

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

1 PETER 3:13-5:14, THE BELIEVER AND SUFFERING

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 (1:13-2:10)
4. The importance of submission (2:11-3:12)
5. The believer and suffering (3:13-5:14)
 - a. Suffering for doing good (3:13-17)
 - b. The example of Jesus Christ (3:18-22)
 - c. The value of suffering (4:1-6)

B. Review of 1 Peter 3:13-17

1. Roger Raymer, *Peter encouraged his readers with the fact that the right response to undeserved suffering results in blessing. He presented the principle in verses 13–17 and provided examples in verses 18–22.*
2. Edmund Clowney, *Peter has moved to the issue that is central for the rest of the letter: the issue of Christian suffering. . . . Suffering has become an opportunity to meet evil with good and cursing with blessing.*
3. Warren Wiersbe, *These verses . . . introduce the important spiritual principle that the fear of the Lord conquers every other fear.*

C. Introductory comments on 1 Peter 4:1-6

1. Roger Raymer, *This chapter is the heart of Peter's encouragement for endurance. Here is practical instruction based on Christ's example in undergoing suffering.*
2. Thomas Constable, *Since Jesus Christ has gained the victory, Peter urged his readers to rededicate themselves to God's will as long as they might live. He wanted to strengthen their resolve to continue to persevere. He resumed here the exhortation that he broke off in 3:17. Generally speaking, verses 1–3 focus on Christian behavior and verses 4–6 on pagan response.*
3. J. Vernon McGee, *In this passage of Scripture Peter makes it very clear that when life is easy there is danger of drifting into a state of mind which accepts every blessing in life as if it were owed to us. We come to the place where we do not prize or value life as we should. As a Christian, what value do you put upon life? God permits His children to suffer in order to keep us from sin and to give us a proper value of life.*

1 PETER 4:1-6, THE VALUE OF SUFFERING

A. The purpose of believers (1-2)

1. To follow Christ's example of obedience despite suffering (1), ***Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,***
 - a. *Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh*
 - 1) Note 1 Peter 3:18, *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,*
 - 2) Roger Raymer, *Peter referred back to Christ's suffering in 3:18 and applied the principles of patient endurance in unjust suffering to his readers' immediate situation.*
 - 3) David Walls, *Therefore connects this chapter to the discussion of the sufferings of Jesus Christ at the end of chapter 3. The suffering that Christ endured was, in part, because of the righteous life that he lived.*
 - 4) Charles Swindoll, *With the logical conjunction "therefore," Peter is saying in shorthand, "Now in light of everything I have just written about Christ, I'm going to present you with some practical conclusions."*
 - b. *arm yourselves*
 - 1) It means *to prepare, to make ready*
 - 2) Thomas Constable, *Peter called his readers to commit themselves to the same purpose (cf. 3:15). Jesus suffered to the extent of dying, and Christians should be willing to suffer to the same extent.*

- 3) Roger Raymer, *He exhorted believers to arm themselves with the same courageous attitude or mind-set Christ had regarding suffering. The word translated “arm yourselves” (hoplisasthe, used only here in the NT) referred to a soldier putting on armor (cf. Eph. 6:13).*
- 4) Wayne Grudem, *Arm yourselves with the same thought means to think as Christ did about obedience and suffering: to be convinced that it is better to do right and suffer for it than to do wrong (cf. 3:17–18).*

