

1 Peter Introduction – Part B

As we continue with the introduction to [1 Peter](#), [1 Peter 5:12](#) offers some insight into why Peter is writing this letter when it says,

1Pe 5:12 By Silvanus, our faithful brother as I consider him, I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God in which you stand.

Peter understands all of the difficulties, struggles, and trials that these believers are facing because of their faith in Christ, and so he exhorts them very strongly to “**stand**” in the grace that God provides for those moments when trials often seem to have a way of overwhelming them. The way that the NKJV actually translates this verse is a little weak because the word “**stand**” is actually a verb in the imperative mood. The NIV, ESV, AMP, and NASB actually capture the idea of what Peter is saying much better because they make the last phrase a separate sentence so that it reads much more as a command. For instance, the ESV and NASB read “**Stand firm in it.**” The NIV reads “**Stand fast in it**”. The AMP may be the best and says “**Be steadfast and persevere in it**”. Those four (4) translations pick up more on the impact of what Peter is saying. Peter’s message is that the grace of God is more than sufficient to strengthen these believers during their trials and that they are to resolutely remain firm and steadfast in the grace that God will give them.

The problem that Peter’s recipients were experiencing was one of escalating suffering and persecution that they were having to endure. No matter how strong or how mature someone may be in the Lord, having to endure suffering and persecution is never easy, never pleasant, and never anything that you just want to happen to you. As Christians in America, we have never had to suffer for our faith. However, in most other parts of the world, Christians are held in great reproach. They are constantly criticized, ostracized, and detested, and in many countries their life is always at risk. So, what Peter does throughout the letter is to provide various kinds of encouragement that were directed at strengthening the believers both mentally and spiritually. For instance, Peter reminded them of their election and the heavenly inheritance that they had been promised by God. Notice [1 Peter 1:2-4](#),

1Pe 1:2 elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied. ³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

Peter encouraged them on how they should respond to difficult circumstances. He talks about how they should respond to the government in [1 Peter 2:13-17](#),

1Pe 2:13 Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, ¹⁴ or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and *for the* praise of those who do good. ¹⁵ For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men-- ¹⁶ as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. ¹⁷ Honor all *people*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

Probably the most significant verse and example in the entire letter is [1 Peter 2:23](#) which says,

1Pe 2:23 **who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;**

What a picture. This is one of the great encouragement verses in the New Testament because it tells the believer exactly what to do in the midst of very trying times. Believers are to fully commit themselves to their heavenly Father in exactly the same way that Christ did. The word “**committed**” is “*paradidomai*” and simply means to surrender to someone, to entrust yourself into their care.¹ For every believer, there will always come that time in their life where they have to decide who they want to be in charge of their life – themselves or God. Everyone has to face that decision. No one is exempt. This verse is the answer. Jesus Christ is always the believer’s example and model to follow. If when He was reviled and when He suffered He did not retaliate and fight back, then neither should the believer. Why did Christ respond that way? It was simply because He wanted His Father to be in complete control of His life, and He fully committed Himself to that.

Peter identified how they were to respond to very difficult masters in [1 Peter 2:18-21](#). It must be remembered that at the time of his writing this letter that nearly 40% of the Roman Empire were slaves, and for the majority of Christians who were slaves, their masters were not generally taken to kindness.

1Pe 2:18 **Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. ¹⁹ For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. ²⁰ For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. ²¹ For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ²² "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth";**

In [1 Peter 3:1-7](#) Peter talks about how wives and husbands are to relate to each other – with honor and understanding. Peter reminds his readers that they will need to endure suffering in [1 Peter 4:1](#), but once again that Christ was their example.

1Pe 4:1 **Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,**

Peter talks even more about the potential suffering that they will have to endure in [1 Peter 4:12-17](#).

1Pe 4:12 **Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; ¹³ but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. ¹⁴ If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. ¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. ¹⁶ Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.**

[1 Peter 4:19](#) is his kind of summary statement on suffering when he says,

1Pe 4:19 Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to *Him* in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

Then in [1 Peter 5](#) he gives instructions to those who are shepherds and elders, as well as how believers are to resist the enemy by remaining “sober”, “vigilant”, and “steadfast in their faith”. Without overstating the issue, this is a very exhortative letter. It is filled with encouragements from beginning to end and has 37 imperative tense verbs almost evenly spaced from chapter to chapter. [1 Peter](#) is considered one of the most exhortative letters in the New Testament.

