

1 Peter 1:1-25

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The theme for our study of First Peter will be **Sanctified for Suffering**. The word *suffering* or its equivalent is found 21 times in this short epistle. First Peter teaches *hope* sustained by *grace* despite *suffering*. But it goes beyond the sphere of passive suffering. It reveals that Christians are **called** to suffer (see Rom. 8:17; Phil. 1:19). A Christlike character is not being formed in us unless we suffer (Rom. 5:3-5) and we are not properly trained to comfort others unless we are schooled by suffering (2 Cor. 1:1-9).

Adoniram Judson, renowned missionary to Burma, endured untold hardships trying to reach the lost for Christ. For seven heartbreaking years he suffered hunger and privation. During this time he was thrown into Ava Prison, and for 17 months was subjected to almost incredible mistreatment. As a result, for the rest of his life he carried the ugly marks made by the chains and iron shackles which had cruelly bound him. Undaunted, upon his release he asked for permission to enter another province where he might resume preaching the Gospel. The godless ruler indignantly denied his request, saying, "My people are not fools enough to listen to anything a missionary might say, but I fear they might be impressed by your *scars* and turn to your religion!"

The fact that good people suffer has been one of the great paradoxes of life. The Wisdom Literature of the Bible (i.e., Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon) is the OT's partial revelation to this question. **Suffering** is cited by most unbelievers as the number one proof that God does not exist.

Peter wrote, "If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you." (4:14). Just *how* the spirit of glory and of God rests upon us when we suffer faithfully for Christ is what Peter will tell us in his first epistle. He begins in the first chapter by telling us that because the genuineness of our faith will be tested by some kind of fire, we must **Gird up our minds**.

Be in Bible School for this series of lessons. It will help you gird up your mind to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you (1 Pet. 3:15).

QUESTIONS:

1. *How* are Christians *sanctified* by the Spirit? 1:12 Sanctified for *what*?
2. *How* are we *born anew*? 1:3-5; 1:22-23 How do we know *when* it takes place?
3. *Why* is a Christian's faith tested? 1:6-7 *How*?
4. Did the prophets *really* predict the sufferings and glory of Christ? 1:10-11. Where are the predictions to be found?
5. *Why* did angels want to see these things? 1:12 Didn't they?
6. What is *girding* up one's mind? 1:13 *How* does one go about doing it?
7. Is *fear* a proper motive for conduct? 1:17
8. How *much* of you did God ransom with Jesus' blood? 1:18 Your mind? Your body? Your conduct? Does God have the right to "buy" your mind?
9. How is it possible to have *confidence* in God--you haven't seen him--he hasn't proved his reliability to you, has he? *How*? 1:20-21
10. Why do we have to *obey* the truth to purify our souls? 1:22 Why isn't just asking God to do so sufficient? What *truth* are we to obey?
11. Is the word of God actually *alive*? 1:23 What does that mean?

1 Peter 2:1-25

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INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

In 1 Peter chapter 2, we are exhorted to build ourselves a *spiritual house* (life) that will withstand the “storms” of trouble, suffering and persecution. Everyone builds his own house. Except the Lord be allowed to supervise the building of the house, however, he labors in vain who builds. Jesus told a number of parables about building spiritual houses that would be safe and secure from the storms that rage around them (Mt. 7:24-27; Lk. 6:46-49; Lk. 14:28-30). As Christians labor to build themselves into a *spiritual house* there will inevitably be times of testing and suffering.

Give attention to these words from C. S. Lewis in his book entitled, *The Problem of Pain*:

“The human spirit will not even begin to try to surrender self-will as long as all seems to be well...Until the evil man finds evil unmistakably present in his existence, in the form of pain, he is enclosed in illusion. Once pain has roused him, he knows that he is in some way or other 'up against' the real universe; he either rebels...or else makes some attempt at an adjustment, which, if pursued, will lead him to righteousness...Pain as God's megaphone is a terrible instrument; it may lead to final and unrepented rebellion. But it gives the only opportunity the bad man can have for amendment. It removes the veil; *it plants the flag of truth within the fortress of a rebel soul*...Everyone has noticed how hard it is to turn our thoughts to God when everything is going well with us.”