c. *with the same way of thinking*

- 1) It means *the same insight, attitude*; it is thinking just like Christ thought.
- 2) Peter Davids, *What the Christian readers here put on is an “insight” or a “point of view.*
- 3) Roger Raymer, . . . *an unswerving resolve to do God’s will.*
- 4) David Walls, *As believers in Jesus Christ, we are to adopt the same attitude Christ had toward his suffering. We are to be willing to suffer because we have chosen to live righteous lives. We are to think as Christ did about obedience and suffering: to be convinced that it is better to do right and suffer than to do wrong.*
- 5) Edmund Clowney, *We are to arm ourselves with a thought that is decisive for our new manner of life . . . Peter has already shown the connection with us: Jesus bore our sins in his body on the tree so that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness (2:24).*
- 6) Warren Wiersbe, *As we yield ourselves to God, and have the same attitude toward sin that Jesus had, we can overcome the old life and manifest the new life.*
- 7) Charles Swindoll, *Christ has not sent us into the world as vacationers on a self-guided tour of a playground, but as soldiers on a tour of duty in a battlefield. We are not called to kick back, relax, take in the scenery, and wait for our Guide to take us home. Rather, we are engaged in a fierce conflict on foreign soil. We need to arm ourselves with spiritual armor to withstand the temptations of this world (cf. Eph. 6:10–18).*

d. *whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin*

- 1) Romans 6:8-12, *Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.*
- 2) Charles Spurgeon, *As He has died to sin, we are to die to sin also. This takes place—the commencement of it, at any rate—at the time of conversion. The man who formerly loved sin begins to hate it.*
- 3) Thomas Constable, *In the second part of the verse, Peter probably meant that his readers had identified themselves with Christ’s suffering and death (in water baptism). They should, therefore, put sin behind them and live a clean life (cf. Rom. 6:1–11) . . . Peter apparently meant that suffering with Christ should lead to a more holy life (cf. v. 2).*
- 4) Roger Raymer, *Christ suffered in His body, and a believer suffers in his body also. One who has suffered in this way is done with sin, that is, his being identified with Christ demonstrates (as does baptism) his break with a sinful life. Because of Christ’s death, “we should no longer be slaves to sin, because anyone who has died has been freed from sin” (Rom. 6:6–7).*
- 5) Wayne Grudem, *The phrase has ceased from sin cannot mean ‘no longer sins at all’, for certainly that is not true of everyone who has been willing to suffer for doing right, and several passages in Scripture rule out the idea that anyone can be absolutely free from sin in this life (1 Kgs 8:46; Prov. 20:9; Eccl. 7:20; Jas 3:2; 1 John 1:8). It rather means ‘has made a clear break with sin’, ‘has most definitely acted in a way which shows that obeying God, not avoiding hardship, is the most important motivation for his or her action.’*
- 6) J. Vernon McGee, *Peter says we have got release from sin. That means that God has made an adequate provision for you and me to live the Christian life. Dr. Griffith Thomas has said that in this verse Peter puts Paul’s Romans 6 into a nutshell of just one verse. Romans 6 is that chapter which speaks of the provision God has made for you and me to live the Christian life . . . You can live the Christian life only by having the mind of Christ, by having the Spirit of God moving in you to please God and to refrain from those things which bring disgrace to Him.*
- 7) Charles Spurgeon, *There is no way of getting the power with which we can smite sin, the great adversary of our souls, except by laying hold upon the conquering cross of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.*

2. To pursue God’s will unconditionally (2), ***so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.***

a. The Christian way of thinking is not the pursuit of human passions.

- 1) 1 Peter 1:14, *As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance,*
- 2) J. Ramsey Michaels, *One’s “remaining time in the flesh” is not the relatively short time remaining for everyone until Christ’s return (cf. 4:7), but rather the individual’s lifetime on earth, whether short or long.*

- 3) Peter Davids, . . . *'the flesh' is not used here or anywhere else in 1 Peter (it is used seven times; all but one of them are in 3:18–4:6) in the Pauline sense of the sinful nature in human beings (as, e.g., in Rom. 7–8), but in the normal Jewish sense of human existence as weak, fallen, and therefore subject to pain and death.*
- 4) David Walls, *By following this counsel, you demonstrate to others that obeying God is the most important motivation for your life, more important by far than avoiding hardship and pain.*
- 5) *Human passions may be identified in 1 John 2:16, For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.*
- 6) Charles Spurgeon, *Every moment that we are here, we are travelling at an immense rate, speeding onward to the great goal of death . . . We say that we will find a firm foundation to build on for eternity; and while we are thinking and talking of the foundation, the earth is crumbling from underneath our feet, and we are gradually gliding away.*

b. The Christ-like view is to live for the will of God.

