

# The Epistle of 1 Peter

## Special Lesson – Review

**Intro:** Since it has been a little over a month since our last class (December 12, 2006 - January 23, 2007 – almost a month and a half) I have felt led to spend this hour in a review of the Epistle of 1 Peter, to give us all a fresh start in this very important New Testament epistle.

The Apostle Peter, who was called primarily to minister to Israelites both before and after they were saved, was led by the Holy Spirit to give us two epistles in the New Testament. They were both directed to the same group of believers. See 1 Peter 1:1 and 2 Peter 3:1. So, while he had a special appointment to preach the Gospel to Jewish people, his epistles show that winning Jews to Christ was just the beginning of his mission. He was also called to see that they were established in the truth and taught to trust the Lord in the trials and tribulations that they experienced as the people of God. He spoke to them in 1 Peter, according to a better reading of the Greek text, as “elect strangers scattered.” “Elect” expresses the conviction of the Apostle Peter that they were truly the people of God. “Strangers” meant not only what the writer of the book of Hebrews had in mind as he described Old Testament saints as “strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Heb. 11:13), and as Peter himself called them in 1 Peter 2:11, but that in a special sense because they had been driven from their homes, probably in Jerusalem, and driven into an area in which they were “strangers,” or foreigners. Actually the word in Greek translated which is translated “strangers” in 1 Peter 1:1 is translated “pilgrims” in 1 Peter 2:11 and Hebrews 11:13. The point is that they were living among many people who did not know the Lord, and they knew that they did not really belong to them. Of course that is true of the people of God in all ages. We are in this world, but we are not really a part of this world. The lifestyle of a child of God is completely different from people who do not know the Lord. And this basically is the reason for many of the trials Christians experience.

The areas mentioned in 1 Peter 1:1 were in the area which is now occupied by the nation Turkey. There probably were more Gentiles in these areas than Jews, and probably many of the Jews were people who did not know the Lord. So it was a lonely, difficult situation in which Peter’s readers lived.

We all have felt that separation, or alienation. We may have neighbors with whom we can get along, but if they are not Christians, real Christians, we can never feel the bond that we feel with people who know the Savior. There is a difference from the way we feel about other believers. The people of the world have their own way of living which has little or nothing to do with God and His Word. Christians have a different way of life which is fully taught in the Bible.

Now in writing to these people, it seems to me that Peter did four things:

- 1) He kept going back to the Gospel.
- 2) He recognized that they were in the midst of trials, fiery trials.
- 3) He told them how they were to live in their trials.
- 4) He repeatedly pointed them to the hope that they had as believers, a guaranteed hope, the coming of the Lord. Sometimes he shows the interrelationship between these main points, that is, he may move from writing about the Gospel to moving on to speak of the coming of the Lord. In both of his epistles Peter identified himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ. This was not to set himself above them, but to emphasize the authority that he had received from Jesus Christ to minister to them in their need.

But before I get to these themes, let me point out another detail about this epistle which is also true of the other NT epistles. This is the frequent references to the Members of the Godhead. In this epistle God is referred to many times, not only by name, but also by pronouns that refer to Him. The same is true of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is also mentioned a number of times. This point, while not unique to 1 Peter alone, is characteristic of our Bible so that we can say that preeminently the Bible is a book about God – the Godhead,

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And we must never in the study of God's Word lose sight of that. The Bible contains many other themes, but its emphasis upon the Trinity is the main emphasis. Be sure that you notice this in 1 Peter.

Now as we resume our study of 1 Peter after our extended "layoff," I want to point out the way Peter emphasized these four themes, and I trust that it will lead to an even greater understand of the whole epistle. Let me repeat what they are:

- 1) The Gospel.
- 2) Trials.
- 3) The Christian life.
- 4) The coming of the Lord.

## **I. THE GOSPEL.**

"The Gospel" means good news. It is God's good news. It is good news about the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the message which tells us what God has done through Christ for the salvation of sinners. It is a very simple message in one way, and yet, on the other hand, it is the most profound message that has ever been proclaimed. In its simplest form it is what the Apostle Paul told the Philippian jailor when the jailor asked him, "What must I do to be saved?" And Paul's answer was, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). The Lord gave the Gospel to Nicodemus, a ruler among Jewish Pharisees, when He said,

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

The Bible teaches us that when Adam sinned, he not only brought the judgment of God upon himself, but, being the first man, he brought the whole human race under divine judgment, which meant that everyone since then has been born in sin, and faces eternal judgment. The remedy of our sinful condition is not in what we might want to do for God, but in what God has done by *giving* His Son to be the Savior of all trust in Him and in what He accomplished when He died on the Cross.