If God is allowing you to suffer (physically or mentally) rest assured he is trying to get you to do some “remodeling on your house.” He is trying to help you build a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (2 Cor. 5:1-5).

You will want to be in Bible School to get expert guidance and divine power from God (in the Bible) on renovating your (*oikos pneumatikos*) spiritual house.

QUESTIONS:

1. Where is the pure *spiritual* milk for which we are to long and by which we grow up to salvation? 2:2
2. Why is the *Messiah* symbolized as a living stone? 2:4
3. *How* are Christians built into a spiritual house? 2:5
4. How could the Messiah be both a stone upon which to *build* and a stone which would cause some to *stumble*? 2:6-8
5. For what purpose has God made Christians a royal priesthood and a holy nation? 2:9
6. Does abstaining from evil have an effect on others? 2:11-12 *What?*
7. Are we to be subject to *every* human institution? 2:13-17 *Why?*
8. Must Christians *always* suffer unjustly? 2:18-19
9. Are we really required to be submissive *with all respect* even to the *overbearing*? 2:18-19 What does it take to be able to do that?
10. Do you consider yourself as having been **called** to suffer for doing right? 2:21 Have you ever done so?
11. How did *Christ* deal with suffering unjustly in his own life? 2:23 But are *we* expected to do what *Christ* did?

1 Peter 3:1-22

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INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The mother of a brain-injured child wrote these poignant words in the Christian devotional book, *Our Daily Bread*: "We would have called our daughter's handicap the greatest tragedy of our lives if it were not for the fact that through it we came to know the Lord much better. Words cannot fully express our keen disappointment when our little girl failed to experience normal mental development. Yet her condition made us *understand* just a bit how our dear Savior must feel when his children do not mature spiritually. The Lord knows that heartaches, if properly accepted will enrich our lives in a way that could not happen otherwise. Strengthened in the inner man, we come through our trials bigger and better Christians and with a new and brighter testimony.

John Wesley had a terrible wife. She tormented him beyond measure. But he said that he attributed most of his success to his wife. She kept him on his knees and because he was kept on his knees, he had the victory.

It is true! Some of the most excruciating *suffering* we must endure has to do with *personal relationships*! David suffered over his sons and daughters; Sarah suffered when Abraham produced a child by Hagar; the woman at the well suffered the gossip of her neighbors at Sychar; the man born blind suffered the rejection of his parents; Moses suffered the bitterness of his sister Miriam; the father suffered the rejection of his prodigal son and the unforgiveness of his elder son.

Montel, Vicki Lake and Donahue are not the answer---they are part of the problem! They are merely exploiting people's hatred and hurt for ratings! There is only one answer, "...in your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you." (1 Pet. 3:15). Join fellow, caring Christians in Bible School and learn God's answers!

QUESTIONS:

1. If people suffer because of being created to live in such an intimate personal relationship as marriage, *why* did God make marriage? 3:1-2
2. What does a wife's beautiful conduct have to do with lessening suffering? 3:3-4 What is a *quiet* spirit?
3. What does a husband's *considerateness* of his wife have to do with avoiding suffering? 3:7
4. Are women really the *weaker sex* (Gr. *skeuei vessel*)? 3:7 In what way?
Doesn't this make the Bible out-of-step with modern ideas and needs?
5. If women are really *weaker vessels* what are men to do about it? 3:7
6. How may we avoid suffering in the necessary, daily interpersonal relationships (at work, at play, with neighbors, etc.)? 3:8-9
7. How does a *guileless tongue* keep us from suffering? Christians could lie their way out of suffering if they were smart enough, couldn't they? 3:10
8. What does *reverencing Christ as Lord* do to relieve suffering? 3:15
9. May some suffering be averted by being ready to make a defense of the hope within us? 3:15
10. What does the account concerning Noah and the flood have to do with averting suffering in interpersonal relationships? 3:18-22

1 Peter 4:1-19

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INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

General of the Army Douglas MacArthur made a speech at the University of Pittsburgh on June 8, 1932. In this speech he said, in part:

“Pacifism and its bedfellow, Communism, are all about us.

