

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, April 10, 2019 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



INTRODUCTION TO 1 PETER – PART 2 “The Who, What, When, Where and How of 1 Peter” 1 Peter 1:1-2

*"A gem is not polished without rubbing, nor a man made better without trials."
– Chinese Proverb*

“Consider it pure joy, my brother (and sisters) whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” –James 1:2-4 (NIV)

Although it sounds absurd or perhaps at least a little dark and gloomy that trials would ever be counted a “joy,” we have heard these verses from James enough that as believe we may just accept that at face value and never really ask the bigger question of “How can that be?” We know that maturing in our faith and finding a complete (or whole, full, mature) faith includes times of suffering... sometimes great trial. Without them we may never really develop... and nobody, it seems, ever escapes the process. We simply cannot become the people God intends us to be without some headaches and heartaches along the way... some bumps along the road. But saying that, even embracing that prior to those times of suffering is far easier than living it when they come. There are a couple different natural responses to suffering when it comes in our life...

Possible Responses to Suffering:

1. **Negative response... we can respond by becoming **HARDENED**** – Often when “trial of many kinds” (as James calls it) come our way, whatever that suffering may be, it often throws us so off guard... we are so unprepared, that it knocks the wind out of our sails. It may leave us reeling, perhaps hurting so deeply or so confused and bewildered that we find ourselves growing angry... sometimes even mad. We get mad at God, mad at the world and

mad at others. We can lash out and allow our pains and disappointments in life to literally harden and callous our spirit. We may grow bitter toward God for apparently allowing this to happen to us.

2. **Positive response... we can respond by becoming HOPE-FULL** – James uses the word “joy.” Peter uses the word “hope” in the midst of trials and suffering. For a believer, the suffering we experience in this life can actually serve to enable our faith to be strengthened, lifted, full of hope and encouragement as we mature us and grow in the faith. So. Suffering and the difficulties of this life may actually cause us to draw closer to God than we have ever been in greater dependence and reliance on Him.

So the question is how do I develop that kind of life and faith that enable me to be full of “hope-fulness” even in the midst of suffering. That is where First Peter comes in. The Christian life is an overcoming life. Even though we will definitely have problems and personal struggles in this life (trials of many kinds), we will be able to overcome because of Jesus. Because of Him, we have victory over the world, including sinful habits, bitterness, loneliness, guilt, fear, and discouragement. God desires for you to live an overcoming life! Jesus, Himself, said in John 16:33, “*I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*” And in 1 John 5:4-5, “*For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.*” ⁵ *Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.*” Christians are overcomers and truly are to live hope-filled Christian lives every day, but let’s be honest, there are many trial and struggles, heartaches and difficulties along... times of suffering that can daily rob us of our joy and paralyze our faith, steal our hope, and destroy our relationship and weaken our walk... times of suffering can embitter and defeat us if we let it. 1 Peter was written to help believer’s believe and grow even in times of suffering.

“While there’s life, there’s hope!” That ancient Roman saying is still quoted today and, like most adages, it has a element of truth but no guarantee of certainty. It is not the fact of life that determines hope, the faith of life. A Christian believer has a “living hope” (1 Pet. 1:3) because his or her faith and hope are in God (1 Pet. 1:21). This “living hope” is the major theme of Peter’s first letter. He is saying to all believers, “Be hopeful!”

Before we study the details of this fascinating letter... one of only two books in all of the Bible written by Jesus closest disciples and a leader of the disciples, and both very short... before we get into our study let’s get acquainted with some background information for the book, with the man who wrote it, and the people to whom he sent it, and the particular situation that prompted him to write.

