), “obedience” — God the Son.

“Sprinkling” is a picture of Passover when blood was sprinkled on

doorposts.

“Grace” and “peace” — same formula as used by Paul.

v. 3 — *Looks to past.*

“Blessed” — a paean of praise. Only believers have a songbook.

“Begotten” refers to the new birth (see v. 23).

“Living hope” — Jesus Christ is alive because He arose from the dead. Peter was sure of resurrection (Luke 24:34).

v. 4 — *Looks to the future.* Israel was journeying to the Promised Land. The church is journeying to the New Jerusalem. Each believer has an inheritance.

“Incorruptible” is *non-destructible* — no germ, rust, moth, or enemy can destroy it.

It will always be new, it will never decay.
No night ever comes, it will always be day.
How it gladdens my heart with a joy that’s untold
To think of that land where nothing grows old.

“Undefiled” is *not stained* or *not defiled*. Our inheritance is not received illegally.

“Fadeth not away” is *not withered*. The loveliness of our inheritance is not withered; no season, change of weather, nor drought affects it; it is in perpetual spring.

“Reserved in heaven” is *guarded* (John 17:11, 12).

v. 5 — *Looks to present.*

“Kept” — a Scotsman who was economical had this one word placed on his tombstone. It was enough.

“By the power of God” (see John 10:27, 28).

v. 6 — This is the key verse of the epistle. Rejoicing in trials (or “temptations in the KJV) and suffering is a strange combination. Testing produces joy — it is the end result (Hebrews 12:11). *Suffering* occurs sixteen times in this epistle. Another outline of 1 Peter is:

- (1) Suffering and rejoicing — 1:1-13
- (2) Suffering and holiness — 1:14 — 3:22
- (3) Suffering and fellowship — 4
- (4) Suffering and glory — 5:1-4
- (5) Suffering and others — 5:5-14

v. 7 — “Precious” occurs seven times — the big fisherman uses this word.

As metal is subjected to the furnace in order to draw off the dross and refine it, the child of God is permitted to suffer for the purpose of refinement.

vv. 8, 9 — Simon Peter had seen Christ personally, but most of the believers had not. The Holy Spirit had made Him real to them, and they loved Him. Think what it will be when we do see Him!

II. Suffering and the Scriptures produces holiness, Chapter 1:10-25

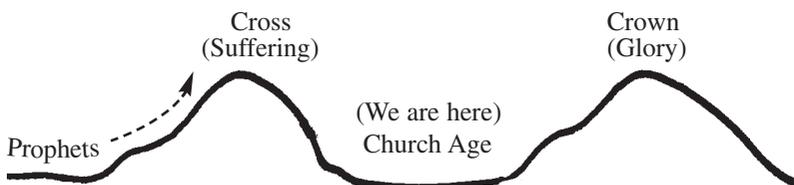
v. 10 — Salvation was a subject of prophecy. Prophets and apostles bore witness.

v. 11 — Prophets did not distinguish between the first and second comings of Christ.

Grace — suffering (v. 10; Isaiah 53; Psalm 22)

Glory — sovereignty (v. 11; Isaiah 11; Psalm 45)

The prophets saw these as two great mountain peaks. They did not see the valley between. We live in that valley. We can look backward and forward.



v. 12 — The apostles delivered the gospel. Although angels desired to, they were not permitted to preach the gospel.

v. 13 — “Hope” — Peter is the apostle of hope. The Scriptures give hope.

v. 14 — The Scriptures also lead to obedience (see v. 2).

v. 15 — Holiness is to the spiritual life what health is to the body. Be mature. Grow up.

v. 16 — The only holiness we have is in Christ. God wants us to grow that we may be like Him. This is the ideal.

v. 17 — The second reason to be holy is that the Lord Jesus Christ is also the Judge.

vv. 18, 19 — Is the life I am living worth the price He paid for my redemption?

v. 20 — “Foreordained” is *foreknown*.

