

Bible Class on 1 Peter

By

Matt Dabbs

<http://mattdabbs.com>

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Introduction to 1 Peter & 1 Peter 1

Peter was one of Jesus first disciples:

John 1:40-42 – the calling of Peter and his name changed to Cephas/Kepha (Greek: Petros = stone/rock & Aramaic: Cephas = stone/rock)

- Paul is the only one who calls him Cephas in the NT: 1 Cor 1:12, 3:22, 9:5, 15:5; Gal 1:18, 2:9-14
- Paul also calls him Peter – Gal 2:7-8
- Probably known as Peter to the Greek-speaking churches.

Peter was the first to confess Jesus as Messiah – **Mark 8:27-30**

Peter was one of the first witnesses of the resurrected Jesus – **1 Cor 15:5**

Peter was the first to convert a Gentile to Christianity – **Acts 10**

Peter was, though, a missionary to the Jews and not as much to the Gentiles – **Gal 2:7-8**

Peter, like Paul was killed for his faith under the rule of Nero in the 60s.

1 Peter's audience – scattered/diaspora Jewish Christians

1:1 – to the exiles of the dispersion (diaspora)

- This same word is used in the LXX in 12 places to refer to God scattering his people in judgment – Deut 28:25, Jer 13:14, 15:17; 41:17; Dan 12:2 for starters.

2:11 – aliens and strangers

- Alien – people who are not citizens and who don't have the protection of the law as citizens would have (McKnight, 47)
- Stranger – temporary resident
- Bottom line – you don't belong here. This is not your home.

These are primarily Jewish Christians that are scattered throughout the Romans world. How were they scattered? We don't know. A few possibilities

- Descendants of diaspora Jews that converted to Christ through missionaries
- Scattered Jewish Christians as we see happening in Acts: Acts 8:1 (scattered but only through Judea and Samaria), 11:19 – scattered further this time...to the edges of the Roman empire. We see in Acts 8:4 that as they scattered they converted those in the lands they settled!
- The cities are in modern day Turkey and are listed in order of a visit/messenger delivering the letter.

Marginalized – this is the word we might use today for people in this position. They don't have the weight of the law behind them. They don't have privilege.

Questions that raises in their lives: They don't have much at all! Who will defend them? What do they have they can hold on to?

Peter is going to answer that in spades!

Where is Peter writing from?

- 5:13 – from Babylon = Rome

So we have Peter writing in the 60s from Rome to scattered Jewish Christians in Turkey. They are aliens and strangers in the world and are also probably undergoing some persecution

Silas – 1 Peter 5:12

- It is probably that Silas is going to deliver this letter.

Persecution in the 60s

- James was killed earlier by Herod.
- Both Peter & Paul are killed by Nero around 65.
- Nero started persecuting Christians around 60
- Written some time between 60-65.
- Christians were persecuted:
 - Young religion
 - Founder was a crucified criminal
 - Don't pay homage to Caesar
 - The things we have talked about before regarding Roman misunderstandings of Christians
- Needless to say, the Christians Peter is writing to are going through a hard time and need some encouragement to remember who they are to persevere even under trial and tribulation.

Scot McKnight says this book is about "Christian life in modern society"

1 Peter 1

- 1:1-2 = typical Greek letter greeting
- 1:2 has a Trinitarian formula
- 1:3 blessing and thanksgiving section.

1:3-5 – Reminder of What God has done for them

- New birth has come from God to us and it is God's gift in that it comes only by his mercy.
- This new birth gives us a living hope, coming through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- New birth and resurrection are tied together – it is new birth after death/life after death...not just about eternity with God in heaven after we die – Peter says we have this new birth, coming through Jesus' resurrection, **now!**
- **Why is this important?** Remember their situation...they are at the bottom of the barrel and it is tempting to try to elevate yourself in the eyes of the world at the expense of God.
- **No one can take it away** – another important message for those who have few to no rights in the world...those who have had much taken away from them

1:6-9 – This salvation is protected and it has real benefits, now.

- Salvation – you do have something to rejoice about!
- Faith brings blessings that will result in the biggest blessing – the salvation of your soul!

Where do you find your joy?

How does knowledge of your future salvation bring you joy and blessing today?

How has it helped you get through a very difficult time?

1:10-12 – further encouragement

This section serves to further build and encourage their faith by linking them to two groups that they had admiration for:

- Saints and prophets of the past
- Angels who were not let in on the secrets that have been revealed to these Jewish Christians through Christ.

