

- ***READ I Peter 1:1,2*** Peter is often best known for his work as one of the leaders of the church of God's people that was in Jerusalem. For years (recorded in **Acts 1-10**), Peter and other handpicked men of our Lord labored with this church in this place from which the Gospel first sounded forth, but it seems as if Peter eventually took his ministry on the road. This seems to be the case when we consider that the end of this letter includes greetings from those disciples that were in Babylon. Some believe that this statement insinuates that Peter had made his way to Rome, while others would argue that the term Babylon was used to describe a different location. Regardless of where Babylon was, Peter definitely seems to have left Jerusalem and is out in the great land ruled by Rome.
- This change in location seems to have given Peter this great ability to write concerning the difficulties that so many within the Lord's Body were facing as they were "*dispersed abroad in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.*" Language throughout the letter leads us to the conclusion that these disciples were Gentiles (**1:14,18; 4:3,4**) who were enduring sufferings for their faith (**1:5-7**) as they are living as "*exiles*" in these various locations.
- As would be expected when it comes to a letter written to those who are suffering, Peter quickly engages in a section of praise towards God that reminds these disciples of the immense blessings that are found in Christ Jesus.
 - Through God the Father's mercy, they had been born again into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. (**1:3**)
 - Not only that, but this new birth had given to them an inheritance that is "*imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.*" (**1:4**)
 - Additionally, God's power was continually guarding them because of their faith as they face the difficulties of living as exiles for Christ. (**1:5,6**)
 - His encouragements focus on the benefit of their sufferings...that they are being refined by fire so that the true character of their faith would be made evident. (**1:7**)
 - Though they had never seen Jesus, these faithful disciples loved Him and believed in Him to the point that they were right in line with receiving the goal of their faith which was their salvation. (**1:8,9**)
 - Peter then makes a connection between these Gentile disciples and the prophets of the Old Testament. They, like these Gentile brethren, had not seen Jesus, but they served the vital role of preparing the people who would receive Christ by writing about the coming Christ. These Gentile brethren had benefited greatly from their work, and they ought to have had a strong appreciation for the way that God has used them. (**1:10-12**)
- With these encouragement stated, Peter uses the rest of the letter to remind the recipients of this circulated letter concerning the nature of their sufferings, how they could use them to their benefit, and what awaited them on the other side after their enduring carried them to the end of their lives. These brethren were surely in the midst of the fire of sufferings, and yet this fire was simply refining them and preparing them for the accomplishing of their faith. Let's finish up by looking at three encouraging reminders that are found throughout this letter.

Peter's Encouraging Reminders:

I. These Gentile disciples now have a new identity as part of the family of God. (1:13-2:10)

- A. Beginning in **1:13**, Peter draws six comparisons between what these brethren were enduring and what the first people of God in Israel endure in their journey as the people of God.
 1. Peter begins by encouraging these brethren to have their minds ready for action by being sober-minded and always setting their hope on the grace of God. This would allow for them to be obedient children who are not conformed to "*The desires of your former ignorance.*" (**1:13,14**)

Those familiar with the Old Testament commands concerning **the observing of the passover in the wilderness** would remember how those Israelites were constantly on the move without a place to call their own. They too were to have their minds/loins girded up for action at all times. Like those people of God, these disciples needed to always be ready, and that readiness begins in the mind.

2. Further, Peter states that this readiness of mind needed to lead them to be a people of holiness in all of their conduct. This time, he quotes from **Leviticus 11:44,45** to impress upon them the need for **their own holiness because of the holiness of their God**. *“For I am the Lord, who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God, so you must be holy because I am Holy.”* **These Gentiles were now living as God’s holy people living in the wilderness.**
 3. Peter then encourages these brethren to live in reverence before God as they are living as strangers wherever they might be. This was to be done because of what had been done for them by God in redeeming them from their empty ways of life. They weren’t redeemed with riches, but they were redeemed by the blood of Jesus, the unblemished and spotless Lamb of God. Of course, this wasn’t the first time that the people had been spared by God through the giving of an unblemished and spotless lamb. **(1:17-21)** Surely Peter’s words are an illusion to the first people of God who were **delivered from destruction through the giving of the Passover lamb. (Exodus 12)** His point is to remind these Gentile brethren that **they are a part of the new Exodus and the new Passover.**
 4. Jesus serving as the true passover Lamb allowed for these Gentiles to be purified through their obedience to the truth of the Gospel. They had showed sincere love for for another, and Peter attributes their transformation to their being born again. This was prophesied throughout the Old Testament writings of the prophets, but two of the most well known restoration text are **Isaiah 40 & Jeremiah 31**. Both of these texts speak to **the restoration that was predicted as coming in the future**, and these Gentiles are being reminded that they were experiencing that transformative and enduring Word of the Lord. **(1:22-25 & Isaiah 40:6-8)** **They were a part of the new covenant people of God!**
 5. Chapter 2 begins with Peter instructing these disciples to make sure that they continue to present themselves to people who have tasted the goodness of God and put away the wickedness of the world. **(2:1-4)** They, just like **the temple of the Old Testament**, were being built up as the place where the holy priesthood would offer sacrifices. **(2:5)** They were being built up as that spiritual house that is built upon Christ as the Chief Cornerstone. **(2:6,7 & Isaiah 28:16)** Though many of Israel had rejected Jesus, these Gentile brethren had embraced Him and had become part of this great family of God. **(2:8)** **They were a part of this new temple of God!**
 6. This led to the great descriptions of **2:9,10** being made true of these Gentile brethren. Though Gentiles and formerly set apart from God’s people and without mercy, they were now, *“a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His possession.”* All of this was done so that they might continue to proclaim the praises of God even in their sufferings. **They were now serving as God’s kingdom of priests!**
- B. Yes, these brethren were enduring sufferings, but Peter tries so hard to remind them that they were not suffering alone, but that they were suffering as the people of God. They were God’s special people, and He was going to continue to guard them by His power until their full salvation was realized and achieved. What an encouragement to be reminded that you are the people of God, and that same encouragement remains for us, today. We, too, are God’s people and these same blessings and promises continual to remain true for us. God will bless His people, and we can take great encouragement in remembering whose family we belong to.