- 1) 2 Corinthians 5:15, *and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.*
- 2) Romans 8:5-6, *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.*
- 3) Peter Davids, . . . *since the flesh is weak and fallen, it is the mode of existence in which the evil impulse in human beings operates. Believers thus have a choice: (1) they can live their remaining time "for human desires," or (2) they can live it "for the will of God."*
- 4) Warren Wiersbe, *The will of God is not a burden that the Father places on us. Rather it is the divine enjoyment and enablement that makes all burdens light . . . We may not always understand what He is doing, but we know that He is doing what is best for us. We do not live on explanations; we live on promises.*
- 5) J. Vernon McGee, *A great many folk are trying to find a shortcut to living the Christian life, and there is no shortcut. God says that He will use suffering in your life in order to keep you from sin.*
- 6) J. Ramsey Michaels, *The best summary is perhaps the fourfold command of 2:17 ("Show respect for everyone, with love for the brotherhood; reverence toward God, and respect for the emperor") . . .*
- 7) H. D. M. Spence, *God' will is our sanctification (1 Thess. 4:3). That will is ever the same, a fixed, unchanging rule; the lusts of men are shifting, uncertain, restless.*
- 8) Charles Spurgeon, *You will not bring a man into the temperament to break off his sin by merely telling him that it is his duty, or by warning him that he will be ruined unless he does so. No, but if you can lay that dead man at the foot of the cross—if you can bring the pierced hand of Jesus to touch that dead and powerless sinner—then he will live.*

B. The way of unbelievers (3-5)

1. A pagan lifestyle is no longer appropriate for a Christian (3), ***For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.***

a. Enough of immorality!

- 1) Acts 17:30, *The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent,*
- 2) 1 Thessalonians 4:5, *not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God;*
- 3) It is interesting to note that the unbeliever "wants" to do immoral things whereas God "wills" things for the believer.
- 4) The word for *living* means *to behave in a customary manner, with possible focus upon continuity of action, acting in their customary way.*
- 5) Thomas Constable, *Peter's readers had already spent too much time living for self in typically unsaved Gentile practices.*
- 6) Roger Raymer, *Christians were exhorted to live for the present in God's will because old habits were a thing of the past. In blunt language Peter stressed that there must be a definite break from what pagans choose to do . . . the wasted years of debauchery . . .*
- 7) David Walls, *This verse says quite bluntly that our past experience of sin is sufficient. The Greek perfect tense emphasizes that the kinds of activities listed in verse 3 are over; this part of our lives is a closed chapter.*
- 8) Wayne Grudem, *To the Christian who wonders whether ever in the future he or she might indulge in one more unrestrained time of sin, one more time of doing what the Gentiles like to do, Peter's answer is clear: The 'time that is past' is 'sufficient', is 'enough' of living that way.*
- 9) Edmund Clowney, *Those who have been given new life through Christ will look with fear and revulsion at the life-style that once swept them along with the crowd.*

