

The Book of I Peter – Part Twelve

March 20, 2010

1). As always, before we start reading in the Book of I Peter from somewhere in the middle of the book, we need to set context to make sure that we understand the flow and intent of the letter that Peter is writing. It is extremely important to remember that the majority of the New Testament books are actual letters written by the apostles themselves to their fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, scattered throughout various areas. The letters aren't a compilation of short essays or poems like the Psalms, but are a cohesive writing in which the author was intending to get across certain ideas and thoughts in a single sitting to certain individuals. The letters were meant to be read in one sitting, so when we spend months on one of these letters, breaking down each individual part, sometimes the whole flow and gist of the overall picture and intent gets lost. We really need to be sitting down, ourselves, and reading all the way through I Peter without stopping. But I won't be doing that with you today.

a) Instead, before we start reading the letter from Chapter 3, I'll sum up what Peter has said so far:

b) Peter is writing a letter of encouragement to "pilgrims of the Dispersion," i.e. faithful *kingdom seeking* Christians scattered about various regions undergoing severe persecution for their faith. They are enduring emotional, mental, and especially physical suffering because of their belief in Christ. Peter is reminding them that this life is fleeting and temporary, and they have born again to a living hope that they will be able to realize (their inheritance) if they would just continue to endure their present sufferings. He adamantly exhorts them to continue to "do good," no matter what the situation is that they face, and to behave in a godly and upright manner, fixing their hope "completely on the grace that is to be brought to them at the revelation of Jesus Christ." He goes on to warn them that they need to abstain from all fleshly behavior, because it wars against their soul by causing them to be disobedient, and Peter has already emphasized that the whole goal of their faith *is* the salvation of their soul. If they do not behave in a holy manner they may be disqualified from receiving their inheritance (for there is a possibility of stumbling on this Rock of Offense, the Stone of Stumbling, the Chief Cornerstone). There is nothing bigger or more important than this that Peter could say.

b) And so the last couple of weeks we looked specifically at the exhortations that Peter directs to those Christians in order to give them some idea of what it looks like to behave in a godly manner. Peter's focus is on their human relationships, starting with the slave and master relationship, and moving on to the husband and wife relationship. Remember, Peter doesn't focus on the rightness or wrongness of the situation of slave

ownership (nor did Paul, as we studied in his letter to Philemon); he simply encourages each individual within that type of relationship to behave in a pleasing manner to the Lord, disregarding the unfairness and the unrighteousness of whatever situation they find themselves in. He doesn't try to change the situation (a man-made creation/institution), he simply states how each person should conduct themselves as they sojourn through this brief life. If you'll remember, this was the also the gist of Hebrews chapters 11 and 12 that we've been looking at as well.

c) After Peter speaks about submitting to man's institutions and the dynamics of the slave and master relationship, but *before* Peter moves on to suggest to the wives and husbands how they should behave, he makes sure to mention that we already have an example of what it looks like to have to endure the suffering of unrighteous relationships – Christ Himself. Peter had already pointed out that we have been “called” to endure suffering in this world, as Christ endured suffering for us. We are reminded that Christ suffered a horrific death *for us*, “[bearing] our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds [we] were healed.” And because of this, the fact that we were redeemed with God's “precious blood” (I Peter 1:19), we are to “conduct [ourselves] in fear during the time of [our] stay on earth” (I Peter 1:17). And this is how we do it – we emulate what Jesus did. Jesus, amidst all His suffering, entrusted Himself to His Father who judges all things righteously, and even though Christ could have at any time called down legions of angels to deliver Him from that situation, He did not, but rather chose to endure the shame because of the joy that was set before Him.

d) So Peter then tells wives to put themselves under their husbands as they both seek after the kingdom, and he tells husbands to live with their wives “in an understanding way.” Peter tells wives that, when your husband is disobedient, fall back and behave properly before the Lord because that is probably the best way you can “help” your husband get back on the road of obedience. Peter makes sure to emphasize how important it is for the wife to be inwardly gentle and quiet and in obedience to the Lord, so as to be recognized as the proper lineage of Sarah and Abraham in order to receive the promise of the inheritance. Peter tells husbands to remember how precious and valuable their wives are... and how *easily broken* they are, as he challenges husbands to behave properly as well. Peter even warns husbands that if they do not behave in the proper way towards their wives, their prayers to God may be “cut off.”

e) The focus on this, from Peter's point of view, is those kingdom seeking Christians who may be tempted to act as they did formerly, as the Gentiles do, but should not and cannot so as to not dishonor their being called to be “a kingdom of priests.”

e) And then Peter transitions his focus to *all* of those kingdom seeking Christians within the hearing/reading of his letter and exhorts them to behave godly in all that

they do (this would even encompass all of those within the relationships previously mentioned) -

1Peter 3:8

Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; 9 not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. 10 For "He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit. 11 Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil."