You all know what the Gospel is. You know that the Bible tells us in many places that salvation not only includes the removal of our judgment, but it includes the gift of eternal life. And all through our lives God is working in our hearts toward the ultimate goal of making us like the Lord Jesus Christ. So what Peter taught about the Christian life, and the hope that we have of being with the Lord, and like Him, is all a part of the Gospel. The Gospel includes our justification, our sanctification, and our glorification. And this is why the Apostle Peter mentioned the Gospel throughout this epistle. *You can't find a single book in the Bible which does not have something to say about the Gospel.*

But now I want to go through 1 Peter and point out the passages in which Peter was speaking about the Gospel:

- 1) 1 Peter 1:1-5.
- 2) 1 Peter 1:10-12.
- 3) 1 Peter 1:18-21.
- 4) 1 Peter 1:23-25.
- 5) 1 Peter 2:9-10.
- 6) 1 Peter 2:24-25.
- 7) 1 Peter 3:1.
- 8) 1 Peter 3:7.
- 9) 1 Peter 3:18-22.
- 10) 1 Peter 4:1.
- 11) 1 Peter 4:6.
- 12) 1 Peter 4:13.

13) 1 Peter 5:1.

## II. TRIALS.

This, beyond all doubt, is the main reason that the Apostle Peter wrote this epistle. Believers have different kinds of trials – discouragement, broken fellowship with other believers, pride, jealousy, lack of love, and others. But the main trial that Peter was writing about, was persecution. They had been driven from their homes because they were believers who were seeking to live for the Lord. They were in their present circumstances, not because they chose to be, but by necessity. This is the kind of suffering that we in the United States know very little about, and most probably the reason is because we are not as faithful and fervent as those early believers were in seeking to live to please the Lord. It usually started because of the attitude of former friends which is stated in 1 Peter 4:4. And it would proceed from just an attitude to, in some cases, the most physical forms of violent. Believers in those days often were called upon to lay down their lives for Christ and the Gospel. In the light of the seriousness of the circumstances of the people to whom Peter was writing, it is somewhat interesting that Peter did not speak more of their trials than he did. The explanation of the lack of reference to their trials, can be seen in the fact that his epistle was to comfort and encourage them to go on living for the Lord, not compromising in any way with the truth. For most of the epistle Peter was writing to all of the believers generally, but he did address himself directly to servants (1 Peter 2:18-25), wives (1 Peter 3:1-6), husbands (1 Peter 3:7), elders (1 Peter 5:1-4), young people, but then expanding it to all of the believers (1 Peter 5:5-11).

Trials are mentioned in the following passages:

- 1) 1 Peter 1:6-7.
- 2) 1 Peter 2:18-20.
- 3) 1 Peter 4:12-19.

## III. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

Trials do not change the way the people of God are to live. Peter makes this very clear. There is not one way of living when believers are relatively free from trouble, and another way when they are under attack. If anything, it is even more important for the believer under trial to be faithful in his life and to seek in all things to bring glory to God. See 1 Peter 2:9, 12; 1 Peter 4:11 and 5:10-11. Therefore, this subject claims the greatest number of verses in the epistle. Note that Peter's instructions are not given as suggestions, but as commandments which are binding upon the people of God. Remember that the old English word "conversation" means *walk*, not just *talk*, but *our talk is always a part of our walk*.

It is good in reading any book of the Bible to note particularly the commandments that are addressed to the people of God. There are five hundred or so in the NT. Note how the Lord spoke of His commandments in John 14:15, 21, 23; 15:10, 14, 17.

Note the following verses which were to apply to their daily living:

- 1) 1 Peter 1:3-9.
- 2) 1 Peter 1:13-25.
- 3) 1 Peter 2:1-10.
- 4) 1 Peter 2:11-17.
- 5) 1 Peter 2:18-25 – to servants, which probably included most of them.
- 6) 1 Peter 3:1-6 – to wives.
- 7) 1 Peter 3:7 – to husbands.
- 8) 1 Peter 3:8-17.

- 9) 1 Peter 4:1-19.
- 10) 1 Peter 5:1-4 – for elders.
- 11) 1 Peter 5:5a – for young people.
- 12) 1 Peter 5:5b-9.

What should be especially instructive and encouraging to all of us, is to note that after all that Peter has written, he concluded with a prayer that “the God of all grace” through their sufferings, would “perfect, stablish, strengthen, and settle them. *Only God can make our trials profitable for us.* So in all of the trials of life we need to be faithful in praying for ourselves, and praying for others whose faith is being tried in any way.

#### **IV. THE COMING OF THE LORD.**

The epistles of the NT, in particular, exhort us to look forward to the coming of the Lord. We are closer to that event than any generation of the Lord’s people has ever been. The Apostle Paul told the Roman church that “the sufferings of this present time are not to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18). The Apostle John said that “it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). The Apostle Peter, who had seen the Lord repeatedly during His earthly mission, spoke in 1 Peter 1:8 of the fact that the people to whom he was writing, had not yet seen the Lord, but indicated by various references to the coming of the Lord that some day they would see the Lord too.

Note how Peter wove references to the coming of the Lord throughout this epistle:

- 1) 1 Peter 1:3-5.
- 2) 1 Peter 1:7-9.
- 3) 1 Peter 1:13.
- 4) 1 Peter 4:7.
- 5) 1 Peter 4:13.
- 6) 1 Peter 5:1.
- 7) 1 Peter 5:4.
- 8) 1 Peter 5:10-11.

What a glorious prospect is ahead, an eternal glory, for those of us who know the Savior! As we await His return, how wonderful it is to have an epistle like 1 Peter to encourage us along the way to be faithful to the Lord, believing He has eternal blessings in mind for us whatever our trials might be.

End of Review