“The sovereign choice of God in foreordination, election, and predestination logically originated in the divine decision based on His eternal omniscience of all possible plans of action. The order logically, not chronologically, is omniscience, divine decision (foreordination, election, predestination), and foreknowledge. As God’s decision is eternal, however, so also His foreknowledge is eternal. As foreknowledge extends to all events, it includes all that is embraced in election, foreordination, and predestination. Election is, therefore, according to foreknowledge, and foreknowledge is according to election, meaning that both are in perfect agreement.” (*The New Scofield Reference Bible*, Oxford University Press, 1967)

v. 21 — “Hope” — the resurrection of Christ is the basis of hope.

v. 22 — Transforming hope leads to obedience of the Scriptures and love of the brethren.

v. 23 — “Being born again” is *having been begotten again*. The Word of God is the instrument of God for producing the new birth. The Word of God is not sterile; it is living and powerful.

vv. 24, 25 — Man’s feebleness and frailty is compared to the grass in contrast to the Word of God that is life-giving and eternal (Psalm 119:89).

III. Suffering and the suffering of Christ, Chapters 2 — 4

A. Produces separation, Chapter 2

v. 1 — “Malice” is *congealed anger*. It is an unforgiving spirit.

“Guile” is the spirit of using cleverness to get even. Real separation is from the works of the flesh.

v. 2 — “Pure milk” is *spiritual milk*. Just as a hungry baby reaches for the bottle, a believer is to desire the Word.

v. 3 — At the moment of salvation a person is born with an appetite for the Word.

v. 4 — The living stone is Christ (Matthew 21:42-44). Peter identifies the stone as Christ:

This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. (Acts 4:11)

v. 5 — Believers are living stones that are built on Christ (Ephesians 2:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 3:11). They constitute a living temple in which spiritual sacrifices of praise, possessions, and one's person are presented.

v. 6 — This is a quotation from Isaiah 28:16 (see also Romans 9:33).

v. 7 — A better translation is "For you therefore which believe is the preciousness."

"Disallowed" is *rejected*. It refers to a tradition at the time of building Solomon's temple (see Psalm 118:22; Matthew 21:42; Exodus 17:6).

v. 8 — Christ is either a stepping-stone or a stumbling stone. Christ in the Word of God is a stumbling stone to many.

v. 9 — A Christian is to live a life commensurate with his position in Christ. This is normal Christian living.

"Chosen generation"— these are believers who belong to a chosen generation because of the new birth. If you want to know if you belong to the elect, the real test is: Have you come? (John 6:37).

"Royal priesthood"— believers are priests (see notes on Hebrews). Israel *had* a priesthood; the church *is* a priesthood.

"Holy nation"— believers are *holy* because of their position in Christ. They are a *nation* because they are a new entity in the world (1 Corinthians 10:32).

"Peculiar people" (KJV) — not oddballs or weird. It literally means *a people for acquisition*, a people for God's own possession.

"Show forth the praises" is *publish* or *tell abroad His virtues*.

v. 10 — The same statement is made concerning the Gentiles in Ephesians 2:11, 12.

v. 11 — Christians are to publish His praises by not manifesting the works of the flesh.

v. 12 — Believers who are in business show forth His praises by honesty.

vv. 13-15 — Believers who submit to governments and those in

authority reveal the praises of God.

vv. 16, 17 — A believer’s relationship to others speaks louder than the pulpit. We are to treat all men equally.

vv. 18-20 — Christians in labor relationships also reveal the praises of God when their attitudes and actions are mild and fair.

vv. 21-23 — The suffering of Christ is the theme of the remainder of this chapter. Christ suffered vicariously to set us an example as well as for our sins.

v. 24 — Christ suffered a vicarious, substitutionary death for our sins. “By whose stripes ye were healed” is a quotation from Isaiah 53, which reveals that Isaiah is not speaking of physical healing, but that which is more important and profound — healing from sin.

v. 25 — Humanity (both lost and saved) is called sheep.

B. Produces Christian conduct, Chapter 3

1. Conduct in the home, vv. 1-7

v. 1 — “Be in subjection” is *submitting yourselves*. This is a voluntary step, not a command. Obviously this refers to an unsaved husband who will not hear the Word of God, but who might be won by the conduct of the wife. This is real personal evangelism.

v. 2 — “Conversation” (KJV) is *behavior*.

v. 3 — This is a reference to Roman styles of arranging the hair and wearing of jewelry, which is very similar to modern styles. A Christian woman may win a husband by sex appeal, but she can never win him to the Lord by sex appeal.

v. 4 — Inward, not outward, adornment wins the lost husband.

vv. 5, 6 — Sarah and the wives of the other patriarchs did not hold their husbands by sex appeal.

v. 7 — Christian husbands are to love and honor their wives because of their intelligent understanding of the marriage relationship. The apostle indicates that the prayers of a family are not answered when the marriage relationship is not right.

