

THE SUFFERING OF THE SAINTS

I Peter 1:6-9

Introduction:

1. The people to whom Peter wrote were God's elect because they had obeyed the gospel of Christ (I Pet. 1:2; 2 Thess.2:13-14).
2. As God's elect they had an inheritance (I Pet. 1:5).
3. As God's chosen ones they rejoice in salvation (I Pet. 1:6)
4. Problem: Why do the saints suffer?

I. The Fact of Christian Suffering

- A. All that live godly shall suffer (2 Tim. 3:12).
 1. Jesus suffered (John 15:20; I Pet. 2:21-24). / (I Pet. 4:16)
 2. One who suffers as a Christian should not be ashamed. /
- B. Why do the saved suffer?
 1. By a physical body the Christian is connected to a world where there is suffering, disease, death, and accidents.
 2. A sinful world does not appreciate godliness, and will react by inflicting physical and/or mental suffering upon the saved (I Pet. 4:1-5).
 3. Satan causes suffering (I Pet. 5:8; see Job 1) / Mtt.10:32f
 4. Some inflict suffering upon those obeying Christ

II. The Nature Of The Trials

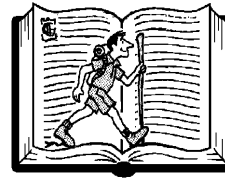
- A. Manifold trials - I Pet.1:6:
This refers to kinds of trials and not to numbers; persecutions, deprivation, hardships, difficulties, etc.
- B. Fiery trials - I Pet. 1:7;
Some trials are fierce (Luke 12:50; Matt. 26:39);
Life during time of Nero was difficult (I Pet.2:19,20; 3:14f)
- C. Temporary trials -- 1 Peter 1:6;
Life's trials are "but for a moment" (2 Cor. 4:17); suffering as a Christian is but for "a little while" (I Pet. 5:10).

III. The Value of Suffering

- A. Trials test and reveal true nature of one's faith. (Cf. Abraham in Genesis 22:1,2, 12). Peter uses the figure of removing the impurities from gold by fire (1:7). Trial of faith works patience (steadfastness) James 1:2-3.
- B. Trials may arouse one to greater service -- Psalms 119:67, 71
- C. Trials enable one to help others who suffer (2 Cor. 1:3-4)

CONCLUSION:

1. It is important to develop and maintain a Christian attitude in the midst of suffering.
2. The importance of attitude: the same sun that melts wax hardens clay.
3. Rejoice because of heavenly reward -- Matthew 5:11-12.



Walking Thru The Bible FIRST PETER

Introduction

Author: Peter was also called Simon (Acts 15:14; 2 Pet. 1:1) and was born at Bethsaida (Jn. 1:44). His father was Jonas, or John (Mt. 16:17; Jn. 1:42) and with him Peter and his brother Andrew carried on the trade of fishing at Capernaum where he lived (Mt. 8:14) and where his wife's mother also lived (I Cor. 9:5).

His brother Andrew brought him to Christ and Jesus gave him the name 'Peter' or Hebrew 'Cephas' (Jn. 1:40-42). He became a leader among the disciples and one of the inner-circles of Jesus' apostles. Christ gave to him the keys to open the kingdom on the day of Pentecost to the Jews (Acts 2) and to the Gentiles (Acts 10) with the conversion of Cornelius.

Background of the Letter: From reading the epistle it is evident there was a persecution upon the Christians under way. The persecution of Nero as described by the Roman historical Tacitus seems to best answer the situation. This came in the middle of the AD 60's. Paul was killed in this persecution and the epistle seems to have been written about this time.

The Recipients: The letter is addressed to Christians in the central and northern provinces of Asia Minor. It is addressed to the elect who are *sojourners of the dispersion*. It is apparent that the readers were Christians of both Jewish and Gentile background (1:14; 2:9-10; 4:3-5). Peter looked upon the scattered Christians as sojourners upon earth and as dispersed among the nations. It is likely that because of Nero's persecution many Christians had been forced to seek safety in the provinces Peter mentions.

Place of Writing and Date: In 5:13 Peter refers to "*Babylon*" and sends salutations to the saints to whom he was writing, so that we get the impression that Peter was in Babylon when the letter was written. A great deal of speculations has been engaged in as to whether or not this was literal *Babylon*, the city on the Euphrates River, or whether the term, *Babylon*, symbolically refers to some place of great persecution like the "Babylon" in Revelation which is identified as the city of Jerusalem. (Cf. Rev. 11:8; Rev. 14:8.) There are others who hold to it as Rome.

