

THE FIRST LETTER OF PETER

INTRODUCTION

A. Introductory outline of 1 Peter

1. Greeting (1:1-2)
2. The greatness of salvation (1:3-12)
3. Characteristics of the Christian life (1:13-25)
4. Responsibilities of the Christian life (2:1-25)
 - a. First steps in the pursuit of holiness (2:1-3)
 - b. Growing together (2:4-10)
 - c. Pursuing a proper testimony (2:11-25)

B. Review of 1 Peter 1:13-25

1. Charles Swindoll, *Still focusing on the believer's life in this fallen world, Peter shifts his emphasis from physical trials to spiritual temptations. If the question in the first section was, "How can I remain joyful in the midst of suffering?" the question in the next is, "How can I stay clean in a corrupt society?"*
2. Scot McKnight, *Theology prompts ethics. That is, beliefs about God and experiences with God undergird beliefs about what is right and wrong.*
3. Thomas Constable, *Peter wanted his readers to live joyfully in the midst of sufferings. Consequently he outlined his readers' major responsibilities to enable them to see their duty clearly so they could carry it out.*
4. David Walls, *Our living hope, our great salvation does not simply impact the future; it is to mark the way we live today, particularly when we experience suffering and pain.*
5. David Walls, *God, in his mercy and through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, has given Christians a living hope that cannot be taken away, even though their lives may be excruciatingly painful. It is in him that we have the resources to continue living holy lives.*

C. Comments on 1 Peter 2

1. David Walls, *Becoming a member of God's family initiates a lifelong building program. Just as buildings under construction improve in appearance as they near completion, so, too, should the behavior and attitudes of believers improve as we get nearer our eternal reward.*
2. William Barclay, *Christians cannot stay the way they are; and Peter urges his people to have done with evil things and to set their hearts on that which alone can nourish life . . .*

1 PETER 2:1-25, RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

1 PETER 2:1-3, FIRST STEPS IN THE PURSUIT OF HOLINESS

A. Put aside sinful behavior (1), ***So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.***

1. Notes

a. *So*

- 1) It means *therefore, accordingly, then.*
- 2) It is a marker of result.
- 3) Wayne Grudem, *The word so, or 'therefore', refers back to the command 'love one another' in verse 22.*

b. *put away*

- 1) It means *to lay aside, rid oneself of* (in this case, vices).
- 2) Hebrews 12:1, ***Therefore***, *since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also **lay aside** every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,*
- 3) Thomas Constable, *To prepare for an exposition of the Christian's calling, Peter urged his readers to take off all kinds of evil conduct like so many soiled garments (cf. Rom. 1:29-30; 2 Cor. 12:20; Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8; 1 Tim. 1:9-10; James 1:21).*
- 4) Wayne Grudem, *This verse explains in more detail what is involved in loving one another 'earnestly': one must put away (give up, get rid of) attitudes and habits which are harmful to others.*
- 5) William Barclay, *There are things of which Christians must divest themselves as they would strip off a soiled garment.*

c. Comments

- 1) Thomas Constable, *The sins he mentioned are all incompatible with brotherly love (cf. 1:22) . . . Peter here called his readers to put into practice what they had professed in their baptism.*
- 2) Peter Davids, *These are not “the grosser vices of paganism, but community-destroying vices that are often tolerated by the modern church.”*
- 3) Roger Raymer, *Peter then listed five sins of attitude and speech, which if harbored would drive wedges between believers.*
- 4) Edmund Clowney, *Of course, by reminding Christians of what their conversion means, Peter is indirectly warning them against the sins from which they have been delivered.*

2. Peter’s list of vices

a. *all malice*

- 1) It means *hateful feeling, hostility, intentional wickedness, depravity.*
- 2) Ephesians 4:31, *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.*
- 3) 1 Peter 2:1, *So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.*
- 4) Charles Swindoll, . . . *a general word for evil. In this passage it characterizes those entrenched in the world system.*
- 5) William Barclay, . . . *it is the most general word for wickedness, and includes all the wicked ways of the Christless world. The other words are illustrations and manifestations of this [malice].*
- 6) J. Ramsey Michaels, [Malice] *could be summarized as “mischief” or “bad blood,” the nursing and acting out of grudges against particular people, or against society as a whole.*
- 7) David Walls, . . . *an attitude similar to hatred, is the desire to inflict pain, harm, or injury on another person. It includes the holding of grudges and acting out of these grudges against others.*

