

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL - Fall 2024 - FBC
The Life of Peter

Lesson #10 “Peter’s Pastoral Letter”

Text: I Peter chapters 2-5

Introduction: In the first 2 verses of Peter’s letter he makes clear that he is writing to those who are “elect” or God’s chosen ones who are in “exile” or who are strangers. We talked about how it feels to be “strangers”. Later in the first chapter (vs 17) Peter says this: “live in reverent fear during the time of your exile [NRSV] (or during the time you are strangers)”. The challenge for his readers, who are exiled from where they once lived, is to live well **even while they are in exile**.

In this final class we want to do two things: A. get an overall sense of Peter’s “message” to his readers and B. learn about Peter’s final years according to ancient sources.

A. Peter’s message:

1. Know who you are (identity)

As already mentioned, Peter recognizes and identifies his readers as being exiles or strangers and then stresses “who they are”; emphasizing their “**identity**”, not their situation or experience of being exiles/strangers.

Last week we saw these “**identity**” statements in:

1:2

1: 22-23

Peter makes further “identity” statements in chapter 2:

2: 9-10

2:21

2:25

2. Live well (deliberate action)

Speaking as a “pastor” or “bishop” Peter has many statements in this letter as to “how they ought to live”:

1:13-16

1:22b

2:1-2 & 5

2:11-17 – under the broad heading of: Live as servants of God

4:1-2

4:7-10

5:1-9a

And then pastoral advice as to how to live in their specific situation which involves **suffering**:

3:8-16

4: 12-16 & 19 (Peter may have added this when he heard of a new kind of persecution)

5:9b

Note that there is “good suffering” and “bad suffering” (see 3:13-17 and 4:15)

Note too that Christ suffered: 4:1 and 5:1.

3. Peter has a wonderful **benediction and blessing** for them in 5:10.

B. Peter’s final years

- an early bishop **Clement of Rome in approx. 96 AD** – perhaps 30 years after Peter wrote his first letter:

“..Peter, who, because of unrighteous jealous, endured not one or two but many trials, and thus having given his testimony went to his appointed place in glory...”

(In the same letter Clement mentions Paul suffering from jealousy and strife so both appear to be in Rome or have been in Rome and died there during the reign of Nero in approx. 64 AD.)

- **St Ignatius (approx. 110 AD)** mentions Paul and Peter in his letter to the Rome, hinting that they were there.

- **Eusebius (a historian of Christianity) cites Dionysius, bishop of Corinth in about 170 AD** speaks of Peter and Paul being in both Rome and Corinth and that they “suffered martyrdom about the same time.”

- **Irenaeus (abt 180 AD)** writes that: “Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome and laying the foundation of the Church. After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter.”

- **Tertullian (abt 208 AD)** writes: “In Rome Nero was the first who stained with blood the rising faith. Then is Peter girt by another, when he is mad fast to the cross”.

- **Helyer’s** assessment: p. 272 – first paragraph

I Peter Chapter 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Salutation

¹Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

To the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ²who have been chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ and to be sprinkled with his blood: May grace and peace be yours in abundance.

A Living Hope

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, ⁷so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, ⁹for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

¹⁰Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours made careful search and inquiry, ¹¹inquiring about the person or time that the Spirit of Christ within them indicated, when it testified in advance to the sufferings destined for Christ and the subsequent glory. ¹²It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in regard to the things that have now been announced to you through those who brought you good news by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look!

A Call to Holy Living

¹³Therefore prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed. ¹⁴Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. ¹⁵Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; ¹⁶for it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’

¹⁷If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile. ¹⁸You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. ²⁰He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. ²¹Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God.

²²Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart. ²³You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God. ²⁴For

‘All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, ²⁵but the word of the Lord endures for ever.’

That word is the good news that was announced to you.

The Living Stone and a Chosen People

2 Rid yourselves, therefore, of all malice, and all guile, insincerity, envy, and all slander. **2** Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— **3** if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

4 Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and
5 like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual
sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For it stands in scripture: 'See, I am laying in Zion a
stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.'
7 To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe,
'The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner',
8 and 'A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall.'
They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may
proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.
10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people;
once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Live as Servants of God

11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the desires of the flesh that wage war against
the soul. 12 Conduct yourselves honourably among the Gentiles, so that, though they malign you as
evildoers, they may see your honourable deeds and glorify God when he comes to judge.