- 10) Warren Wiersbe, *There are times when looking back at your past life would be wrong, because Satan could use those memories to discourage you. But God urged Israel to remember that they had once been slaves in Egypt (Deut. 5:15). Paul remembered that he had been a persecutor of believers (1 Tim. 1:12ff), and this encouraged him to do even more for Christ. We sometimes forget the bondage of sin and remember only the passing pleasures of sin.*
- b. A catalog of pagan activities
- 1) *sensuality*
 - a) It means *to give oneself over to debauchery, licentiousness, behavior completely lacking in moral restraint, promiscuous sexual behavior.*
 - b) It can also mean *lack of control over oneself, often in the form of excesses of sex and/or food.*
 - c) This word is used in Romans 13:13; Galatians 4:19, Ephesians 4:19, 2 Peter 2:7, 2:18.
 - d) David Walls, *Debauchery and lusts refer to unbridled and unrestrained living. They describe a person who knows no restraints, has no checks and balances for life. Specifically, such a person has no restraint when it comes to sexual morality or violent behavior.*
 - 2) *passions*
 - a) It means *lust, a desire for something forbidden, to engage in an activity which is morally wrong.*
 - b) Wayne Grudem, *Passions are sinful human desires which can be allowed to exert strong influence on one's behaviour.*
 - c) J. Vernon McGee, *"Lusts"—that includes a great many things, lusting after the things of the flesh.*
 - 3) *drunkenness and drinking parties*
 - a) *Drunkenness* appears in the New Testament only here and implies consumption of large quantities of wine.
 - b) David Walls, *"Drunkenness" emphasizes the habitual nature of a person's sin.*
 - c) Wayne Grudem, . . . *characteristic of a life bent on following physical desires . . .*
 - d) Louw-Nida, *drinking parties involving unrestrained indulgence in alcoholic beverages and accompanying immoral behavior . . .*
 - 4) *orgies*
 - a) It originally meant *a festal procession in honor of Dionysus, then a joyous meal or banquet.*
 - b) It came to mean *excessive feasting, carousing, revelry.*
 - c) Louw-Nida, . . . *drinking parties involving unrestrained indulgence in alcoholic beverages and accompanying immoral behavior.*
 - d) Wayne Grudem, . . . *banquets and feasts given to wild immorality.*
 - 5) *lawless idolatry*
 - a) *Lawless* means *disgusting, detestable; tied to idolatry, they mean unlawful deeds connected with idolatry.*
 - c) David Walls, *In the first century, sexual and alcoholic excesses had become idols in many people's lives. Believers may continue to struggle with the temptations of these kinds of activities, but they must remain a part of our past history.*
 - d) Wayne Grudem, . . . *sensual living is often connected with idol worship and the demonic forces behind those idols which incite people to yet greater sin . . .*
2. Christians are maligned by unbelievers because of their changed lifestyles (4), ***With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you;***
- a. Unbelievers are surprised by Christians' changed behavior.
 - 1) Wayne Grudem, *The phrase "join them" is literally 'running with them', an expression which vividly reflects the frenetic pace of their continually disappointing search for true pleasure . . . The whole picture is one of people rushing headlong toward destruction.*
 - 2) Thomas Constable, *Some of the persecution Peter's readers were experiencing was due to their unwillingness to continue in their old lifestyle with their unsaved friends. This continues to be a common source of persecution for Christians today.*
 - 3) Roger Raymer, *Godless men are genuinely surprised by the changed lives of those who once were like they are. They think it strange . . .*

- 4) Peter Davids, *The Christians' unconverted neighbors were quick to notice the change in lifestyle, which they could not comprehend. What specifically bothered them was the nonparticipation in the enumerated vices.*
- 5) Warren Wiersbe, *Unsaved people do not understand the radical change that their friends experience when they trust Christ and become children of God. They do not think it strange when people wreck their bodies, destroy their homes, and ruin their lives by running from one sin to another! But let a drunkard become sober, or an immoral person pure, and the family thinks he has lost his mind! Festus told Paul, "You are out of your mind!" (Acts 26:24, NASB) and people even thought the same thing of our Lord (Mark 3:21).*

b. Christians are maligned for their new lifestyle.

