

1 Peter Introduction – Part C

Once again, this introductory part of our study is different than normal teaching. I am not actually teaching as much as I am simply presenting an overview of what is in the five (5) chapters. These introductory studies are simply providing an outline and initial overview of the letter so that we can get a “feel” for what it contains.

1 Peter 1 – What Salvation is All About

1 Peter 2 – Living Out the Christian Life. Certainly we all realize that being a Christian is one thing, but living out the Christian life is something very different. Without overstating the issue, the Christian life is very demanding on the believer. It is something that has incredibly high standards, and those standards, morals, ethics, and values that are an integral part of the believer’s life are always making demands on the believer. There is no escaping this spiritual reality. In fact, to just casually ignore or to be indifferent to God’s spiritual demands on someone’s life are often an indication that they are not actually saved. So, much of this letter addresses the very practical ways that the Christian life is to be lived out by a genuine believer. It is filled with commands and exhortations that provide the Scriptural basis of how a believer is to live. The point is that everytime that we come to a command or an exhortation, it is something that the believer must take seriously. It becomes the spiritual scale against which our Christian life is being measured and evaluated by God, as well as by others.

Beginning in 1 Peter 2:1-3, Peter says that every believer needs good, solid spiritual food. The analogy that Peter paints here is that of a young baby and how much they want their milk. They crave it and often times literally scream to get it. It is something that they feel that they must have. The believer, in a very similar way, is to “**desire the pure milk of the word**”. The NIV and AMP actually say to “**crave**”. The NASB and ESV translate it “**long for**”. The Greek word for “**desire**” is “*epipotheo*” and comes from the word “*potheo*” which means to yearn for something.¹ It is a word that has a very strong connotation and undertone associated with it. In fact, every believer can probably do a self-assessment and examination of where they actually are in their Christian life based on how deeply they personally long for and crave the Word of God in their life. Many believers are just “Sunday morning come to church” type Christians. They are more than satisfied with just a minimal weekly input of God’s Word into their life by someone else, and the rest of the week they are not that inclined or motivated to even read God’s Word. They may be busy, tired, or just spiritually complacent and lazy. You see, immediately Peter begins to confront the reality of how we are actually living out the Christian life, and what he is saying is that our life being divorced from a strong desire of knowing and studying the Word of God is an indication of where we actually are in our Christian life.

No believer can grow spiritually if they do not have a strong desire and yearning to learn more of God’s Word. There is no Scriptural basis that allows believers to ignore this aspect of the Christian life. This one attribute of not deeply hungering for the Word of God may be the most lacking quality in many Christian’s lives. We can become very busy and easily distracted, and eventually this longing for the Word of God becomes relegated to just listening to someone else who has done the studying for us. If we are going to be able to truly live out the Christian life, then we will find that growing spiritually is directly linked to a genuine longing for God’s Word and a longing for a deeper understanding of it.

In [1 Peter 2:4-8](#), Peter makes the comparison between Christ as the “**living stone**” (singular - v4) and to believers as “**living stones**” (plural – v5). The picture is that of a building that is under construction. In ancient days, the builders used large stones that were quarried, and the most important stone was what was called the “**chief cornerstone**”. It had to be utterly level and absolutely square because everything else that would be built worked out from that stone. The problem that exists in construction is that if you are out of plumb or level just a small amount, then that error will be magnified and increased as you get further away from the foundation or the wall.

What Christ is building is His church, His bride. The church is God the Father’s gift to Christ, and so the goal is to present the bride to Christ without spot or blemish. [Ephesians 5:27](#) says,

Eph 5:27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

[2 Peter 3:14](#) says,

2Pe 3:14 Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless;

So Peter says that as believers we are “**being built up a spiritual house**” (v5). We are to be individuals who have a distinctly spiritual character about our lives. We are a “**spiritual house**”. The word “**spiritual**” is the Greek word “*pneumatikos*” and simply means of the Spirit. It refers to those things that pertain to the Holy Spirit and to those things in our life that are controlled by the Holy Spirit. It is in contrast to those things that pertain to or are governed by our natural instincts and impulses.²

So, being a part of God’s church is a very meaningful part of how we actually live out the Christian life. It is very difficult, probably impossible, to live out the Christian life disengaged from other Christians, disconnected from meaningful fellowship with other believers who are there to encourage and build one another up. One of the ways Peter indicates that someone can differentiate between true believers and those who actually reject Christ is by seeing who is “**disobedient**” to Him (v7, 8). For them, Christ is called a “**stone of stumbling and a rock of offense**”. They stumble over Christ and He becomes offensive to them. His Word is a hindrance to them, and because they reject His Word, they immediately take on a lifestyle that accommodates their disobedience.