That is a lot of information but it all leads to practical application in their everyday lives:

1:13 – therefore

Since God has done all of this for you...

What you do matters:

1. Holiness
 - a. *Why the call for holiness amidst their trouble?*
 - b. As Christians we are called to a new way of life...old things have to be put behind.
2. Judgment
 - a. 1:17 – the reality of judgment. Message is what you do really matters. Don't try to justify evil.
3. The sacrifice of Jesus (a high price was paid for you).
4. How you treat each other matters (1:22-25)
 - a. *How does he say they are to treat each other? Why is this important to be pointed out?*

1 Peter 2

2:1 - "Put off, therefore, all malice, all guile, insincerity, envy and all slander."

- Outside the Bible, "Put off" is usually used of clothing and often in connection with baptism
 - Put off your clothing and enter the waters of baptism
- NT – this word is used to get rid of sinful ways of doing things (Rom 13:12, Col 3:8, Eph 4:22, James 1:21, Heb 12:1)

Why do this? – therefore points us back to chapter 1 where Peter concluded by talking about **holiness**. If you are going to be holy you have to rid yourself or put off things that are sinful.

Notice that these sins are relational – they involve evil thoughts and actions toward other people. These are disjunctions and divisions in the body. Peter tells us that these things affect our holiness, will bring us judgment and result.

How we treat each other matters.

Once you put off the former ways...then what?

"We need to learn what holiness means in all areas of life...Peter is calling his people to a lifestyle that begins and ends with the theme of holiness and we need to realize that holiness is not just a call to read the Bible daily, to pray daily, to be faithful attendees of church, to be tithers, or to follow any other Christian virtues that have become the essence of Christian living. Holiness is a thirst, a drive to know God in his fullness and an unashamed commitment to obey God whatever it costs and wherever we are. It begins in the morning, directs our path during the day and leads us to confession and praise in the evening." – Scot McKnight, "1 Peter NIV App", 138

Desire – "like newborn babies, crave"

- This is a strong need that results in a strong desire for something.
- This word is usually used in the NT by Paul to talk about his longing for the Christians in the churches he writes to.

Desire is a very important topic and one that we don't often address. We often talk more about the head than the heart but both are important.

2:3 - Tasting the Word of the Lord

- Look back at 1:23 – they were born again through the word of God.
- Seeing Jesus as food is foreign to us – Lord's Supper
- This is about experiencing Jesus
- When you experience Jesus it should increase your desire for him.

These are terms that we don't normally talk in. We want to talk about understanding Jesus, knowing God, etc...that is all right and good and in line with having faith. But it moves beyond that to meaningful connection with Christ.

Serious discipleship means serious time in the word of God.

It is hard to even go forward until we are committed to doing that.

Conversion of our desires – from the fleshly sinful things to the eternal things that starts and is complimented by our time in the word.

The house that God built (2:4-8)

- Notice all of this is the work of God.
- Notice it all begins with Jesus
- Then it moves to including us

Temple of God

- We think of the church building as our building...but we are the building. We are the temple.
- Temple is where the divinity dwells
- We are that house
- We are that priesthood
- Implication – God's dwelling place has been not just among us but in us.

Inclusion in ministry

- We are all priests offering the spiritual sacrifices.
- In Israel only a certain group (Levites) could be priests. They were one small tribe out of the whole of Israel.
- In a sense the priest has more access to God and more participation in ministry and worship to God than the average Israelite.
- That is now open to all
- Acceptable sacrifice: It isn't the Law that makes the sacrifice but Jesus Christ (through Christ).

Remember, this is the continuation of the holiness discussion in chapter 1

- Priests, temples, the presence of God – these are all things associated with holiness
- Look back at 1:13-16 that kicked this conversation off
- Was tied to chapter 2 in verse 1 with the "therefore"

We are ridding ourselves of the unholy nature of sin in order to be who God is making us to be.

Living in a hostile world (2:11-25)

So now the question arises – if we are to be holy, different, set apart...not live as the world lives then how are we to live in this world? Let's take this up a notch – how are we to live in a world that is hostile to the Christian faith?

Peter is optimistic about the future, even though the situation itself doesn't warrant that. They are suffering and will continue to suffer.

Why can Peter still be optimistic about the future and the path forward?

Because Peter is looking at the right things, things from God's perspective.

- Their faith will grow
- God is faithful and more powerful than the world
- We know who the ultimate victors are
- We will not be "put to shame" (2:6)

What is Peter's advice to Christians (even us) living in this world?

