

1 Peter-by Nathan White

Chapter 1

First Peter is written to Christians in exile about how to live in a world that is hostile toward them. They are exiles and they need to know how to live as exiles. The letter opens with a beautiful reminder of the gospel – the message that has pitted the world against them and upon which they are to build their hope. Peter recalls for them their imperishable, undefiled, unfading inheritance to which they have been resurrected in Christ. The trials and sufferings they will face as exiles will only serve to prove the genuineness of their faith in these promises of God. This faith and these promises are unfathomably precious and because of them, Peter calls his readers to holiness. Surely, in a culture that hates them, a dedication to holiness is no small feat, but they have been “ransomed from the futile ways inherited from [their] forefathers...with the precious blood of Christ.” What they gain in Christ is infinitely greater than what they give up as exiles.

Chapter 2

In light of the gospel that has saved them, Peter calls his readers to put away their old ways and to crave “pure spiritual milk.” They have been born to a new life, and should desire the food that will sustain them in it. As Calvin writes in his commentary on this passage, Peter is telling them to “live a life corresponding with their birth.” If we have tasted that the Lord is good, we should continue to crave what we’ve enjoyed. These new desires flow out of a new identity given to us in Christ. At one time, we were not a people, but now we are God’s people. We are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, and a holy nation. As His people, we should live in a way that honors Him among people who do not know Him and are at times hostile toward us. The tremendous freedom and grace given to us in Christ should be used to honor God and serve people. While this pursuit will likely bring suffering, we can, like Christ, face it while “entrusting [ourselves] to Him who judges justly.”

Chapter 3

After instructions given specifically to husbands and wives, Peter issues a command to all believers to be unified, sympathetic, loving, tender, and humble. These kindhearted traits aren’t intended to be shown only to each other, but also to those who persecute them. Peter tells his readers that they should bless those who do evil to them, echoing both Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:44 and Lk. 6:28) and Paul in Romans 12:14. Even when they do suffer evil at the hands of people who hate them, Peter tells them that the blessing to come is greater than the sufferings they face. They should continue to honor Christ and be prepared to explain their hope in the face of persecution and pain. Their conduct toward those who hate them is a testament to their hope in Christ and shames their persecutors. To intentionally show kindness to those who hate us brings honor to God and shame to His enemies. Our hope is in Christ and that cannot be taken away. We have no need to fear.

Chapter 4

Surely we’ve established that suffering is a major theme of this book. In fact, we see it throughout the Bible. Many of the Psalms are laments. Jesus is called a “man of sorrows, acquainted with grief.” It’s no secret that suffering happens and Peter has made it abundantly clear that to suffer for the sake of Christ should be counted as an honor. He also makes an important distinction. Not all of our suffering happens because we’re trying to honor Christ. Sometimes suffering happens because we’ve brought it on ourselves as a “murderer or a thief or an evildoer or a meddler.” There is a difference between suffering as a Christian and suffering because we’ve caused problems. Peter exhorts his readers to be careful not to bring suffering on themselves in this way and in so doing, dishonor Christ. To suffer “as an evildoer”

and shift the blame to mask it as some form of persecution is not only immature and foolish, but also detrimental to our brothers and sisters who are persecuted.

Chapter 5

With what attitude do we face suffering? Humility. “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you.” This humility that Peter challenges us to cultivate is based in an understanding that God is sovereign over our lives. It is, after all, His mighty hand, not our persecutors’, under which we are to humble ourselves. Our fears and uncertainties are to be cast onto Him. We can resist the devil knowing that our brothers and sisters have faced and continue to face the same sufferings across the world – and throughout history – and the Lord has sustained them. We can trust that, as His people, God will one day “restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish” us. The suffering of His people is not outside of His rule. He will not forget His people and He will right all wrongs. We can entrust ourselves to Him completely because this sovereign God with a mighty hand is also “the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ.”

-Reflecting on 1 Peter-

Before moving on to our next book of the Bible, take some time today to reflect on what we've read in 1 Peter. Perhaps re-visit a favorite chapter or an especially meaningful passage. Or read the beginning chapter(s) again, now that you've read the whole. Or go back to a part of the book that struck you as curious and see if it makes more sense now. Or speed-read the whole thing again, seeking to reinforce its main themes. Or... perhaps you need a catch-up day to finish 1 Peter before we move forward?

"Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life..." Philippians 2.14-16a