Quotes about 1 Peter:

“For the most part, Christians in the Western world have enjoyed comfortable lives. Our brothers and sisters behind iron and bamboo curtains have suffered for their faith. Now there is ever indication that the time is approaching when it will cost us to take a stand for Christ. The only ‘comfortable’ Christian will be a ‘compromising’ Christian, and his comfort will be costly.” –Dr. Warren Wiersbe

“If you know something about suffering and persecution, then 1 Peter has a message for you... ‘be hopeful!’” – Dr. Warren Wiersbe

“In his first letter, Peter reminded believers of the many blessings available to them because of their suffering... Peter’s letters of encouragement and warning are just as important for believers today to hear, understand, and apply to their lives as they were during the first century.” –Dr. John MacArthur

“Believers in the early church, who were scattered across the Roman Empire, were facing the threat of increased persecution. Peter, the most outspoken of the disciples and leader among the apostle, wrote two practical and encouraging letters to strengthen the hearts of these followers of Christ. Through words of hope and wisdom, he taught them how to live victoriously in the midst of the life-threatening trials they were facing.” –Dr. John MacArthur

Some Interesting Facts About 1 Peter:

1. Author: **PETER**
2. Time Written: Shortly before **A.D. 64**
3. Position in the Bible: **60th** book of the Bible, **21st** book of the New Testament, **16th** of **21** Epistle (Letter) books (Romans-Jude)
4. Book Stats: **5** chapters, **105** verses, **2,482** words
5. Special Observations: The basic theme of 1 Peter is the proper response to Christian **SUFFERING**... hope in the midst of suffering. Peter is writing to Christian in a world that is becoming increasingly hostile to them now in the Romans, as well as the Jews, are persecuting the church.
6. In the book of 1 Peter the word “Suffering” and its equivalent, occur only **2 TIMES** in the book, but the “sufferings” of Christ are mentioned in **EVERY CHAPTER** of 1 Peter - Why? Maybe to point us to Him who suffered for us so that in our suffering we would have hope. He is our hope
7. Christ in 1 Peter:
 - (1) Chapter 1 – Christ is man’s source of hope and man’s redeemer (1 Peter 1:3, 18-19)
 - (2) Chapter 2 – Christ is the chief cornerstone (v.6), man’s example (v.21), man’s sinner-bearer (v.24)
 - (3) Chapter 3 – Christ is Lord (vv.15,22)
 - (4) Chapter 4 – Christ is man’s suffer (vv. 1,13)
 - (5) Chapter 5 – Christ is the Chief Shepherd and Overseer (v.4)

“^dPeter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ²elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.” -1 Peter 1:1-2 (NKJV)

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF FIRST PETER?

Notice the very first verse of this important letter claim authorship, *“^dPeter, an apostle of Jesus Christ...”* That is an interesting opening statement for a number of reason. The writer of the letter is clearly stated Peter was not merely an apostle, but there is a sense in which he was the

leader of the apostolic group. **Peter was an important and an influential man in the early church.** This letter would have been received with a sense of importance.

3 Significant Reasons this Letter Would Have Been Received with a Sense of Authority and Importance Because Peter Wrote It:

1. Peter's name is mentioned in the **GOSPELS** more than any other person except **JESUS, Himself**
 2. No one **SPEAKS** in the gospels as often as Peter
 3. Jesus speaks more **TO PETER** than to any other individual
- *these three things highlight a sense of how important Peter was and his significance to the early church.*

Some Highlights to Note of the Peter/Jesus Interaction: *We said that Jesus speaks more to Peter than to any other individual in the gospels. That is significant here are some of those marked times that we see their interaction and relationship.*

1. Jesus **REBUKED** Peter more than any other disciple
2. Peter was the only disciple who dared to **REBUKE** Jesus
3. Peter **CONFESSED** Jesus more boldly and accurately than any other disciple
4. Peter **DENIED** Jesus more forcefully and publicly than any other disciple
5. Jesus **PRAISED** Peter more than any other disciple
6. Peter alone among the disciples was addressed by Jesus as **SATAN**

Since Peter is so prominent in the gospel records, it is worthwhile to remind ourselves of some of the important mentions of Peter in the four gospels.