Submit yourself to the authority you find yourselves under:

- Free people submit to the government
 - Good comes -
- Slaves to their masters
 - Good comes – commended before God
- Wives to their husbands
 - Good comes – win unbelieving spouse

Why is it important that we live godly lives?

- Some point to Rom 12:20 – that by doing good you will pour hot coals on someone's head.
- As you live godly lives in this world you have a better chance of winning people to Jesus.
- We all have a reputation...and it must be a good one.

So how do you go about having a good name in the world? Show that you are someone who is respectful of the authority they have been placed under.

2:21 – Christ serves as an example of obedient submission in his submission to God.

2:23 – Jesus didn't have to fight back. He didn't have to because he trusted God who is the just judge.

Truth doesn't need defended. God doesn't need defended. There are some fights just not worth fighting. Instead live with integrity and humility and in full submission to the authority you have been placed under.

1 Peter 3

1 Peter 3:1-7 (Wives and Husbands)

This is a continuation of the instructions that Peter began back in chapter 2. First, we have to understand how women were viewed at this period of time,

“Dominant among the elite was the notion that the woman was by nature inferior to the man. Because she lacked the capacity for reason that the male had, she was ruled rather by her emotions, and was as a result given to poor judgment, immorality, intemperance, wickedness, avarice; she was untrustworthy, contentious, and as a result, it was her place to obey. Such a view of women was also sedimented in legal tradition: women could not vote or hold office, could not take an oath or plead a case in court, could not be the legal guardian of their own minor children and were legally dependent on either their father or guardian.” (Achte-meier, 206)

What is being taught here?

First, notice which women Peter is addressing – married women whose husbands are not Christians. At that time it was fully expected for a woman to follow the religion/gods of her husband.

Let’s put this in context going back to where this whole section began back in 2:13,

“Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him...”

- Do this for the Lord’s sake – in other words, God has a purpose in us living well under the authority we are placed.
- Peter will spell this out more specifically as he goes.
- Earthly authorities:
 - 2:15 – silence foolish men
- Slaves and masters:
 - 2:20 – commended before God
- Wives and husbands
 - 3:1-2 – that they be converted to Christ
- One another
 - 3:9 – inherit a blessing

This doesn’t mean that all of these things are always perfectly acceptable to Christ and yet they exist and how are we, as Christians, to live under these authorities we find ourselves under?

Back to Christian wives and unbelieving husbands.

- Achtemeier points out that in that day women had to follow the gods of their husbands
- Christian women wouldn’t do that

- So living peaceably at home had the affect of soothing things out as much as possible and in doing so might lead to converting the man without her having to use words/teach him and further rub things in his face.

3:3-6 – it is what is on the inside that counts

- The other day Jonah (6 yrs old) wore a shirt to school that embarrassed him. I assured him that he was more valuable than anything he was wearing because he is so kind, loving, smart, and my son.
- This may still have an evangelistic component – that their unbelieving husbands will be turned to Christ because of their virtue
- Focus on what is important to God first and let everything else work out around that.

Peter is not condemning wearing jewelry, although **1 Tim 2:9-10** does say women are not to wear those things. One thing that may play into 1 Tim 2 is that Paul is writing to Timothy who is in Ephesus and in Ephesus they had Isis and Artemis cults that were big about women being the authorities and decking themselves out in these things. God is interested in the heart and internals rather than extrenals.

3:4 – “it is rather the person hidden in your heart, with that imperishable quality of a humble and quiet spirit. It is [an adornment] most lavish in God’s sight.” (Ramsey, WBC)

NIV – “inner self” misses something there. Achtemeier calls this the “secret person”

Greek – kruptos (where we get cryptic) = secret.

Gentle/quiet – also a word used in 1 Tim 2 in verse 2 – that Christians in general are to lead peaceable lives. In other words, don’t make a fuss and mess up your witness.

This is something that needs to be taught today – people don’t know this. The way you present yourself in public can affect your witness. Our problem is people don’t think they have a witness to begin with!

All are under the authority of God, to submit to him. Women are also to submit to their husbands who are supposed to be submitting to God (now, this is not the context of 1 Peter 3 but it is the context for most in our Bible classes – Christian husbands and wives).

3:7 – Husbands toward wives

Weaker = physically. In the Greco-Roman world (as mentioned in the quote above) their weakness would have been understood to be in a lot more areas than physicality.

NIV – treat them with respect misses the point. It says “pay them honor” which is a big deal in their world.

Literally – “living with one’s wife knowingly” (McKnight, 186) – has a sexual connotation but is far more than that.