In the theaters, newspapers and magazines, pulpits and lecture halls, schools and colleges, it hangs like a mist before the face of America, organizing the forces of unrest and undermining the morals of the working man. Day by day this canker eats deeper into the body politic. For the sentimentalism and emotionalism which have infested our country, we should substitute hard common sense. Pacific habits do not ensure peace or immunity from national insult and aggression. Any nation that would keep its self-respect must be prepared to defend itself.”

For that speech this great and wise man was roundly denounced not only by pacifists and Communists, but even on the floor of Congress itself. But General MacArthur knew what he was talking about! Had America been armed with more than wooden rifles and stove-pipe cannons in the 1930s, hundreds of thousands of lives could have been saved in World War II.

As late as March 10, 1996, William Pile wrote in the Christian Standard, *The Suffering Factor in Our Faith*, to remind us that the Christian faith and suffering are inexorably tied to one another. He said, “There may be no less popular subject in America today than suffering...in a culture whose psychological paradigm has no place for suffering, we are asked to preach a gospel that includes suffering.”

The apostle Peter knew what he was talking about when he wrote, “Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, *arm yourselves* with the same thought...”

So how does one handle suffering? Just like Jesus and the apostles---by *arming* oneself to fight against it! Be in Bible School to learn how to use "the sword of the Spirit, *the word of God*" against suffering. It's as up-to-date as tomorrow!

QUESTIONS:

1. What weapons does the Christian have with which to *arm* himself in the war of suffering? 4:1 (see also Eph. 6:10ff; 2 Cor. 6:7; 10:3-5)
2. How does suffering in the flesh cause one to *cease* from sin? 4:1-3 Is this the only road to cessation from sin?
3. Why do those living in licentiousness *abuse* those who do not? 4:3-4
4. Why would Peter need to warn Christians to be *sane and sober*? 4:7
5. How does love *cover* a multitude of sins? 4:8 Does love overlook sin?
6. What *gift* do you have that you *employ* for someone else? 4:10 You do have a gift, don't you? Sure you do! You're employing it aren't you?
7. Why does scripture forbid Christians to be *surprised* at being persecuted? 4:12 Isn't it *strange* for people to suffer for doing good?
8. How does the *Spirit* and *glory* of God rest upon you when you are reproached for the name of Christ? 4:14 What's glorious about suffering?
9. *How* does one suffer according to the will of God? 4:19. Is it *really* in the will of God that we suffer? (see Acts 14:22; 2 Cor. 12:7-10)

1 Peter 5:1-14

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INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

During the winter of 1621-22, the Pilgrims entered into a *starving time*. Unexpected, additional Pilgrims had arrived on the ship *Fortune* (one of them an ancestor of mine) one year after the *Mayflower* had come in 1620. The extra mouths to feed had not been anticipated. They were ultimately reduced to a daily ration of five kernels of corn each! They simply entrusted themselves to a faithful Creator, and God had mercy.

At the next Spring-Summer corn-planting a drought of over 3 months ensued. Their corn and beans appeared dead. But rather than despair, Edward Winslow writes, it "...moved...every good man privately to enter into examination with his own estate between God and his conscience, and so to *humiliation* before Him, but also to *humble* ourselves together before the Lord by fasting and prayer. To that end, a day was appointed by public authority, and set apart from all other employments." This was how the Pilgrims faced their suffering---as a loving chastening from God.

Two days later a gentle, soaking rain began and continued 14 days! No wind or storm of any kind accompanied the rain. That year, the yield was so abundant the Pilgrims ended up with a surplus of corn with which they were able to trade the Indians for valuable venison, etc. And so, in the Fall of 1622 a second Thanksgiving Day was planned just like the one in 1621.