Peter In the Four Gospels: *These are some of the more important mentions of Peter in the four gospels just to remind us of how important and significant Peter would have been to the early church and followers of Jesus.*

1. **Peter lead the other disciples** - When Jesus woke up early in the morning, to pray before the sun came up, Simon Peter led the other disciples on a hunt to find Jesus to tell Him what He should do (Mark 1:35-39)
2. **Peter had the great catch of fish** - He put his nets out at the direction of Jesus to bring in a massive catch of fish (Luke 5:1-11).
3. **Peter was sent by Jesus on an important outreach trip** - He went on a unique outreach trip with the other disciples (Matthew 10:1-42).
4. **Peter was the only disciple to walk on water** – Further he was the only human other than Jesus to walk on water. He stepped out of the boat during a raging storm and walked on the water with Jesus (Matthew 14:24-33) Granted, he did sink, but at least he stepped out of the boat and took a few step on the water. Many of us (me included) often won't even do that).
5. **Peter made bold confessions about Jesus** - He was the one who said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also, we have come to believe and to know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (John 6:68-69)
6. **Peter say Jesus transfigured** - He saw Jesus transfigured in glory, together with Moses and Elijah (Matthew 17:1-9)

7. **Peter asked about forgiveness** - He was the one who asked Jesus how many times should we forgive a brother that sins against us, quoting the high number of "seven times" (Matthew 18:21-35)
8. **Peter asked about giving up everything and rewards for following Him** - He was the one who asked Jesus, after the encounter with the rich young ruler, what the disciples would receive for giving everything up to follow Jesus (Matthew 19:27-30)
9. **Peter was the one who was reluctant to let Jesus wash his feet** - He was the one who insisted that Jesus would not wash his feet; then commanded Jesus to wash his whole body! (John 13:6-10)
10. **Peter was personally warned by Jesus of his denial of Christ** - He heard Jesus predict that he would deny Him three times (Matthew 26:30-35), and Peter replied, "Even if I have to die with you I will not deny You!" (Matthew 26:35), and the rest of the disciples agreed.
11. **Peter was the one who defended Jesus in the garden** - He was the one who cut off the *right* ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest, when the soldiers came to arrest Jesus (John 18:1-11).
12. **Peter was the disciple who denied Christ** - He denied Jesus three times, cursing and swearing that he did not even know "the Man," refusing to even name the name of Jesus (Matthew 26:69-75)
13. **Peter was one of the first disciples (with John) to enter the empty tomb** - He was the one who ran with John the disciple to the tomb on the morning of the resurrection, after hearing the report of the women that the body of Jesus was not in its tomb (John 20:1-10)
14. **Peter received a personal post-resurrection appearance on the day of the resurrection** - He was the one who received a personal visit from the resurrected Jesus on the day of the resurrection (Luke 24:34).
15. **Peter was personally restored by getting to affirm His love for Jesus to Jesus in person** - He received a public restoration of Jesus in front of the other disciples, after the resurrection of Jesus (John 21).

That just gives you a bit of a picture of the prominent role Jesus played in the earthly life of Jesus, and as a disciple... his significance and perhaps why he would be so highly regarded and with great authority and important by the early church and Christians. I mean Peter had perhaps one of the most personal, intimate, up close and personal relationship, raw relationship, honest relationships with Jesus as anyone ever had.

Notice that Peter refers to himself as "an apostle"... "*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ.*" Significantly, Peter introduced himself as an **apostle**. New Testament Biblical Scholar and Theologian, Wayne Grudem write, "*The supreme importance of the apostles is suggested by the fact that the phrase of Jesus Christ is attached to no other New Testament office: we do not read of teachers of Jesus Christ or prophets of Jesus Christ or evangelists of Jesus Christ, only of apostles of Jesus Christ.*" And Peter did nothing to explain or justify his apostleship, and did not add a phrase like "by the will of God" as Paul did on some occasions (1 Corinthians 1:1, 2 Corinthians 1:1, Galatians 1:1, Ephesians 1:1, and so on). "Unlike Paul, Peter's apostolic status was never questioned. This brief phrase indicates Peter's authority." (D. Edmond Hiebert)

Qualifications for Apostleship: *Peter, himself, is the one who proposed choosing a new apostle and set the qualifications in the book of Acts when Judas was replaced. Not everyone*

could be considered for an apostleship. These are just (4) of the necessary qualification and by no mean indicative of other that may have been necessary for apostleship. These were perhaps the four major requirements.