It is always amazing to me how honest and transparent the Bible is relative to the various trials and difficulties that believer’s may have to endure at different times in their life. The Bible never paints some kind of idyllic, pleasant, blissful picture of the Christian life - never. That is one of the crucial misconceptions within most Charismatic teaching that God’s purpose for people’s lives is that they be healthy and wealthy and that just by confessing a few words that they can alter the events of their life to remove all of the negative events that may be happening to them. I have taught it often, but the Scriptures seem to be clear that God is not so concerned with what happens to us as He is to how we respond to what happens to us. No matter who we are or where we may be in our walk with God, what is ultimately important is that we represent Him in a way that demonstrates that no matter what may happen to us – good or bad – that our conduct will remain above reproach. No matter our circumstances we will live a life that is worthy of our calling and election. We will remain blameless in our conduct. We will speak with grace and use wholesome words. We will be people of virtue and moral integrity. Once again, in the Christian life integrity is everything, character is everything.

So, one of the messages that Peter is providing to his readers is that one of the greatest testimonies of the reality of their faith is that during the most trying and difficult times in their lives that they will submit their lives and their conduct to God no matter the outcome. To the truly committed believer, God’s will is much more important than God’s blessings. The moment that we as believers lose sight of how God has chosen for us to live, at that moment we will find ourselves becoming bitter towards those who may mistreat us, becoming angry with people who have hurt us, and ultimately forfeiting our Christian hope and in some sense actually denying the faith.

So, Peter’s point throughout this letter is that we have a great salvation. It is a salvation that is sure and certain, one that has been preserved by God, one that is “**incorruptible**”, one that is “**undefiled**”, one that is “**reserved in heaven**”, and one in which the “**power of God**” sustains the believer. The believer is never left alone and left completely dependent on their own spiritual capacities. To the contrary, they are “**kept by the power of God**” ([1 Peter 1:5](#)). The word “kept” is translated as “**guarded**” (AMP, ESV, RSV, ASV), as “**shielded**” (NIV), and “**protected**” (NASB). In this context it means to preserve the believer spiritually.² In other words, God is protecting the believer’s salvation, guarding them. The believer and their salvation is being guarded and protected by the very “**power of God**” so that even in the midst of very strong trials and difficult circumstances they will be able to overcome and endure them in a way that honors God. This is not where Peter ends his letter, but where he starts it. This will be tone of his entire letter – to entrust ourselves to a great God who will keep us and bring us into His presence.

Now, we have to appreciate that Peter never window dresses or ignores and overlooks any of the difficult issues that believers will face. Initially, he gives the believer hope, then he exhorts them because of that hope to live a certain way. However, he is very sober about what may happen, and in the midst of his sobering message he offers spiritual comfort to his readers. For instance, in [1 Peter 4:12](#) he tells them not to be “**surprised**” about what is happening to them,

^{1Pe 4:12} Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;

The NIV, ESV, and NASB say “**do not be surprised**”, the AMP says “**do not be amazed and bewildered**”. Then, as he progresses he encourages them in [1 Peter 4:13](#) to keep on rejoicing, in [1 Peter 4:19](#) he tells them to “**commit their souls**” to God “**in doing good**”, and then to “**cast all your cares**” on “**the mighty hand of God**” in [1 Peter 5:6-7](#).

^{1Pe 5:6} Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, ⁷ casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

These are two great verses simply because they provide God’s solution to anxiety, apprehension, and fear. We have to literally cast ourselves on God. We must understand that God is in control of all things and that He is sovereign over all things. A believer’s willingness to actually cast themselves on God’s care during very difficult circumstances will be dependent on how deeply they know Him. The deeper our knowledge and our personal relationship and commitment to Him, the deeper and more profound will be our willingness to trust Him with our lives, our families, and our future. What we truly believe about the future will be the determining factor in how we actually live in the present. I know this may sound like an oxymoron, but God expects us to suffer joyfully when and if that time actually comes in our life.

