

## 1 Peter

AUTHOR: The Apostle Peter. See 1 Peter 1:1.

THEME: "Victory Over Suffering"

INTRODUCTION: Peter was the apostle to the circumcised (Jews), so his writings basically have to do with the Jewish believers. These believers became scattered and endured persecution and suffering. Hence, Peter wrote them a letter telling them some things about suffering; in fact, the word "suffering" occurs 15 times in 1 Peter and is the most important word in this book. He also had Gentiles in mind, as is found in 1 Peter 2:10, but primarily he had in mind the suffering Jews. He gave them the following information and teaching about suffering.

I. SUFFERING ASSURES US THAT WE ARE GOD'S CHILDREN. See 1 Peter 1:2-7. Peter says you are not saved because you suffer, but you suffer because you are saved. All saved people will have to endure suffering. (Notice Hebrews 12:5-8 very carefully.) God chastens His own children. If one is not chastened, he is an illegitimate child and not born again at all. The entire teaching of the Bible is toward the parent disciplining and chastening the child. A child may be spanked by his father or mother, but even that is assurance of his being their son. None of us spansks the neighbor's kids; we spank our own kids. So Peter was saying to them, "Even though you are enduring horrible sufferings and persecutions, that in itself can give you comfort in that it gives you assurance that you are God's child."

II. SUFFERING IS GOOD FOR US. See Hebrews 12:5-13; 1 Peter 4:17-19; 1 Corinthians 11:31, 32. Suffering is not fun; chastening is not enjoyable, but it does make us more what we ought to be. Man tries his gold in the fire in order to refine it and make it pure gold. God tries His children in the fire in order to refine them and make them better children. Peter is reminding the Christians, especially the Jewish Christians, that God is working on them and that they can rejoice in the fact that it will inevitably result in growth in grace and Christian maturity.

III. SUFFERING WILL MAKE US ENJOY CHRIST'S APPEARING MORE. Read 1 Peter 1:7. Heaven will be better to one who has suffered. If we enjoy more here, we will enjoy less there. Somebody has said that more enjoyment on earth will mean less enjoyment in Heaven; less enjoyment on earth will mean more enjoyment in Heaven. Of course, this is not true in every respect, but it is true that the darker the night, the more the light is appreciated. The more the pain, the more the alleviation of that pain is appreciated and enjoyed. The less one has, the more he enjoys what he has. Therefore, Heaven will be more precious to the shut-in, the persecuted, the suffering. Peter reminds them that though they do not have it as good as other people do now, they are being assured of having it better than other people later on.

IV. CHRIST IS GLORIFIED WHEN THE BELIEVER SUFFERS PATIENTLY. Notice 1 Peter 4:16. Christ suffered patiently. He suffered on the cross; yet. He said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." See Luke 23:34. When we suffer patiently, we are more Christlike. Consequently, we can glorify Him more and show Him more to others.

This means that when we suffer as we ought to suffer, we are a greater blessing to others. (Teacher, have the class give illustrations of people who have suffered—older people, shut-ins, people who have lost loved ones, etc.—and yet have been a blessing to others in so doing.)

V. OUR FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST IS GREATER WHEN WE SUFFER. See 1 Peter 2:20, 21;

3:17, 18; 4:12, 13. Since Christ suffered, He can understand our sufferings. When we suffer, we have better fellowship with Him. The Apostle Paul said to the Philippian church, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings...", Philippians 3:10. There is a fellowship in suffering. Two people who have had the same disease have more in common. Two people who bear the same burden have more in common. The more burdens we bear that are like the burdens that Christ bore, the more and better fellowship we can have with Him. Hence, the suffering ones get to know Christ better.

VI. SUFFERING HELPS TO CLEANSE THE CHRISTIAN FROM SIN. Read I Peter 1:7; 2:5, 10; 4:1. Suffering has a certain purifying effect. Suffering helps us not only to grow in grace, but to overcome sin and to live more like Christ.

VII. SUFFERING GIVES US A CHANCE TO TESTIFY, FOR IT MAKES US ASSOCIATE WITH OTHERS WHO SUFFER. Many Christians have won converts in hospitals while they themselves were suffering. Many have led others to the Saviour in funeral homes while they were also bereaved.

CONCLUSION: The Bible speaks much about suffering. Matthew 5:12a says to all who are persecuted, "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in Heaven." It tells us not to shrink from suffering for Christ. We are not to look for suffering or persecution, nor are we to agitate such. We are supposed to go on about our daily lives and our regular activities. We are not supposed to shrink from what we are supposed to do for Christ to avoid suffering. Daniel did not pray in a way that he was not accustomed to praying when he prayed with his window open, looking toward Jerusalem. He was not cast into the lion's den because he flaunted his prayer life; he had always prayed that way. He simply did not change what he had done. Because of this, he suffered.

Think of all the people in the Bible who suffered for Jesus and had greater experiences because they suffered. Daniel suffered, so he saw the lions' mouths closed. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego suffered, so they saw the Son of God in a fiery furnace. Paul suffered, so he was caught up into the third Heaven. Stephen suffered, so he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God. John suffered, so he was given the glories of the Revelation.

Isaiah suffered, so he saw the Lord, high and holy and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. There comes a certain growth in grace, a depth of Christianity, and maturity of purpose to the one who has to suffer for Jesus.