1. **Eye-witness to Jesus EARTHLY MINISTRY** – An apostle needed to have been with Jesus during the whole three years that Jesus was among them. That is, he needed to be an eyewitness of Jesus’ baptism when the Heavenly Father validated Jesus’ person and work.
2. **Eye-witness to Jesus’ TEACHING and MIRACLES** - He needed to have heard Jesus’ life-changing teachings and been present to see His healings and other miracles.
3. **Eye-witness to the CRUCIFIXION** - He needed to have witnessed Jesus sacrifice Himself on the cross
4. **Eye-witness to the RESURRECTION and/or the resurrected Christ** – An apostle needed to be on who had seen Jesus walk, talk, and eat among the disciples again after His resurrection.

These were the pivotal facts of Jesus’ life, the heart of the message they were to teach, and personal witnesses were required to verify the truth of the good news. Peter not only met these 4 pivotal marks but He actually was instrumental in setting these things. That itself established a great authority and authenticity behind Peter’s leadership in the early church. All of that to say, when Peter spoke people listen... they sat up and took notice. This letter is significant for that reason, if no other... but there are other reasons for the important of 1 Peter.

WHO IS THE BOOK OF FIRST PETER WRITTEN TO AND WHEN?

“¹Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ²elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.” – 1 Peter 1-3

Notice the 3 things Peter tells us about the recipients of his letter:

1. **They are pilgrims** – To the pilgrims: The idea behind the word “pilgrims” is of someone who lives as *a temporary resident in a foreign land*. Pilgrims are sojourners and travelers, and pilgrims live in constant awareness of their true home. The early Christian writing *The Epistle to Diognetus* gives the idea of what pilgrims are. "They inhabit the lands of their birth, but as temporary residents of it; they take their share of all responsibilities as citizens, and endure all disabilities as aliens. Every foreign land is their native land, and every native land a foreign land ... they pass their days upon earth, but their citizenship is in heaven." (Cited in Barclay)

NKJV – pilgrims *How are Christians like pilgrims?*

NIV & ESV – exiles *How are Christians like exiles?*

NASB – aliens *How are Christians like aliens?*

KJV – strangers *How are Christians like strangers?*

NLT – foreigners *How are Christians like foreigners?*

Greek word “parepidemois” a double compound adjective usually translated as “sojourners” or “pilgrims,” “aliens,” or “strangers.”

Compound word made up of three Greek words:

- (1) “para” = from, expressing a contrary condition
- (2) “epidemeo” = to sojourn, journey, travel
- (3) “demos” = a people

The word is used metaphorically of those to whom Heaven is their own country, and who are sojourners on earth. The picture in the metaphor here is that heaven is our native country and we are only temporary sojourners here on earth. The Christian is a pilgrim or sojourners on his or her way to the homeland.

THIS WORLD IS NOT MY HOME

Jim Reeves

This world is not my home I'm just a passing through
My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue
The angels beckon me from heaven's open door
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore

Oh Lord you know I have no friend like you
If heaven's not my home then Lord what will I do
The angels beckon me from heaven's open door
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore

Being a pilgrim just isn't the dominant model of the Christian life for our times. Our view of Christianity is geared to the here and now: What will it do for my marriage? How will it help me raise my kids? Will it help me succeed in my career? Will it help me overcome personal problems? Will it help me feel fulfilled as a person? Heaven is thrown in as a nice benefit at the end of the ride. But heaven is not our focus. We want to enjoy life now and cling to it as long as we're able. We don't view death as the gateway to everything we've been living for. We see it as something to be postponed and avoided at all costs. We don't view ourselves as pilgrims.

