

## INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF

# 1 Peter

Writing in an evil and stressful environment, Peter calls suffering Christians to walk in holiness and hope, in confident joy, in humble service and submission. From the introduction (1:3-5) to the conclusion of this epistle (5:10, 11), we taste the flavor of our gracious Lord (2:3).

**What is it?** A letter of five chapters, written by the apostle Peter to believers scattered across Asia Minor (modern Turkey).

**Where is it?** After James; the 21st book of the New Testament.

**To whom was it written, and by whom?** To Christians (4:16), by a Christian (Acts 11:26, Galatians 2:11).

It was written to pilgrims (1:1), by a pilgrim: Peter's progress changed him from an impetuous, offensive manager (in the Gospels) to a gentle, loving leader (3:8-12).

It was written to living stones (2:5), by a stone: Peter's name means "small rock" (John 1:42). We, with him, are living bricks built on the solid rock of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (2:6-8; Matthew 16:16, 17).

It was written to suffering servants (4:12-19), by a suffering servant: Peter died a martyr's death; he may have been crucified upside down. Jesus is the true Suffering Servant (1:11; 2:21-24; 5:1).

It was written to fellow shepherds, by an elder shepherd (5:1, 2). Peter points us to the Chief Shepherd and Bishop of our souls (v. 4; 2:25).

truth in the Spirit. This is the new birth, bringing us to baptism, the symbol of salvation (1:3, 8, 21-23; 3:21).

**Third key:** growth in holiness, all the way from Christian infancy into fully obedient children of God. This is a joyous process, but can only be accomplished through trials (1:6-8, 14-16; 2:2; 5:10).

Peter moves naturally from salvation to the Christian walk. Here are his tips for spiritual strength and a victorious walk.

- Roll up your sleeves; use your mind; trust in grace (1:13).
- Love each other with a pure heart (1:22).
- Lay aside malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, evil speaking (2:1).
- Drink of the milk of God's Word (2:2).
- Abstain from lusts that war against the soul (2:11, 12).
- Control your tongue (3:10).
- Resist the Devil (3:11; 5:8, 9).
- Cast your care upon the Lord (5:7).

Peter strengthens his brethren on their journey as the Lord told him to do. He too was once weak and lost several battles of faith (Luke 22:31-34).

**Submission is . . .**

- to secular governments and kings (2:13-17).
- to employers and masters (2:18-20).
- between husbands and wives (3:1-7).
- to elders in the church (5:5a).
- to one another (5:5b).
- to God (5:6, 7).

**First Peter in a sentence:** Christians — born of God's Word, redeemed by His blood, members of His church — should prepare themselves for a life of holiness and humble service in the face of many trials and temptations.

First Peter is a letter of salvation, submission, and suffering.

**Salvation is described . . .**

- as past experience: We were begotten, or born again (1:3, 23).
- as present experience: We are being kept by God's power (1:4).
- as future experience: We shall receive the end of faith (1:5, 9).
- as redemption from our worthless lives (1:18, 19).
- as healing for our sin-sickness (2:24).
- as return from our wandering (2:25).

- as reconciliation with God (3:18).
- as glory yet to be revealed (4:13; 5:1).
- as the coming of Christ (1:5, 7, 13; 4:4, 5, 13; 5:4).

Jesus Christ gave Peter the keys to the kingdom (Matthew 16:18). In this epistle, Peter uses those keys to unlock salvation's door.

**First key:** to hear the Word of God, especially concerning the death and resurrection of Christ (1:3, 18, 19, 21, 23-25; 2:24; 3:18, 21).

**Second key:** to believe and obey this

### Submission is . . .

- not coerced, but free and voluntary (2:16).
- not dependent on the one being served (2:18).
- not useless, but redemptive under God (2:21-24).
- not partisan, but mutual and universal (3:7, 8; 5:5).
- not hopeless, but leads to exaltation at God's mighty hand (5:6)

### Suffering

#### The sufferings of Christ

- are an example for us (2:21).
- are for sins, to bring us to God (3:18).
- were in the flesh (4:1).
- were endured patiently, without threatening (2:23).
- were followed by glory for Him (1:11; 5:1).

#### Human suffering

- To suffer wrongfully while doing good is commendable (2:19, 20).
- To suffer for Christ and righteousness' sake brings blessing (3:14; 4:14).
- Some suffering is according to the will of God (4:19).
- It is better to suffer for doing good than for doing evil (3:17; 4:15).
- By suffering in the flesh, we may cease from sin (4:1).
- Brethren in the world also suffer from the Devil (5:9).
- After suffering, we get strength and stability from God (5:10).
- Suffering with Christ prepares us to share His glory (4:13).

#### How we should respond in suffering

- Greatly rejoice when various trials come (1:6; 4:13).
- Do not be afraid or troubled by evil threats (3:14).
- Adopt Christ's attitude regarding suffering (4:1).
- Do not think that suffering is strange

or unusual (4:12).

- Do not be ashamed to suffer, but glorify God (4:16).
- Commit ourselves to our Creator and do good (4:19).

The answer to the problem of suffering is neither resistance nor rebellion, protest nor paranoia, anger nor fear. It is faith and holiness and hope and love (1:2, 3, 13, 15-17, 21, 22; 2:22, 23; 3:8; 4:8, 19; 5:14).

#### Nugget sermons

Peter pleads for Christian qualities:

- Be holy (1:15, 16).
- Be submissive (3:1; 5:5).
- Be of one mind (3:8).
- Be tenderhearted (3:8).
- Be courteous (3:8).
- Be ready (3:15).
- Be serious, watchful in prayer (4:7).
- Be hospitable (4:9).
- Be examples to the flock (5:3).
- Be sober (5:8).
- Be vigilant (5:8).

#### Verses to memorize:

1:16 - "It is written, 'Be holy. . .'"

5:6 - "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand. . ."

#### What 1 Peter says about the Word of God

- We hear the gospel of Christ in it (1:11, 25).
- Prophets inquired diligently to understand it (1:10).
- Angels desired to look more into it (1:12).
- It is living, eternal, and incorruptible (1:23).
- It produces the new birth in unbelievers (1:23).
- It produces growth in new believers (2:2).
- Those who disobey it will stumble (2:8).
- Some who disobey it may be won by conduct (3:1).

#### What 1 Peter says about the Church of God

- It is a spiritual house, built up from living stones (2:5).
- Jesus Christ is its precious and chief cornerstone (2:6-8).
- It is a royal priesthood with spiritual sacrifices (2:5, 9).
- It consists of people chosen by God, special to Him (2:9).
- Its purpose is to proclaim the praises of God (2:9; 4:11).
- It is something new, and was not always so (2:10).
- Each of its members has received a gift (4:10).
- The judgment of God begins in it (4:17).
- Its elders are servants, eager, willing, not greedy (5:1-3).

5:7 - "Casting all your care. . ."

5:8 - "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary. . ."

**Difficult verses:** 3:18-21. When, where, and how did Jesus "preach to the spirits in prison," and who were these spirits? In what sense does baptism now save us?

**Doxology:** "May the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen" (5:10, 11).

**Next month:** Joel and Zechariah

#### Unworthy

A traditional story has Peter fleeing to avoid martyrdom in Rome. He meets Jesus and asks Him, "Where are you going?" Jesus tells him that He is going to be crucified.

Rebuked by his own cowardice, Peter returns to Rome and is crucified upside down, considering himself unworthy to be killed in the same manner as His Lord.