b. *all deceit*

- 1) It means *cunning, treachery, snare*
- 2) It is *that which gives a false impression as in diluting wine.*
- 3) 1 Thessalonians 2:3, *For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive,*
- 4) William Barclay, . . . *who stoop to devious and underhand methods to get their own way.*
- 5) Charles Swindoll, *It involves more than just lying to a person’s face. It includes acting in disingenuous or two-faced ways.*
- 6) David Walls, *Deceit refers to deliberate dishonesty, to speaking or acting with ulterior motives. Anything less than speaking the full and honest truth from the heart is deceit.*
- 7) William Barclay, [Deceit] *is the trickery of those who are out to deceive others to achieve their own ends, the vice of people whose motives are never pure.*

c. *hypocrisy*

- 1) A hypocrite is one who *pretends, is insincere, saying one thing and doing another.*
- 2) Louw-Nida, *to give an impression of having certain purposes or motivations, while in reality having quite different ones . . .*
- 3) Charles Spurgeon, . . . *one who acts a part, “being one thing inside and another thing outside.”*
- 4) Ceslas Spicq, *1 Pet 2:1 explains why hypocrisy is so odious to the Christian conscience; it is because the baptized person is a sincere person who has explicitly renounced perversity in all its forms . . .*
- 5) William Barclay, *Hypocrites are people whose professed allegiance to Christianity is for their own profit and prestige and not for the service and glory of Christ,*

d. *envy*

- 1) Some Bible versions translate *envy* as *jealousies*.
- 2) It means *to have ill will toward someone because of a real or presumed advantage experienced by the other person.*
- 3) Mark 15:10, *For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up.*
- 4) Proverbs 14:30, *A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot.*
- 5) Jealousy does not necessarily want the things of others for oneself but it doesn’t want the other person to have those things.
- 6) Basil the Great, *grief at your neighbour’s good fortune.*
- 7) D. Edmond Hiebert, . . . *the feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing of the advantage or prosperity of others . . .*
- 8) Charles Spurgeon, *Envy remains one of the “favorite indoor sports” among fellow believers.*

- e. *slander*
 - 1) The word is only used here in the New Testament and means *speaking evil of others, defamer*.
 - 2) Wayne Grudem, . . . *any speech which harms or is intended to harm another person's status, reputation,*
 - 3) Gerhard Kittel, *Its frequent occurrence in the apostolic fathers shows how seriously it is taken in the early church, but also how rampant it is.*
 - 4) Charles Spurgeon, *This disparaging gossip destroys our confidence in an individual and can weaken that person's reputation.*
 - 5) William Barclay, *Disparaging gossip is something which everyone admits to be wrong and which at the same time almost everyone enjoys; and yet there is nothing more likely to produce heartbreak and nothing is so destructive of mutual love and Christian unity.*
 - 6) Charles Spurgeon, *You certainly cannot expect to have fellowship with Christ if you mar the fellowship of Christ's church by talking one against the other.*

3. Comments

- a. Thomas Constable, *The sins he mentioned are all incompatible with brotherly love (cf. 1:22).*
- b. Roger Raymer, *None of these should have any place in those who are born again. Rather, in obedience to the Word, believers are to make decisive breaks with the past.*
- c. Wayne Grudem, *All these sins aim at harming other people, whereas love seeks the good of others.*
- d. Scot McKnight, *In early Christian literature it was common to speak of Christians "stripping themselves" of vices and "clothing themselves" with virtues (cf. Rom. 13:12–14; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:8–12; Heb. 13:1; James 1:21). This image draws a picture of bad habits that need to be eliminated and good habits that need to be developed.*
- e. David Walls, *None of these practices should have any place in those people who are born again. In obedience to the command of God, believers are to rid themselves of such attitudes and actions.*
- f. William Barclay, *and it is to be noted that they are all faults of character which hurt the great Christian virtue of mutual love. There can be no mutual love as long as these evil things exist . . . These, then, are the things which those who are reborn must strip off—for, if they continue to allow them to have a grip upon their lives, the unity of the church community will inevitably be injured.*

B. Hunger for God's Word leads to spiritual maturity (2), ***Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—***

1. *Like newborn infants long for*

- a. J. Ramsey Michaels, *The metaphor's point of comparison is not the smallness or innocence of a baby, but its strong and instinctive longing for a mother's milk.*
- b. J. Vernon McGee, *You see, at the moment of salvation, a child is born with an appetite for the Word of God, just as a newborn infant immediately starts to eat.*
- c. William Barclay, *It [long for] is the word which is used for the deer longing for the flowing streams (Psalm 42:1), and for the psalmist longing for the salvation of the Lord (Psalm 119:174). For sincere Christians, to study God's word is not a labor but a delight, for they know that there the heart will find the nourishment for which it longs.*