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:19, "If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied." Ask yourself if you really live this way. Ask, "Can I truthfully say that?" For me, the Christian life is the best way to live. I have a wonderful wife and children. I have the family of God. I have fellowship with my Creator and Savior. His Word guides me. I enjoy all the blessings He bestows. Where else can you find a way of life that brings as much joy as Christianity?

There's nothing wrong and everything right about enjoying God and the blessings He freely bestows on us in this life. But if we don't hold the things of this life loosely and aren't focused on God Himself and on being in heaven with Him as our goal, we are holding to a shallow form of Christianity. If we're just living for the good life that being a Christian gives now, we wouldn't last a minute under persecution. We wouldn't endure much suffering. Nor would we withstand the many temptations to indulge in fleshly desires. The only thing that can steel us to endure suffering and to seek holiness in this wicked world is to live as pilgrims, bound for heaven.

That's what Peter wanted his persecuted readers to see-- that the Christian life is a pilgrim life. We're aliens and strangers on this earth.

In 1 Peter 2:11-12 Peter writes, *"¹¹ Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, ¹² having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation."*

What does it mean for a believer/Christian to live as or be a "pilgrim" here?:

- (1) **A Christian has a dwelling place in heaven** - You are strangers in this world, 1 Peter 2:11 says it, *"¹¹ Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul."* The Bible talks about the Christian as having a dwelling place in heaven. In John 14:1-3 Jesus said, *"Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."* The Bible talks about our Lord Jesus, our King who rules from heaven. We are citizens of heaven, and we will join Him there when He returns or when we die whichever comes first.
- (2) **A Christian is a stranger here in this world** - Some of you might be able to relate to being a stranger. Perhaps some of you, because you are of a different ancestry, feel like strangers here in this country. Maybe you have a language barrier and your English isn't as good as you'd like it to be. Or maybe sometimes, you just don't feel like you fit in.
- (3) **A Christian is a foreigner in this world** - If you have ever visited a foreign land you make an inkling of what it means to feel like a stranger in a strange land. Everybody make look like you, but they don't speak like you... different language that you can understand or communicate with. You can't understand anything they were saying. The customs were different. And the food maybe totally different than what you are use to and what your body can handle. Their way of doing things is likely different also. Perhaps the people are polite, but you feel like a stranger, an outsider, a foreigner in a strange land. You most likely at some point will start longing for home where things were familiar and comfortable.
- (4) **A Christian is different than others in this world** - As a Christian, you are a stranger in this world of unbelievers. You may be the same on the outside as everyone else, but on the inside you are different. You don't think like them. You don't act like them. You don't have the same customs as they do. You don't have the same goals and desires, the same interests and ideas of fun. When they want to go partying and getting drunk and go carousing, because you are a Christian, you don't want to join them... They may use the Lord's name in vain, participate in the deeds of darkness and are, essentially, the walking dead. You are not like them. They glorify themselves. You glorify God. Some glorify false gods. You glorify the true God. You are different inside. And it shows.
- (5) **A Christian has a different set of values and worldview** - The world rejects God and His ways and seeks its own pleasures. On television we can see the commonly accepted practice of adultery and casual sex between people who aren't married. Sitcoms are full of coarse jesting and put downs, insults to masculinity, promotion of homosexuality, and moral relativism. The News tells us about the murders in our streets and the rising crime.