2). The beginning of this passage begins with the word "Finally," which isn't marking the conclusion of his letter but is rather concluding his thoughts on the "excellent behavior requirement" amidst the "suffering requirement" that he's been going on about -

1Peter 3:8

Finally, all of you be of one mind...

c). And this makes me think of this which Paul wrote to the Church in Corinth -

1Corinthians 1:10

Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.

1Corinthians 2:14

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. 15 But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. 16 For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.

d) Since we have the mind of Christ - in the sense of having access to the perfect will of God through the Spirit - we should easily be able to see why Peter would say such a thing as to emulate that which Christ did... because He knows that we are able to do so if we would just submit ourselves to the Spirit's work in our life, *especially during the most stressful situations of suffering.*

e) And you can further see the necessity for us ALL to have the same mind, for us ALL to be of ONE MIND - *that of Christ*. We need to be thinking the same as one another. Contextually, Peter is calling for all of us to have the same mindset as one another – and with Christ - with regards to the tension between our faithful obedience and our circumstances and our relationships.

f). We all need to align our thinking with God’s plans and purposes, to be settled and assured of His faithfulness and to trust Him even if we must “endure grief, suffering wrongfully,” because, just as Jesus did, we understand and embrace that which is out ahead of us.

g) It is further stated by Paul –

Philippians 2:5

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. 9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

h). We can see clearly here that Christ’s ‘mind’ was not focused on His present suffering, but rather on the *outcome of that suffering*, His being exulted and enthroned as King of kings and Lord of lords. This same ‘mind’ is to be in all of us, as Peter exhorts in his letter.

3). Continuing in Peter –

1 Peter 3:8

Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous...

a). ‘Having compassion for one another’ literally means ‘to have a fellow feeling’ (i.e. “sympathetic”); in other words, *to share with others their experiences*. And this would not be limited to sharing in their sufferings only (even though Peter’s focus is on their sufferings), but also to share in their joy –

Romans 12:15

Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

b). The idea here in the original language is not in the sharing of these things in some kind of organized forum, but rather in the spontaneity that comes through living through the various seasons of our lives together.

c). And this idea leads us into the next thought, 'love as brothers'. In the Greek, the word "love" here is actually an adjective, not a verb. So it should really be understood as describing those who are brothers – more like "loving brothers." And if you'll see how Peter is saying this, he's actually saying, 'brothers, be loving'.

d) And the kind of love we are dealing with here takes us back to the love that was first introduced by Peter back in Chapter 1 –

1Peter 1:22

Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren...

d). This is the "phileo" kind of love - that "liking" and "personal affection" kind of love. What Peter is calling us to do is to relate to one another with genuine personal affection, liking *what* and *who* our brothers and sisters in Christ are. We should want to have as our company those who are engaged with us in like manner in the race of faith – those of "one mind." We should take delight in them and rejoice over them. This is what 'loving brothers' looks like here.

e). And as Peter points out in v. 8, in order to be 'loving brothers' we need to be 'tenderhearted'. The word 'tenderhearted' in the Greek gives us the idea of absolutely no harshness, no bitterness, and no contention. But rather compassion, grace and mercy. This is how we are to "phileo" one another.

f). Additionally, we need to "be courteous." This word in the Greek means, 'humble minded.' We all need to have a modest opinion of ourselves and not to exalt ourselves in our own eyes above our brethren. There is to be no arrogance whatsoever, especially not *spiritual* arrogance.

i). And going back to the same Romans passage we just looked at in connection with having compassion for one another, we can see something similar to what Peter is saying here –

Romans 12:14

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. 17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for

good things in the sight of all men.¹⁸ If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.¹⁹ Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

4). And this is exactly how 1 Peter 3:9 continues -

1Peter 3:9

...not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.

a). This seems to mean exactly what it says – don't return evil when you are treated with evil. Don't revile when you are reviled. Don't do it, because Peter has already told us what to do when this happens to us... we emulate Jesus, who –