2. *the pure spiritual milk*

- a. *Spiritual means true, genuine, unadulterated.*
- b. Roger Raymer, *Pure [adolon] is deliberately contrasted with "deceit" [dolon] in v. 1. God's Word does not deceive; neither should God's children.*
- c. William Barclay, *In all human wisdom, there is some element of what is either useless or harmful; the word of God alone is altogether good.*
- d. Scot McKnight, *"Pure spiritual milk" refers to the very things that nourish the Christian community in its growth: knowledge of God, prayer, instruction in the gospel, faithful obedience, and hearing God's preached word.*
- e. J. Ramsey Michaels, *The "milk" here is not elementary Christian teaching (cf. 1 Cor. 3:2; Heb. 5:12–13), in contrast to "meat," but the spiritual food of all believers.*
- f. Warren Wiersbe, *It is sad when Christians have no appetite for God's Word, but must be 'fed' religious entertainment instead. As we grow, we discover that the Word is milk for babes, but also strong meat for the mature (1 Cor. 3:1–4; Heb. 5:11–14).*
- g. Wayne Grudem, *Someone who is practicing 'deceit' or 'envy' or 'slander' will not be able truly to long for 'pure spiritual milk.'*
- h. Charles Spurgeon, *Give me a congregation of hungry hearers, with eyes that seldom turn from the preacher, and with ears that catch every word!*

3. *that by it you may grown up into salvation*
 - a. Thomas Constable, "Salvation" here, as Peter used it previously, refers to the full extent of salvation that God desires every Christian to experience.
 - b. Roger Raymer, *After believers cast out impure desires and motives (v. 1), they then need to feed on wholesome spiritual food that produces growth . . . The words in your salvation (lit., "unto salvation") recall the ultimate fulfillment of salvation spoken of in 1:5, 7, 9, 13.*
 - c. Scot McKnight, . . . *if they yearn for spiritual nourishment, they will grow into that final salvation that is being protected for them by God as they continue in their faith (1:4–5).*
 - d. Edmund Clowney, *What will advance their growth? What will deepen their love? The same truth of God that gave them birth also nourishes them. If the word of God is water to wash us, it is also milk to build better bodies in Christ. Christians must be addicted to the Bible.*

4. Comments

- a. Scot McKnight, *The desire for spiritual nourishment is the desire of any church that wants to know the Lord and live in light of his will . . . When a church yearns for spiritual nourishment, that church will not be involved in bitter disputes with hypocritical showings or deceitful communications.*
- b. John Stott, *We confess that we have sometimes pursued church growth at the expense of church depth, and divorced evangelism from Christian nurture." This leads, not to church growth, but to stunting the growth of the church.*
- c. J. Ramsey Michaels, *they [recipients of this epistle] are active participants in the drama of salvation, whether their participation is depicted as having their faith tested and proved genuine in "various ordeals" in pagan society, or as feeding on the life-giving "milk" of God's mercy for the well-being of their minds and souls (cf. James 1:21).*
- d. Charles Swindoll, *We must all strive to set aside our petty differences, embrace our common salvation, and live as reflections of hope for the sake of our brothers and sisters in Christ. That sounds simple and easy, but it is a full-time task!*
- e. Warren Wiersbe, *When Christians are growing in the Word, they are peacemakers, not troublemakers, and they promote the unity of the church.*

C. Remember God is worth the effort (3), ***if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.***

1. *If* identifies this as a first class conditional clause. Therefore, *if* may be understood as *since*.
2. Peter reminds the readers of their commitment to Christ by referencing Psalm 34:8, *Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!*
3. Roger Raymer, *They had taken a sample, having experienced God's grace in their new birth, and had found that indeed the Lord is good.*
4. Edmund Clowney, *What we taste in Scripture is not simply the variety and power of the language. What we taste is the Lord.*
5. Wayne Grudem, *To drink the milk of the Word is to 'taste' again and again what he is like, for in the hearing of the Lord's words believers experience the joy of personal fellowship with the Lord himself.*
6. Charles Spurgeon, *We shall have an inward and spiritual apprehension of the sweetness and preciousness of Christ as the result of living faith.*