Many, however, do not interpret this passage figuratively. A passage should be interpreted literally unless the type of literature, context, or other weighty evidence indicates otherwise. *Babylon* is said to have been a large city with a good size Jewish population during the first century. (The city was not actually destroyed and deserted until the end of the third century.)

The date for the composition of First Peter is generally believed to be about AD 64 or 65. The persecution is probably that which was instigated by Nero in his rage against Christians following the fire at Rome in July of AD 64. According to tradition Peter was martyred in Rome about AD 65-67.

THE MESSAGE OF FIRST PETER

Theme: The idea of "suffering" occurs 26 times in the book. Peter writes to encourage these saints who are suffering in the midst of persecution. Note how he would encourage them:

I. HE SPEAKS OF THEM AS A SAVED PEOPLE 1

Salvation of one's soul is of utmost importance--

- A. *It was Planned by God* (v.2)
Salvation was enjoyed not as an afterthought but by God's forethought, thus according to his plan or purpose.
- B. *It was Prophesied in the Old Testament* (vs. 10-12)
God's plan was prophesied that Christ was to suffer and to enter into his glory.
- C. *It was Preached by the Apostles* (v.12)
- D. *It was Purchased with the Blood of Jesus* (vs. 18-19)
They were not redeemed by corruptible things.
- E. *It is Predicated upon Obedience* (vs. 22-23)
Their souls were purified by obedience.

II. THEY ARE A SEPARATE PEOPLE ch 2

- A. *They are Separate by Birth* - (1:23; 2:5)
Their birth was one that made them different, but it was not their fleshly birth, but their **new** birth.
- B. *They are Separate by Belief* - 2:7
What they believed made them different from others.
- C. *They are Separate by Behavior* - 2:11
To abstain from things detrimental to the soul.

III. HE WILL SPEAK OF THEM AS A SUBMISSIVE PEOPLE ch 3 (Three areas where essential)

- A. *In their Martial Responsibility* - 3:1-7
The duty and demeanor of the wife-- she is to be in subjection to the husband. He is to be a man of consideration and concern for his wife.
- B. *In their Mutual Responsibilities* - 3:8-17
Christians are to have proper aims and attitudes in our contact with other people.
Cultivate right attitude v.8 -- control self v.9-12 -- maintain courage and confidence v.13-14 -- firm conviction v.15 --

- C. *In their Missionary Responsibilities* - 3:18-22
Imitate Christ's concern for the lost even if the lost don't always respond in a positive way.

IV. THEY ARE A SUFFERING PEOPLE ch 4

- A. *Suffering can be Expected* - 4:1-6
Christians should expect persecution as Christ received.
- B. *Suffering can be Easier* - 4:7-11
There are some things that will cushion the blow.
-- keep a cool head (v.7) -- keep a warm heart (v.8)
-- keep open houses (v.9) -- keep ready hand (v.10)
-- keep truthful tongues (v.12)
- C. *Suffering can be Endured* - 4:13-19
Look back and see how Christ endured.
-- Keep your perspective (v.12) -- keep your peace (vs. 13-14) -- keep your purity (v.15) -- keep your pride (v.16) -- keep your poise (vs.17-19) --

V. THEY ARE TO BE STEADFAST ch 5

In closing, Peter is aware of their struggles. He encourages them to remain firm and steadfast. What will help them? --

- A. *Leadership that is Strong* - 5:1-4
Peter an elder talking to elders and he knew that strong leadership is needed if the church remains steadfast. With respect to leadership Peter speaks of:
-- respect that elevates (v.1) -- restrictions that regulate (vs.2-3) -- regard that dominates (v.2-3) -- rewards that motivates (v.4)
- B. *Loyalty that is True* - 5:5-9
Satan will attempt to destroy their faith. They are to realize the danger yet resist all efforts of the devil.
- C. *Love that is Sincere* - 5:10-14
In brotherly love Peter closes epistle and sends greetings. All should encourage one another and be warm in our love. (5:14; cf. 1:22).

Conclusion: Such an epistle would help one to endure the cross in order to obtain the crown. Yes, they are saved, separated, submissive and suffering, however, they must remain steadfast.