We hear about abortions numbering in the millions. We hear about wars and rumors of wars. Christians have and live by a different set of values and have a totally different worldview... at least they should. As a believer you are called to separate yourselves from this strange land - You are called *"to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul."* When Adam fell in the garden, we fell with him. His fall brought to all of humanity, a sinful nature. We are all born with the desire to please ourselves and not God. We want to fulfill the desires of our flesh. We are sinful by nature. However, when you are a Christian, you have the Lord living in you. He has given you a new heart and new mind. You have the mind of Christ. You are no longer dead in your sins and no longer a slave to sin. Therefore, you wage war against the sinful desires of your flesh. You are called to abstain from those sinful desires. Before I was a Christian, I sought the gratification of my flesh. I did what I wanted and did it when I wanted. But now, my desire is to do the will of God and to abstain from sinful desires. God says that we are called out of the world to be sanctified, to be holy. However, it isn't easy to abstain from sinful desires. Though the Lord is dwelling in you and though you now have the mind of Christ, you still have the sinful nature. Therefore you are at war with yourself. Paul said in *Romans 7:15, "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do."* And also, in *Romans 7:21-25, "So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. 22 For in my inner being I delight in God's law; 23 but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. 24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God -- through Jesus Christ our Lord!"* In war there is death. In war there are usually two sides fighting against each other. Each one wants to kill the other side, to destroy it and conquer it. The war is over only when one side gives up or is defeated. Your sinful nature is at war with your regenerated soul. Your sinful nature wants to destroy you and kill you. It resists what is holy. But you can conquer our sinful flesh through the power of the Holy Spirit. Yet, you live in this world. And so, while you are here in this strange land, God wants you to live such good lives among the unbelievers that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. God wants you to live good and holy lives. This is for your own benefit - Unholy living can bring such pain. Living a sexually promiscuous life can lead to diseases and even AIDS. Doing drugs can land you in jail, or broke, or a slave to your addiction. Being a drunk can ruin your life and cause you to lose everything. Lying to your family, friends, or coworkers can only get you into trouble. So, if you are living good lives you will be safe from sexually transmitted diseases, drug addictions, drunkenness, and lying. But perhaps the most important reason for living a good and godly life is that it brings Glory to God. The reason you are to live godly lives is that it glorifies God. The Lord died on the cross to buy your redemption, not so that you could serve yourselves and not so you could be prosperous. Rather, He bought you to be a Holy people for Himself. You are His people and you are saved out of this world because of the cross. He wants to love you and have fellowship with you. He can't do that if you are full of sin. One day, Jesus will return. He will come in the clouds and every eye will see Him. That is the day when all things will be laid out in the open, all your deeds, your thoughts, your desires, your motives..... How will you do on that day? Will your deeds glorify God? Will your lives reflect the holiness that you are supposed to represent? Be patient and loving in this world to the

unbelievers. Let them see your good deeds so that you may glorify God on the day that He returns. Let that be your goal.

What is significant about calling believers “pilgrims?” What does this term suggest for us as modern-day believers? _____

2. **They are in a dispersion** – To the pilgrims of the Dispersion: Peter is clearly writing to Gentiles (see 1 Peter 1:18, 2:10, and 4:3). Yet he calls them pilgrims of the Dispersion, a name that was applied to the Jews. He calls them this because he sees the Christians of his day as being "sprinkled" throughout the world as the Jewish people were in the Dispersion after the fall of Judah and Jerusalem when it was conquered by the Babylonians.

NKJV –Dispersion
 NIV –scattered throughout
 NASB –scattered throughout
 KJV –scattered throughout
 ESV –Dispersion
 NLT –living in the provinces

The “dispersion” with the Greek definite article, “dispersion” is sometimes a technical term for the scattering of the Jews from Israel throughout the world. But here, without the article, it is used in a non-technical sense referring to spiritual pilgrims, aliens to the earth, whether Jews or Gentiles... i.e. the church.

When the city of Rome burned, the Romans believed that their emperor, Nero, had set the city on fire, probably because of his incredible lust to build. In order to build more, he had to destroy what already existed. The Romans were totally devastated. Their culture, in a sense, went down with the city. All the religious elements of their life were destroyed – their great temples, shrines, and even their household idols were burned up. This had great religious implications because it made them believe that their deities had been unable to deal with this disastrous unstoppable fire and inferno and were also victims of it. The people were homeless and hopeless. Many had been killed. Their bitter resentment was severe, so Nero realized he had to redirect the hostility.