Now, without oversimplifying or spiritualizing all of this, I think that we can break the five (5) chapters down in a very simple way to help remind us of what Peter is actually communicating. Keep in mind that [1 Peter](#) is primarily a letter of exhortation and not necessarily a doctrinal treatise. Also, please appreciate that in every one of these chapters that there will be overlap from one chapter to the next. Obviously, each chapter is an integral part of all of the other chapters and cannot be isolated or separated from the other chapters.

[1 Peter 1](#) – What Salvation is All About. V1-2 clearly state that God has chosen you, elected you, and is fully committed to sanctifying your life so that you can live in obedience to Him. Then in v3-5 Peter emphasizes that there are tremendous benefits to salvation, and one of those benefits is that salvation is actually designed to bring joy into your life when you experience very difficult trials. [1 Peter 1:6-8](#) says,

^{1Pe 1:6} In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, ⁸ whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,

The word “**grieved**” or “**distressed**” in v6 is the Greek word “*lypeo*” and refers to something that causes the individual to be distressed, and to experience emotional, mental, and even spiritual heaviness. It is the kind of experience that makes someone sorrowful.³ No believer is exempt from these circumstances occurring in their life. It could really be anything. In fact, the word “**various**” means manifold types of trials, diverse kinds of trials, trials of all kinds of character. The word “**trials**” is “*peirasmos*” and simply refers to anything that puts a believer to the test. It refers to multiple kinds of adversities that they may face, but specifically to those kinds of godly trials that are designed to have a beneficial purpose and effect in the believer’s life rather than those trials that may occur because of our personal carelessness or unfaithfulness.⁴ For the believer it could be suffering for their faith, something like a fatal cancer, the death of a family member, losing their job, experiencing sorrow over a particular sin in their life, or anything really. Whatever it is, it makes the believer sad. The word “**trials**” represents something very different from temptations or solicitations to evil. Very often God is the author of the trial, and because of that the purpose is to actually prove the genuineness of the believer’s faith ([1 Peter 1:7](#)), and never for the purpose of causing them to fall or stumble. That would be a temptation.⁵ The kinds of trials of which Peter is speaking are God-designed trials that actually encourages the believer and increases their faith and confidence in God. Think of it this way. If the trial that you are experiencing causes you to distrust God and to complain against Him, then most likely it is a temptation sent to you by the enemy or a trial of your own making. It is not a good thing to always be blaming God for everything that does not go our way.

In v13-21, Peter encourages believers to live a holy life – to be sober, to not be conformed to the world, to be holy in their conduct because they have been redeemed with the “**precious blood of Christ**” (v19). The cost of salvation should always humble the believer. It should always help to keep their life in focus and give meaning and substance as to why God calls on them to live a certain way. The Christian life is not something that should ever seem arbitrary or subjective to the believer. Why? It is because everything that God does or allows in a believer’s life is designed to accomplish His specific purposes for that individual. God is never subjective, never capricious, or just haphazard with what He does or what He allows to happen in our lives. He always has a distinctive purpose in mind that is designed to strengthen the believer and to cause their life to testify to the goodness and greatness of God Himself. If a believer does not see their life, their trials, and their struggles from that perspective, then in reality they may forfeit much of God’s good work in them.

In v22-25, Peter talks about the need that believers have to genuinely have a deep spiritual love for one another. For instance, [1 Peter 1:22](#) says,

1Pe 1:22 Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart,

The word “**fervently**” (*ektenos*) literally means to stretch out. It comes from “*ek*” – out, and from “*teino*” – to stretch. It is the idea that the individual is not going to be relaxed in whatever effort they are exerting towards someone because they are exerting an enormous amount of effort to help someone else.⁶ It is the idea of being intense in what someone is doing. The same word is used of Jesus in [Luke 22:44](#) when He was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane,

Lk 22:44 **And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.**

Next week we will look at Chapters 2 - 5.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Strong, 1289.
- ² Zodhiates, 1456.
- ³ Strong, 1215.
- ⁴ Strong, 1303.
- ⁵ Zodhiates, 1135-1136.
- ⁶ Vine, 420.

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