Our lesson this Sunday will follow the theme of Peter's exhortation: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time he may exalt you. Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you." 1 Pet. 5:6-7. That's how a Christian deals with suffering.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why is Peter so emphatic that elders in his day and time give *attention* to their responsibilities 5:1
2. What does the *plurality* of elders here say about the concept of one pastor or pope over the whole church? 5:1
3. What is *tending* the flock of God? 5:2 Should we have *paid* elders? (1 Tim. 5:17-18; 1 Cor. 9:3-7).
4. What has *humility* to do with dealing with suffering? 5:5
5. Is *casting all your anxieties on him* copping-out on personal responsibility? 5:7
6. Does he mean *all* our anxieties? 5:7 (Mt. 6:24-34) Does it work?
7. Can *human beings* resist the devil? How? 5:8-9
8. How does knowing that *others* are suffering too, help one resist the devil? 5:9
9. *Where*, in his epistle, has Peter declared the true grace of God? 5:12 Just what is the *true* grace of God? Is there a *false* grace of God?
10. Was greeting one another *with the kiss of love* reserved for practice only in the first century church? 5:14 Or was Peter just kidding?

2 Peter 1:1-21

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The theme of our lessons in 2nd Peter will be *Sanctified For Stability*. Twice Peter solemnly warns **against instability** (2:14; 3:16). And he exhorts, "Therefore, brethren, be the more zealous to **confirm** your call and election, for if you do this you will never fall..." (2 Pet. 1:10).

If you have never read Vance Packard's book, *The Hidden Persuaders*, you should do so. It is all about how the greedy and unscrupulous "hucksters" of everything from soap to automobiles are determined to **manipulate** and **exploit** you and me. For example: "One of the main jobs of the advertiser in this conflict between pleasure and guilt is not so much to sell the product as to give moral permission to have fun without guilt." ---Earnest Dichter, president, Institute for Motivational Research, Inc.

And, "Social scientists in the past have paid attention to the irrational patterns of human behavior because they wish to locate their social origins and thus be able to suggest changes that would result in more rational conduct. *They now study irrationality...to gather data that may be used to manipulate consumers.*" ---an anonymous ad executive in the magazine, *The Nation*.

According to Vance Packard, a certain Chicago ad agency has used its psychiatric probing and manipulating techniques on little girls, and public relations experts are *advising churchmen on how they can become more effective manipulators of their congregations*.

Our society is now beginning to reap the harvest. Through the years the vast majority of American people have grown more and more credulous and vulnerable to seduction. Our citizenry has lost the *stability* of its forefathers because it has become increasingly materialistic, secular and "entitlement" oriented. Unstable people are continually exploited and manipulated by greedy con-men, some of whom are *religious scam-artists*. This is as relevant as your T.V. screen! Be in Bible School--it will help **solidify** (Gr. *esterigmenous*, from which we get "steroid") you in the **truth**.

QUESTIONS:

1. Through what agency has God granted to us **all** things that pertain to life and godliness? 1:3-4 Is that *really all things*?
2. Through what agency do we escape the corruption that is in the world and become partakers of the **divine nature**? 1:3-4 Is this the same as partaking of the **Holy Spirit**?
3. What is **virtue**? 1:5 (Gr. *areten*, cf. 1 Pet. 2:9; 2 Pet. 1:3; Phil. 4:8) Do you have it? How do you get it?
4. **Must** one have what Peter lists (1:5-7) to have knowledge of Jesus Christ that is fruitful? What about money, expertise, personality and charisma?
5. Can we **do** anything to make our calling and election sure? 1:10 What?
6. What does the **truth** have to do with all of this? 1:12 (that Gr. word *esterigmenous*, solidify is in this verse).
7. Peter emphasizes his preaching about Jesus is not **mythological**---Why? See also 1 Pet. 3:15
8. What would you say to the charge that Christianity is mythological? Do you need help with this? Where will you get it?
9. Why does Peter say **the prophetic word** is "more sure?" 1:19
10. What does Peter mean...no prophecy...is a matter of one's **own** interpretation? 1:20 Shouldn't everyone have their own, different, interpretation?