II. Through their sufferings, these disciples are serving as witnesses for Christ. (2:11-4:11)

- A. Though suffering, these brethren are encouraged to continue living with honor and respect so that Jesus's good name would be glorified.
1. Peter begins by urging, again, these strangers and exiles to abstain from sinful desires. They were to be honorable in their conduct among the Gentiles, so that they wouldn't give opportunity for the good name of Jesus to truly be slandered. **(2:11,12)**
 2. They were also to submit to those that ruled over them. They were to do so because God has established them for a good purpose, but their good actions would also silence those who were opposing them. Even though they were often treated as mere subjects, Peter reminds these brethren that they were truly the slaves of God. He was the one they ought to truly fear for the power He possesses. In the meantime, they needed to keep things simple by showing honor to everyone, loving the brethren, fearing God, and giving due honor to emperor. **(2:13-17)**
 3. Peter even addresses those who are household slaves and encourages them to submit to their masters. That would be easy for those who are nice, but he even goes so far as to say to be respectful towards those who were cruel. Why would they be willing to do all of this? Peter says that in behaving in this manner they would invite favor from God. No one is rewarded for being ill treated when wrong, but when we suffer for what is good then it brings favor with God. **(2:18-20)** This is especially true in the case of Jesus who had committed no sin and no sin was found in His mouth. Yet, he was insulted and suffered without returning hate. He would even go so far as to give his life on the cross for us so that we might live in righteousness. **(2:21-25)** We often bemoan when we are mistreated, but Jesus serves as our example of how to respond when others do us wrong. We endure it with patience and gain favor with God.
 4. Peter lastly addresses wives of men who are not disciples. Instead of being hateful and obstinate towards them, Peter says that they could be won over by observing the good conduct of their godly wives in how they treat and respect them. The godly example of Sarah is offered up by Peter as someone to try to follow in the footsteps of. **(3:1-6)** Husbands are also encouraged to live in an understanding way with their wives because they are both heirs of grace and they wouldn't want their prayers hindered. **(3:7)** The best advice for the marriage relationship within the letter is found in **3:8-12**. All relationships, and most especially marriages, would be greatly bettered if men and women would be committed to following these instructions.
 5. God's people would stand out even in times when they might be under the hand of oppression and be found suffering for doing what is good. People who are devoted to doing good in this manner have no need to fear or be intimidated by anyone or their threats because they can stand with a good conscience. How could they have this good conscience? Peter would go on to say after drawing some parallels between Jesus, Noah, and the flood that it is at the point of baptism that we are able to have a good conscience before God. With that clean conscience, we can stand up before any sufferings that come our way. **(3:13-21)**
- B. That clear conscience continues to be ours if we continue to reject the sins that might have plagued us in our pasts.
1. These Gentile Christians were encouraged to remember the sufferings of Christ as they sought to overcome the temptations they once gave into. All of the sins that are mentioned from **4:3** were to be in their pasts because of their commitment to holiness in Christ. Even in trying to do what was good, Peter states that they would be slandered for their good behavior, but those who slandered would be the ones in for a rude awakening come the judgment. **(4:1-6)**
 2. Therefore, it was key for them to make sure that they lived as if the end of all things and coming of Jesus was near. Again, there is an admonition to alertness and sober-minded prayer. In all things they were to serve God and one another. **(4:7-11)**

III. Though suffering at the present time, these disciples possess a future hope that can sustain them. (4:12-5:9)

- A. Peter begins to bring the letter to a close by reinforcing the idea that Christians ought to go so far as to expect sufferings, and this expectation is because of what Christ first went through. He suffered but then found rejoicing, and that same promise remains for us! If we will be sure to not live in an ungodly manner then our sufferings will only bring glory to God's name. **(4:12-16)** Even with the current sufferings, Peter's admonition is continued faithfulness while entrusting themselves to God because they know that He is the faithful Creator who will reward those who are doing what is good in this world. **(4:17-19)**
- B. To begin chapter 5, Peter encourages the leadership within these churches to spearhead the efforts to uphold those who were suffering at this present time. There is always a need for strong leadership that will keep the church going in the right direction and that is especially true when it comes to times of difficulty. This could be accomplished if these shepherds would first be pure in their motivations for leadership and then set the proper example for those around them. **(5:1-5)** If these leaders had their hope in the coming return of God then they could properly lead others to be prepared for that day in the same way. They would one day stand before the Chief Shepherd and be judged according to their work as local church shepherds.
- C. Finally, Peter concludes by reminding these brethren who the true enemy is...and that is Satan. He is the one who is behind all of their trials and difficulties, and these disciples are therefore encouraged to throw themselves before the merciful throne of God so that He might lift them up and give them the strength to overcome. He was already helping others in the world to do this, and He would gladly help these brethren to do the exact same thing. **(5:6-9)** He cares for us!

Peter's ends this letter in the same way as he began it...encouragement. *"The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered for a little while. To Him be dominion forever. Amen."* No matter what our circumstances might be...I am thankful to know that I serve a King who will one day make it all better. One day He will right the wrongs. The evil workers will be brought low, and the faithful will be exalted. As we go throughout this week, may we remember that our trials and refining by fire are only producing within us a stronger faith that will sustain us until the very end.