2. Conduct in the church, vv. 8-17

v. 8 — Believers are to be *like-minded, sympathetic, tenderhearted,* and *courteous* (which means *humble-minded*).

v. 9 — This is turning the other cheek.

vv. 10, 11 — For the one who loves life and really wants to live, here is the key.

v. 12 — God has not guaranteed to hear the prayers of those who do evil, but He has guaranteed to hear the prayers of His own (see Psalm 34:15, 16).

v. 14 — Suffering for the right should bring joy to the child of God.

v. 15 — By our lives and lips we can sanctify God in our hearts. Our lives should bring glory to God. Also, the believer should be able to explain his position in Christ.

v. 16 — Be sure that those who speak evil of you are in error.

v. 17 — Be sure our suffering comes to us because of doing good, not evil.

3. Christ's suffering preached by the Spirit in Noah's day, vv. 18-22

v. 18 — Again, Christ's suffering for our sins is cited as the hope in our suffering.

v. 19 — When did Christ preach to the spirits in prison? In His day or in Noah's day? The next verse answers it.

v. 20 — "When" is the key word. It was in the days of Noah. Noah preached the gospel in his day. In Christ's day, the spirits of those men to whom Noah had preached were in prison, for they had rejected the message of Noah.

v. 21 — "Baptism" is *identification*. "By the resurrection of Jesus Christ" is salvation — a believer is identified with Him.

v. 22 — We are seated in Christ in heaven.

C. Produces obedience to the will of God, Chapter 4

v. 1 — God permits us to suffer sometimes to keep us from going into sin. A child of God with a new nature longs to please Christ in all things.

v. 2 — The child of God can no longer be satisfied to live in the flesh.

v. 3 — This is the life of the unbeliever.

v. 4 — The unbeliever cannot understand what has happened to a sinner when he is saved.

v. 5 — The believer knows that he must come before the judgment seat of Christ.

v. 6 — These were dead in trespasses and sins (see John 5:24; 11:25; Ephesians 2:1).

v. 7 — The coming of the Lord is an incentive to living in obedience to Christ.

v. 8 — See Proverbs 10:12.

v. 10 — Every believer has a gift.

v. 11 — Gifts are to be administered in the power of the Spirit.

v. 12 — “To try” (κτν) is literally *trying*; “happened” is *were happening*. These believers were already being tested by suffering. Suffering is not accidental, but it is normal Christian experience.

“Fiery trial” is literally *smelted in a furnace*.

v. 13 — The believer is partaking of Christ’s sufferings in his own suffering (see Romans 8:17).

v. 14 — The believer is to rejoice if he is reprovved for Christ’s sake.

v. 15 — The believer should not suffer as a sinner.

v. 16 — He is to suffer as a Christian.

v. 17 — Believers are to appear before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10).

v. 18 — The righteous are saved only by their faith in Christ.

v. 19 — This is the comfort of a suffering saint.

IV. Suffering and the Second Coming of Christ, Chapter 5

A. Produces service and hope, vv. 1-4

v. 1 — Peter calls himself a fellow elder. He never claimed a superior

place above his brethren.

v. 2 — The business of the elder or minister is to feed the flock of God. He is to do this willingly and not for money. The test of any cult or Christian organization is how much money it is spending on itself. Is it a religious racket?

v. 3 — The leader is an example.

v. 4 — The Chief Shepherd will reward His own for service.

B. Produces humility and patience, vv. 5-14

vv. 5, 6 — In view of the coming of Christ, humility should be the attitude of the child of God. Christ will establish justice and make things right when He comes.

v. 7 — “Care” is *anxiety* (see Matthew 6:25).

v. 8 — “Be sober” is *be intelligent*. The believer is in an evil and dangerous world.

v. 9 — See James 4:7.

v. 10 — Suffering is on God’s agenda for the believer.

v. 11 — This is a benediction.

v. 12 — This is a personal P.S.

v. 13 — “Babylon,” thought by some to be a figurative name, is, in our judgment, literal Babylon.

v. 14 — This is the final benediction.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS:

- Barbieri, Louis A. *First and Second Peter*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1977. (Fine, inexpensive survey.)
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