2 Peter 2:1-22

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INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

He started a Bible class at age 19. They elected him their Pastor. When his wife left him after 19 years of marriage and sued him it was found that his activities, by now carried on all over the world, were through several subsidiary societies and that all of the wealth which flowed into him through these societies was under the control of a holding company in which the Pastor held 99% of the capital and two others of his followers the other 1%. He advertised and sold "miracle" wheat seed at \$1.00 per pound a hundred years ago---the U.S. government investigated and found the claims to be fraudulent. In his world-wide tours it was found that sermons he claimed to have delivered were never preached in places he never visited. Today his "society" has branches in more than 92 lands, missionary works in over 214 countries, its literature distributed in 110 languages; its print presses in 35 years (1928-1963) produced more than 1.5 billion pieces of literature---much of it called *The Watch Tower*. He was Pastor Charles Taze Russell.

Our lesson in 2 Peter warns of such men. Peter says there *will be false prophets* (Gr. *pseudoprophetai*) and *false teachers* (Gr. *pseudodidaskaloi*) who will secretly bring among believers damnable (KJV) heresies of destruction. And in their greed they will *exploit* (Gr. *emporeusontai*, make a market or department store of) the believers. They will do this with *false words* (Gr. *plastois logois*, "plastic doctrines").

Since all Christians are to be faced with this threat to their souls it is in their eternal interest to find out how to recognize a false teacher. Come to Bible School for this lesson!

QUESTIONS:

1. How do false teachers **operate**? 2:1,3
2. What is the inevitable experience of Christendom as a result of false teachers and their followers? 2:2
3. Why are so **many** people seduced by them? 2:3
4. What does **despising authority** have to do with false teaching? 2:10 Whose authority? Must we honor every "authority?"
5. How does **God** deal with false teachers? 2:4-10
6. Why are false teachers characterized as "**irrational animals**?" 2:12-
7. How do false teachers **entice** followers? 2:14,18
8. Unto what are most false teachers **enslaved**? 2:19
9. **Whose** job is it in the church to be on guard about false teachers?

2 Peter 3:1-18

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INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The knowledge that the entire membership roll of the Nazi Party, containing some 8,000,000 names which was found soon after the collapse of the German army, was not joyous news to those whose names were on it. Once these people were proud to be numbered with the ruling party. Once it had meant power and prestige, and in many cases, wealth. This master file had been the key to places of honor and authority for those whose names were listed; but now it was different! Now it meant sharp investigation, prison for many, and death for others!

Dr. Wilber Penfield, director of the Montreal Neurological Institute, said in a report to the Smithsonian Institute: "Your brain contains a permanent record of your past that is like a single continuous strip of movie film, complete with sound track. This 'film library' records your whole waking life from childhood on. You can live again those scenes from your past, one at a time, when a surgeon applies a gentle electrical current to a certain point on the temporal cortex of your brain." The report goes on to say that as you relive the scenes from your past, you feel exactly the same emotions that you did during the original experience.

Scoffing false teachers may deny the judgment; they may entice unsteady souls and exploit them; they may deliberately ignore the facts of scriptural history; but that will not stop God's judgment from coming. It is inevitable. It is as certain as Jesus was raised from the dead (Acts 17:30-31); it is as certain as the sprouting forth of new *flora* when seeds are planted in the earth (1 Cor. 15:35-57).

QUESTIONS:

1. Why is Peter so emphatic about **reminding** his readers to remember the predictions and the commandments of the apostles? 3:1-2
2. Why will **scoffers** come, scoffing? 3:3 (cf. 1 Tim. 4:1-5; 2 Tim. 3:1-9).
3. What are the **last days** or **when** are they? 3:3
4. About what will the scoffers **scoff**? 3:4
5. What **facts** do they deliberately ignore? 3:5-6 What should these facts tell the world (cf. Rom. 1:18ff).
6. What is it that Christians are not to **ignore** about the coming of Christ? 3:8-10 Are some Christians ignoring it?
7. How should the fact of the coming **judgment** affect our lives? 3:11-12
8. Why do people **twist** the scriptures? 3:14-16
9. Verses 17 and 18 are the **summation** of Peter's 2nd epistle---so what has he been **saying** all along? **Stability!**