“fellow heirs” of the gracious gift of life...this is Christian husbands with Christian wives. Remember how God sees them.

If the men don’t follow this teaching then their prayers will be hindered/thwarted.

3:8-12 Last group – one another

The way we treat one another has an affect on our attempts to reach people for Jesus.

- Live in harmony with other Christians
- Sympathetic
- Love
- Compassionate
- Humble
- Turn from evil, do good
- Just as God will turn from those who treat the weaker vessel poorly, God will turn his face from those who do evil toward others (3:12)

3:12ff – it is not just slaves who will suffer for doing what is right but free people as well.

There is a holistic message you get as you read across all of this:

- Be peaceable wherever you find yourself
- Be in harmony with others
- Treat people with love, honor and respect
- Do good to others...if you suffer, God will take care of you

3:13-22 – Suffering for doing good

- Fear had come up before in 3:2 – when a godly women has fear/reverence for the Lord
- Now there is no fear of the world for those who have proper fear of the Lord.

3:14 - Do not fear what they fear and do not be *disturbed*. The word literally means cause movement by shaking (BDAG). Do not be unsettled. Same word Jesus used in John 14:1 – do not let your hearts be troubled.

Application – How does the world get you stirred up? Shaken up? Why do we allow non-godly things to get us worked up like we do?

Fear.

Fear drives people to say and do some crazy things. We fear the government or a group of people or whatever...motivates people to action. Often bad action.

Antidote – 3:15 – be ready to tell people about Jesus...he is the hope that you have that allows you to live at peace in a crazy world and not fear! People will want to know how you “keep your head about you when all others are losing theirs!”

How you give the answer matters – with gentleness and respect

3:17 – same line over again from 3:13-14 & 2:14-15, 2:20

Jesus was also drawn into the discussion back in 2:21 and how he responded to unjust suffering.

Last, Peter points them to their own salvation. They, like Noah, have been saved through the water...the water of baptism. Point being, don't be concerned about what the world may try to do to you, be reminded of what God has already done and what Christ is still doing on your behalf!

Finally – 4:1-2

Living for God as a result of being saved through the water, dying so you don't have to die.

1 Peter 4 – Suffering for God

Start with the conclusion in mind – **1 Peter 4:19**

- 1 Peter 2 – living under governmental authority and slaves may suffer unjustly. Do what is right because you are pleasing God
- 1 Peter 3 – wives of unbelieving husbands – doesn't address suffering although I am sure some did for not following the religion of their husbands
- 1 Peter 4 – Suffering for doing what is right

In all of these instances we are reminded that you do what is right regardless of your circumstances.

1 Peter 3 ended with a section on doing good even though it brings you harm:

- 3:13 says directly that
- The supporting evidence was the example of Jesus who through his obedient submission won victory over the very powers that tried to shame him.

Why is doing the right thing important?

- Peter would say
 - things will tend to go better for you
 - it may win people to Christ
 - it pleases God when you do

Why is suffering not the ultimate decision maker for what we choose to do or not do?

We may suffer for doing what is right and get rewarded (in this world) for doing what is wrong. Suffering is not the standard we use. God is the standard.

So how do we go about doing good even though we suffer?

4:1-3, 7-11

1. 1-3
 - a. Follow Christ's example
 - b. Have Christ's attitude
 - c. If you have died to sin you are done with sin
 - d. You already spent a bunch of time doing those things that lead to death...don't waste any more of your time.
2. 7-11
 - a. The end is near – live in light of that
 - b. Love each other deeply
 - c. Offer hospitality
 - d. Do not grumble
 - e. Use your gifts to serve each other
 - f. Speak what you know God says

Living in light of judgement (4:7)

He tells us how to do this in 4:8-11

We used to talk a lot about judgment and judgment even used to be a way Christianity would motivate people to behave. We have moved away from that but Peter still finds a place for it here in chapter 4.

In light of Jesus' return we need to live how? (4:7)

Alert & of sober mind

Alert – I have no idea why the NIV went with alert. This word means to be self-controlled “keeping one’s head” (BDAG)...NRSV says “serious”

Hermania, 294 says this has to do with “the ability to see things clearly for what they are”

Sober mind – BDAG says the word means “self-controlled” or disciplined.

Hermania, 294 says this word is the exact opposite of drunkenness. “remaining alert and in full possession of one’s sound mind” ...that is why NIV went with “sober mind” so it literally means sober or of sober mind.

Why is it important that we see things clearly, for what they are?