The emperor’s chosen scapegoat was the Christians, who were already hated because they were associated with the Jews, and because they were seen as being hostile to the Roman culture. Nero spread the word quickly that the Christians had set the fires. As a result, a vicious persecution against Christians began and soon spread throughout the Romans empire, touching places north of the Taurus mountain, like Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, and impacting Christians, whom Peter calls “pilgrims.” These “pilgrims” who were probably Gentiles, for the most part, possible led to Christ by Paul and his associates, and established on Paul’s teachings. But they needed spiritual strengthening because of their persecution and sufferings. Thus Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote this letter to strengthen them.

What happens when there is “dispersion” of Christianity? What does this tell us about suffering and persecution and what might that suggest to us as believers today? _____

- 3. They were spread across Asia Minor** - Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia: These specific areas were places Christianity had extended to in the first several decades after the beginning of the church. It was probably the route that the original courier of Peter's letter would follow in distributing the letter. This was not written to any one congregation, but intentionally written to *all* Christians.

What else do we know about this area from previous studies? How might that apply here and what we may want to keep our eyes open to as we study First Peter? _____

Peter wrote this letter to a group of Christians scattered throughout the northern areas of Asia Minor, where he may have previously preached the gospel. Peter wrote to a group of people that probably included both Jews and Gentiles. The apostle addressed the letter's recipients as “aliens” or “pilgrims” (1:1), a word indicating that Peter was speaking not just to Jews or just to Gentiles but to Christians who were living their lives in such a way that they would have stood out as aliens among the surrounding culture.

In this letter, Peter spoke much about persecution, which anticipated the persecution he and other Christians would endure in the final years of Nero's reign. At the time he wrote, Peter had not yet been arrested, an event that would lead to his martyrdom around AD 66–68. First Peter 5:13 indicates that Peter sent greetings from the local church—calling it “Babylon”—but it's most likely that the apostle was writing in a common metaphor there. He used the name of the ancient Mesopotamian city as a stand-in for Rome, the modern city that, like Babylon, gave itself over to idol worship and false gods. While the fact is not recorded in the Bible, Peter has long been thought to have spent his final years serving the church in Rome.

Based on the numerous references to suffering and persecution in this letter, Peter likely wrote in AD 64, just as the persecution of Christians under Nero was ramping up.

Notice in **verse 2** Peter's description of his readers and all Christians. He writes, ***“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: grace to you and peace be multiplied.”***

Peter's 6 Descriptive Words/Phrases of His Recipients and Christians:

- 1. Elect of God** – He calls them ***“Elect according to the foreknowledge”*** Peter first describes his intended readers as elect. This means simply that they are *chosen*, chosen by God in a particular and unique sense. Biblical scholar, D. Edmond Hiebert says, ***“The opening characterization of the readers as elect was meant to strengthen and encourage them in their affliction. The doctrine of election is a ‘family truth’ intended to foster the welfare of***

believers." In other words, God knows you. He called you. You are His. He knows what you are going through. He sees you.