13 For the Lord's sake accept the authority of every human institution, whether of the emperor as
supreme, 14 or of governors, as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do
right. 15 For it is God's will that by doing right you should silence the ignorance of the foolish. 16 As
servants of God, live as free people, yet do not use your freedom as a pretext for evil. 17 Honour
everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God. Honour the emperor.

The Example of Christ's Suffering

18 Slaves, accept the authority of your masters with all deference, not only those who are kind and
gentle but also those who are harsh. 19 For it is to your credit if, being aware of God, you endure pain
while suffering unjustly. 20 If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, where is the credit in
that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval. 21 For to this you
have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow
in his steps.

22 'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.'

23 When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he
entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. 24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so
that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. 25 For you
were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

Wives and Husbands

3 Wives, in the same way, accept the authority of your husbands, so that, even if some of them do not
obey the word, they may be won over without a word by their wives' conduct, 2 when they see the
purity and reverence of your lives. 3 Do not adorn yourselves outwardly by braiding your hair, and by
wearing gold ornaments or fine clothing; 4 rather, let your adornment be the inner self with the lasting
beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in God's sight. 5 It was in this way long ago that
the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves by accepting the authority of their
husbands. 6 Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him lord. You have become her daughters as long as
you do what is good and never let fears alarm you.

7 Husbands, in the same way, show consideration for your wives in your life together, paying honour to
the woman as the weaker sex, since they too are also heirs of the gracious gift of life—so that nothing
may hinder your prayers.

Suffering for Doing Right

8 Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind. 9 Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called—that you might inherit a blessing. 10 For ‘Those who desire life and desire to see good days, let them keep their tongues from evil and their lips from speaking deceit; 11 let them turn away from evil and do good; let them seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.’

13 Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? 14 But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, 15 but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an account of the hope that is in you; 16 yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. 17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God’s will, than to suffer for doing evil. 18 For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, 19 in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, 20 who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight people, were saved through water. 21 And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

Good Stewards of God’s Grace

4 Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same intention (for whoever has suffered in the flesh has finished with sin), 2 so as to live for the rest of your earthly life no longer by human desires but by the will of God. 3 You have already spent enough time in doing what the Gentiles like to do, living in licentiousness, passions, drunkenness, revels, carousing, and lawless idolatry. 4 They are surprised that you no longer join them in the same excesses of dissipation, and so they blaspheme. 5 But they will have to give an account to him who stands ready to judge the living and the dead.

6 For this is the reason the gospel was proclaimed even to the dead, so that, though they had been judged in the flesh as everyone is judged, they might live in the spirit as God does.

7 The end of all things is near; therefore be serious and discipline yourselves for the sake of your prayers. 8 Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Be hospitable to one another without complaining. 10 Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. 11 Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Suffering as a Christian

12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice in so far as you are sharing Christ’s sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed. 14 If you are reviled for the

name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you. 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, a criminal, or even as a mischief-maker. 16 Yet if any of you suffers as a Christian, do not consider it a disgrace, but glorify God because you bear this name. 17 For the time has come for judgement to begin with the household of God; if it begins with us, what will be the end for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And 'If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinners?' 19 Therefore, let those suffering in accordance with God's will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator, while continuing to do good.

Tending the Flock of God

5 Now as an elder myself and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory to be revealed, I exhort the elders among you **2** to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it—not for sordid gain but eagerly. **3** Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock. **4** And when the chief shepherd appears, you will win the crown of glory that never fades away. **5** In the same way, you who are younger must accept the authority of the elders. And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for 'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'

6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. **7** Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. **8** Discipline yourselves; keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. **9** Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters throughout the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering. **10** And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. **11** To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Final Greetings and Benediction

12 Through Silvanus, whom I consider a faithful brother, I have written this short letter to encourage you, and to testify that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it. **13** Your sister church in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings; and so does my son Mark. **14** Greet one another with a kiss of love.

Peace to all of you who are in Christ.