- 1) *malign*
 - a) *Blaspheme* comes from this Greek word. It means *to injure the reputation of, revile, defame.*
 - b) 1 Peter 3:16, *having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.*
 - c) Douglas Mangum, *This is the most frequently used verb for speaking disparagingly and abusively against God and others.*
- 2) Roger Raymer, *A changed life provokes hostility from those who reject the gospel.*
- 3) David Walls, *Nonbelievers of every era tend to resent the convicting purity of the believer's life, and as a result, the Christian becomes the victim of their slander. Through such slander they seek somehow to justify their own behavior by painting the non-participant in a negative way.*
- 4) Peter Davids, *Their reaction to this nonconformity is to slander the Christians . . . Because of their abstention from social situations involving idolatry or immoral behavior Christians were seen as haters of humanity, politically disloyal, or otherwise abnormal. They were accused of crimes, such as that of cannibalism (because they "ate flesh and drank blood"). All of this rejection was certainly painful, especially when it came in the form of rumors they could not correct and ostracism from former friends and colleagues.*
- 5) Wayne Grudem, . . . *when Christians did not join in sins of unbelievers, the result was not just surprise. The unbelievers became hostile, for Peter says they abuse you. It is primarily verbal abuse and slander that are intended, for the term means 'speak evil of, defame, injure the reputation of someone' (so in Matt. 27:39; Luke 22:65; 23:39; Rom. 3:8; 14:16; 1 Cor. 10:30; Titus 3:2; 2 Pet. 2:2) . . . silent non-participation in sin often implies condemnation of that sin, and rather than change their ways unbelievers will slander those who have pained their consciences, or justify their own immorality by spreading rumours that the 'righteous' Christians are immoral as well.*

c. Comments

- 1) Charles Swindoll, *Your very presence in the world, taking a stand for what's true and good, becomes a standard of righteousness against which unbelievers don't measure up.*
- 2) Warren Wiersbe, *We must be patient toward the lost, even though we do not agree with their lifestyles or participate in their sins. After all, unsaved people are blind to spiritual truth (2 Cor. 4:3-4) and dead to spiritual enjoyment (Eph. 2:1). In fact, our contact with the lost is important to them since we are the bearers of the truth that they need. When unsaved friends attack us, this is our opportunity to witness to them (1 Peter 3:15).*

3. Unbelievers will be judged by God (5), ***but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.***

a. Unbelievers will give account to God.

- 1) Matthew 12:36, *I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak,*
- 2) Thomas Constable, *Peter reminded his readers that God would condemn their unsaved friends' behavior. Consequently they should not return to it.*
- 3) Roger Raymer, *Those who have spent their lives in indulgence and idolatry will someday give account . . .*
- 4) David Walls, *Unbelievers will have to give an account of their lives but will not be able to withstand the divine scrutiny.*
- 5) Peter Davids, *While the Christians may feel abandoned by God and unable to defend themselves, it is their accusers, not they, who have a problem, for the detractors will have to answer to God.*

- b. God will judge everyone.
- 1) Acts 10:42, *And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.*
 - 2) Warren Wiersbe, *The unsaved may judge us, but one day, God will judge them. Instead of arguing with them, we should pray for them, knowing that the final judgment is with God.*
 - 3) Thomas Constable, *The Judge was already “ready” to judge (cf. Dan. 3:15 [LXX]; Acts 21:13; 2 Cor. 12:14).*
 - 4) Roger Raymer, *No one will escape this final judgment of the words and works of his earthly life, when Christ will judge both the living and the dead (cf. Acts 10:42; Rom. 14:9; 1 Thes. 4:15; 2 Tim. 4:1).*
 - 5) David Walls, *Those people who practice these things and who abuse Christians for failing to live the same way may seem to have the upper hand for the time being, but the last word will be with God. He is already prepared. A time is coming when the world as we know it will come to an end and God will judge the world.*
 - 6) Wayne Grudem, *It is not only the living who will be judged, but also the dead—a statement which clearly implies that death will not enable anyone to escape judgment, but that all people will consciously stand before God on that day.*

TO BE CONTINUED, LORD WILLING.

- C. The power of the Gospel (6), *For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.*