In [1 Peter 2:9-10](#), it is very important for believers to see what God has designed us to be as the church. We are called a “**chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people**” so that we can “**proclaim**” His praises. Everyone’s life proclaims something. I love the way that the Greek Interlinear says this. It says “**so that the virtues you may express**”. That is every believer’s calling. We are to proclaim, to express, and to display the virtues and excellencies of who Christ is - and we do that with our life, with our words, and with our attitudes. The goal is to always “**express**” Christ with our life and to put His life on display with our life.

[1 Peter 2:11-17](#) speaks about how we are to live out the Christian life before the world. In v11, Peter says that we are to “**abstain from fleshly lusts...**” The word “**abstain**” carries the idea of keeping ourselves distant from those things that are not spiritual in nature, distant from those things that diminish our testimony. Every believer must be discerning about what they do and how they do it. Peter reiterates this in v12 when he says that our “**conduct**” is to be “**honorable**” among those who are not believers.

Why? It is because everyone is watching. God wants them to see our lives, to see how we live, to see how we respond to difficulties and to trials. Everyone's life makes an impression on someone – either good or bad. For instance, some believers just always seem to be grumpy and complaining, and with that temperament and mindset they are completely unable to display the virtues of Christ. Others may just be casual and lazy regarding their Christian life. Everyone is watching. Our children are watching, our grandchildren are watching, our friends are watching, our co-workers are watching. Everyone is watching. For many who are watching how we live and the decisions that we make, they are using us as a model for how they are going to live – especially our family. I know a family right now who claim to be Christians, but they never attend their church's services - maybe once a month at the very best. None of their children, not one, have any interest whatsoever in the things of God. Why? It is because they have watched their parents' indifference and lack of commitment to God's claims on their life, and it has now become their own. In [1 Peter 2:13-15](#), Peter addresses how believers are to respond to the government. We are to be submissive and obedient to the laws that govern our country. In v15, he says that **“this is the will of God”**.

Then in [1 Peter 2:18-25](#), Peter deals with our relationship to those who may actually mistreat us – and especially employers. In America, we have many laws that govern and control how an employer can treat an employee. However, in Peter's day there were many slave owners and masters who had absolute control over their slaves. Once again, Peter uses the word **“submissive”**, or *“hypotasso”*. He used this word in v13, uses it here in v18, and will use it again in [1 Peter 3:1, 3:5](#), and [1 Peter 5:5](#). The word **“submissive”** or *“hypotasso”* comes from two Greek words – *“hupo”*, or under, and *“tasso”* – to place. It carries the idea of placing something in a particular order.³ The submission is clearly for the purpose of function so that the entity can operate properly. Every business has a kind of chain of command that allows it to run smoothly. However, once that order is broken, it generally leads to the business not being able to operate properly and to function orderly, and ultimately leads to a dysfunctional organization that will quickly fail.

The primary thrust of this passage, however, is the example that has been given to the believer in the life and person of Christ. The operating principle that Peter gives is found in [1 Peter 2:20-21](#) when he says,

1Pe 2:20 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”;

Peter clearly states that God has **“called”** us to a place that may not always be what we want to do. So, what Peter does is to give the example of Christ. For me personally, [1 Peter 2:23](#) is the most important verse in the entire letter. It 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;

The word **“committed”** is *“paradidomai”* and it means to surrender, to yield, and to entrust oneself.⁴ There simply will be many times in every believer's life when they have to make a decision relative to how they are going to actually submit their life to Christ. For instance, [Romans 8:32](#) says,

Ro 8:32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered (*paradidomai*) Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