How does living as Peter describes in the verses that follow show that someone is indeed living in light of the return and judgment of Christ?

Conclusion

You are going to suffer...it isn't going to be nice. Know that you didn't go first through this. Jesus did. Know what lies in store – eternal life. Hang in there!

How does Peter tell them to respond to suffering?

- 4:13 – rejoice
- 4:14 – you are blessed
- 4:16 – praise God

Last, we must commit ourselves to God.

1 Peter 5

Suffering and glory

This theme continues on through chapter 5. They are going to suffer just as Christ suffered. They will move on to glory just as Christ moved on to glory. Hang in there.

To the elders...(5:1-4)

Living under the authority you have been placed:

- Living under the authority of the governing authorities – 1 Peter 2
- Slaves and masters – 1 Peter 2
- Wives and husbands – 1 Peter 3

Now the elders – they work and minister under the authority of the Chief elder/shepherd...Jesus Christ.

How are they to shepherd the flock?

- With proper motivation
- With proper care
- In light of the return of Jesus Christ.

The attitudes Peter says cannot be part of being an elder have a few things in common:

- All trying to be like Jesus
- Incompatible with suffering
 - If you are in it for dishonest gain, you will jump ship when the suffering comes.
- These are things all Christians should strive for

We talk more about qualifications for elders than qualities of a good elder:

- Kind, compassionate, in touch with people, etc.

What do you think makes a good elder?

When was a time an elder made an impact on your life?

How might we better encourage our elders?

To the young men (5:5-7)

It is a little hard to tell if the instructions to the young men carry on through verse 11 or stop around verse 7 and begin a new set of instructions to the Christians there as a whole. We will deal with it as stopping at verse 7 and carrying out to church-wide instructions from 5:8-11. All of these instructions could apply to anyone...not just the young

Connecting to the elders:

- Just as the elders in the congregation have responsibility to submit to the chief shepherd...so do the younger people
- This is like husbands/wives, slaves/master, Christians/governors
- Now we have elders/younger people.

Gender issue here – literally this is young people masculine = young men. Just like English used to be, Greek used masculine for generic. Newer translations often just go with “younger” rather than young men.

There is nothing specific about this to think it only applies to the young men. Young women...those who are younger also need to be humble. These principles still apply. This is not a call on young women to be proud!

Clothe yourself with humility

- Only time this word is used in the NT – put something on.

How do you “put on” humility?

Why is that an apt metaphor for how humility works?

- Humility must go all the way...through and through.
- You cannot just cover a part of yourself with humility and it work – you aren’t truly humble if you do!

Let us not be found in the nakedness of pride

- Humility takes away our shame.
- Pride tends to bring shame – elevate yourself and you tend to be brought down = shame
- We don’t think in those terms but they did and they assigned a lot of value to honor/shame.

We see this in 5:6 – let God be the one who exalts you. Then you will really be exalted.

5:7 – cast your anxiety on him...why? Because he cares for you.

- This word also means worry or cares.
- A needed reminder in the midst of persecution

There is a healthy form of this – 2 Cor 11:28 – Paul had concern for the churches.

How might knowing that God cares for you help you with anxiety?

5:8-19 – Dealing with temptation

Temptation is going to require effort. You are going to have to fight it. You are going to have to know who you are up against and act accordingly. Satan does not have your best wishes in

mind just like a lion does not have the best wishes of the gazelle in mind. So be alert, disciplined and ready for action.

Also, know that you are not alone – the family of believers is undergoing this same kind of suffering.

What is the result of the suffering? (5:10-11)

It all goes back to God who will do what He will do...exalt the humble. Bless those who suffer.

Suffering costs us something. It can cost us our health. It can cost us a lot of energy and mental drain. It can cause us pain, suffering and loss...even loss of life.

God will restore, make you strong and steadfast (5:10)

Here is our hope. God is watching. God knows. God will make it right again. If you are going through a hard time do this:

- Make sure you are humble
- Make sure you are standing up to the temptations you face
- This means you are dealing with life with integrity
- That is all we have on our end...God has to make up the rest!

It is tempting to lack integrity when you suffer for doing what is right:

- Entitlement – I am suffering this for God...he owes me something.
- No He doesn't!
- Hang in there
- Don't rationalized entitlement
- Have integrity
- Watch and see what God will do.

Final Greetings (5:12-14)

Babylon = Rome

Tradition is that Mark wrote his Gospel from Rome with the help of Peter. It is as if the Gospel of Mark is Peter's Gospel. Peter here links those things together.

Peace out!