2. **Foreknowledge of God** – Peter uses the phrase *“according to the foreknowledge of God.”* This describes the nature of their election. God's choosing is not random or uninformed, but according to His foreknowledge, which is an aspect of His omniscience. He knows all... everything. This foreknowledge *includes* prior knowledge of our response to the gospel, but is not *solely dependent* on it. Though God's election is according to ... foreknowledge, there is more to His foreknowledge than His prior knowledge of my response to Jesus. Election is not election at all if it is only a cause-and-effect arrangement between my choosing and God's. God knows and knew what you are going through, and He created you as you are for His purposes and you can trust that.
3. **Sanctification of the Spirit** – *“In sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience”* An essential result of election is **sanctification** and **obedience**. While some would like to think that election has only to do with going to heaven or hell, Peter reminds us that it touches earth also. A claim to be **elect** is doubtful if there is no evidence of **sanctification** and **obedience**. “Sanctification” means to be set apart for His purposes... the Holy Spirit presence of God in our lives allows us to be able to endure and go through what we were set apart for that He created us for... whatever that is.
4. **Sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ** – *“And sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ”* However, since all the elect fall short of perfect sanctification and obedience, there is cleansing from sin provided for them through the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. There were three circumstances in the Old Testament where blood was sprinkled on people. 1- At the establishment of Sinai or Old Covenant (Exodus 24:5-8). 2- At the ordination of Aaron and his sons (Exodus 29:21). 3- At the purification ceremony for a cleansed leper (Leviticus 14:6-7). The sprinkling of the blood of Jesus on us accomplishes the same things. First, a covenant is formed, then we are ordained as priests to Him, and finally we are cleansed from our corruption and sin. Each one of these things is ours through the work of Jesus on the cross.
5. **God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit** – Notice the reference to the “Trinity” in Peter’s introduction, *“God the Father ... the Spirit ... Jesus Christ”* Peter's effortless way of combining the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in our salvation displays the New Testament approach to the Trinity. It is not detailed as a specific doctrine, but woven into the fabric of the New Testament. Jesus has a Father, but not in the sense of being higher than He who gave Him existence. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have existed together throughout eternity, and each is equally God. Father and *Son* are terms used to describe the relationship between these first two members of the Trinity.
6. **Grace and peace to you and multiplied** – *“Grace to you and peace be multiplied”* Peter brings a greeting that had become common among the Christians, combining elements from Greek culture (**Grace**) and Jewish culture (**peace**). A true believer in Christ is a recipient of all of these things through grace and peace with God through Jesus Christ.

WHY IS FIRST PETER SO IMPORTANT?

First Peter focuses on the importance of believers bearing up under unjust suffering yet continuing to live well. You will hear Peter say in 1 Peter 2:20, *“²⁰ For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.”*

In this way, 1 Peter might be called the Job of the New Testament, providing encouragement for the true believer to continue on in the way that Jesus has laid out for all His followers.

First Peter has been called the Job of the New Testament, providing encouragement for the believer in the face of suffering.

The endurance Peter called these believers to is similar to Job's, a man who suffered despite his righteousness. Peter maintained that this was the kind of true perseverance that God expects from His people.

Living in close proximity to Jesus Christ for more than three years had provided the apostle Peter the best possible example of what it looked like to live in holiness amid a hostile world. More than any other man who walked the earth, Jesus modeled that lifestyle. Peter therefore pointed his readers in the best possible direction, to Jesus Himself. The apostle called Christians to "sanctify Christ as Lord" in their hearts, that believers might live and act as Jesus desires during their short time here on earth (1 Peter 3:14–18). This would include submission to authority—even unjust authority—in the government, in the home, and in the workplace. Jesus becomes the focal point for ordering one's life in the midst of trials and tribulations. By rooting their perseverance in the person and work of Christ, believers can always cling to hope in the midst of suffering.

HOW DO I APPLY THIS?

Unjust or unforeseen suffering is one of the great problems that grips the hearts of people today. We struggle with frustration, anger, and uncertainty when trials strange and unexpected land on our doorsteps. Too often in those most difficult moments of our lives, confusion reigns while contentment wanes; questions arise while prayer subsides.

How do you react when suffering comes? Many crumble at the mere thought of another pain or trial. Others rise to the occasion. Most of us are probably somewhere in between. Peter's encouragement to his Christian readers is one of perseverance in faith. It isn't enough for us to simply get up every morning and trudge through each day; neither is it advisable to paste a smile on our faces and ignore troubles. Instead, the lesson of 1 Peter is to push through the troubles, recognizing their temporary presence in our lives while walking in holiness and hope as people of faith.

So press on! It is in the darkest times that our collective light shines brightest.

Big Ideas in 1 Peter:

- 1. Peter encourages Christians to endure persecution/suffering**
- 2. Christians can rejoice in the middle of suffering because of the new life God has given them**
- 3. Suffering tests the genuineness of one's faith**
- 4. God's people are called to live as a royal priesthood and holy nation who give praise to God for rescuing them**
- 5. Christians are called to strive daily to live holy lives**
- 6. People who reject Jesus, the cornerstone, will stumble and fall**