God the Father surrendered His own Son so that we could be saved. This is the supreme example both of the Father and of Christ who gladly submitted His life to His Father's will. He literally entrusted Himself into the hands of His Father's will for His life – and it cost Him His life. Please appreciate that whenever we submit and entrust our life to our heavenly Father, that generally it will have a cost associated with it that may not be exactly what we want. We will all be confronted with this. No one is the exception. There are many issues in every Christian's life where God wants them to do one thing, but they are inclined to do something quite different. The problem is that generally each of us are very adept, very skillful, and very proficient at rationalizing why not doing something that God may want us to do is okay for us. We are masters at deluding ourselves when we know that what we are doing may be in direct conflict with God's Word and God's will for our life. We find justifications and excuses and reasons why we are the exception to being fully committed to Christ in an area of our life. Eventually our bad decisions will catch up with us in ways that we never foresaw. You see, being fully committed to the will of God in any area of our life is always the best thing for our lives and for our families, and Jesus Christ is the model that we follow and imitate.

Without going into much detail at this point in the study, I have to say that [1 Peter 2:24](#) which comes from [Isaiah 53:5](#) has to be one of the most misapplied verses in the Bible, and especially as quoted and claimed by the charismatic healers. It is almost shocking how inappropriately the verses here in [1 Peter 2](#) and [Isaiah 53](#) are used. Clearly, these verses are NOT a teaching on physical healing – not here in [1 Peter](#) and not in [Isaiah](#). This is one of the classic examples where people make the Scriptures mean what they want it to mean. This is one of those verses that are just lifted completely out of its context in both locations and given a meaning relative to physical healing that simply is NOT in the verse. This is a verse about the atoning work of Christ in delivering unbelievers from their sins. We have Christ suffering (v21), bearing “**our sins in His own body**” (v24), us living for “**righteousness**” (v24), and yet somehow many interpret this as a verse for physical healing. Within the context, this is not a diversion on physical healing, but on the spiritual healing that takes place in a person's life because of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

The word “**healed**” is the Greek word “*iaomai*” and means to cure and to make whole,⁵ but it has to be appreciated once again that we cannot just lift a verse out of its context. Every word is surrounded by other words that impact its meaning and its usage. The problem that many have in their interpretation of this verse is that when they hear the word “**healed**”, they immediately take it to mean physical healing – which clearly in the context it does not. In fact, Dr. Strong says that it refers specifically to spiritual healing.⁶ Dr. Zodhiates says that it means to be cured of “*moral diseases, to heal or save from the consequences of sin*”.⁷ It certainly is a word that can be used of physical healing, and actually is many times in the New Testament. However, every word MUST be addressed in its context. The context of the [Isaiah 53](#) and [1 Peter 2](#) passages are not digressions on physical healing, but are some of the greatest expositions in the New Testament on the results of the atonement and spiritual healing specifically related to salvation from sin. Can Jesus heal? Absolutely! Does He still heal? Sure he does. However, these are not the proof texts for that teaching. I certainly believe that physical healing is included in the atoning work of Christ. In fact, without His atoning work, no healing would be available. However, we

must maintain hermeneutical integrity in how we handle the Scriptures. I hear people take these verses and say something like this all the time – “*I believe the Word of God and the Word of God says...*” That sounds right, but if you quote a Scripture out of context, then all that you have is a pretext. What you have is a non-truth. We cannot separate a word or phrase in the Scriptures from the words that surround it. Then, and I think this is just as prevalent, many interpret Scripture based on what words mean to them – not what they actually may mean. Every word has to be contextually defined. That is an interpretive mandate that cannot be ignored. If I ask you what does the word “ball” mean, what are you going to say? Well, it can mean a round object, a good time, or a dance. You see, you cannot interpret the word “ball” apart from the other words that surround it. It has to be used in a sentence to have a definition, and the exact same thing is true of Scriptural words.

So, [1 Peter 2](#) is about how believers are to live out the Christian life in some very practical areas – within the church, before the lost, in relation to the government, to masters, and in a way that reflects Christ. The remaining three chapters will have much of the same connotations and will have the same level of exhortations in other areas of the Christian life.

ENDNOTES

¹ Strong, 1104.

² Zodhiates, 1185-1186.

³ Zodhiates, 1427.

⁴ Strong, 1289.

⁵ Strong, 1145.

⁶ Strong, 1145.

⁷ Zodhiates, 753.

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