1Peter 2:23

...who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;

c). And again compare with what Romans says –

Romans 12:19

Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

d). This really is a trust issue between us and God isn't it? I mean, to do this kind of thing requires absolute belief in God's ability to follow through on what He has promised. And it requires us to be patient, and not needing immediate gratification, right? So many times we want to see an immediate bad consequence happen to the one who has wronged us, so much so that we make sure that we are the ones to inflict it, but in doing for this we are taking the vengeance out of God's hands and putting it in our own. That's disobedience.

e). And Peter doesn't just tell us NOT to revile, he additionally says *we are to bless*. The word "blessing" here isn't a noun, but a participle in the Greek, which makes the understanding, 'be constantly blessing'.

f). And the word blessing is the Greek word, 'eulogeo' which means 'to speak well of.'

g). And so instead of reviling, instead of speaking reproachfully and spitefully to the person who has done so to us, we are to *speak well* of that person, or offer a benediction on their behalf –

Proverbs 15:1

A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.

h). And we are to do this because we know that for this very reason we have been called – that we may inherit a blessing. And the word inheritance should take us immediately to the Judgment Seat where the inheritance will be received. In that Day, God will ‘speak well of’ – *bless* - us if we have been faithfully obedient to His Word, resulting in the salvation of our soul and a position with Christ as His Bride -

1 Peter 1:7

...that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

Matthew 25:21

"His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

5). Peter continues with this theme of what is to come out of our mouth by drawing from Psalm 34 –

1Peter 3:10

For "He who would love life and see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit. 11 Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil."

a). Psalm 34 deals with David's deliverance from Abimelech –

Psalm 34:11

Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD. 12 Who is the man who desires life, And loves many days, that he may see good? 13 Keep your tongue from evil, And your lips from speaking deceit. 14 Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it. 15 The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their cry. 16 The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. 17 The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears, And delivers them out of all their troubles. 18 The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit. 19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the LORD delivers him out of them all. 20 He guards all his bones; Not one of them

is broken. 21 Evil shall slay the wicked, And those who hate the righteous shall be condemned. 22 The LORD redeems the soul of His servants, And none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned.

b). The focus here in this psalm is the salvation of the soul, which is where the words, 'For he who would love life and see good days' would take us. The 'life' would be the life we wish to receive in the age to come and the 'good days' would be the days we wish to be a part of in the Millennial Kingdom.

c). So we can see that Peter is saying that those who would love life and see good days in the Kingdom will "refrain their tongue from evil" and their "lips from speaking deceit" in this present day.

d). The word translated 'evil' means 'to do harm to,' and so again this would take us to the idea of not reviling either as either the perpetrator, or retaliating if we're the recipient. And the word translated 'deceit' refers to setting a trap in order to bring someone into captivity to our agenda. And please remember that we are not dealing with humanity in general here, but with the eternally saved in pursuit of the Kingdom. Those who are in serious pursuit of the Kingdom will on a consistent basis make the choice to refrain from speaking evil and will choose to stop using their lips to trap another brother or sister in the furtherance of their own agenda. In fact, no one in pursuit of the Kingdom should have an agenda outside of their own faithful obedience to the word of God.

e). Those who will love life and see good days will also turn away from evil and *do good* (v. 11). We all have a natural tendency towards evil and so will need to make a deliberate choice to turn away from it. In the immediate context this would be the choice not to return evil for evil and reviling for reviling even though this would be our natural tendency. And then in a broader context this would take us to what Peter has already said -

1Peter 2:1

Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking...

1Peter 2:11

Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,

h). And would include all of the specific commands given to the various roles mentioned: citizens, slaves, masters, husbands, and wives.

6). Our Peter scripture continues -

I Peter 3:11

Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it.

a). For those who will “love life and see good days” they will also ‘seek peace and pursue it’. And what we see here is *a consistent endeavor towards that end*. In one sense the ‘peace’ we are to seek and pursue would be the coming of the Kingdom when the Prince of Peace will rule and reign. But, as we have seen so many times, this future fulfillment has a present application.

b). This present idea of “peace” that we are to seek is summed up by Paul -

Philippians 4:5

Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

d). Anxiety is something we all struggle with, and no more so than those that Peter saw fit to mention specifically... could the servant with the harsh master have cause to be anxious? Yes. Could the wife with a disobedient husband have cause to be anxious? Yes. Could the husband with a contentious wife have cause to be anxious? Yes. Yet in all of these circumstances we have seen one repeated theme - trust God -

Proverbs 3:5

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

e). And it's this trust issue that is at the very heart of our relationship with God.

f). You'll notice that according to our scripture from Peter, this ‘peace’ is something we are to *seek*, and having discovered what it is we are then to pursue it. So it isn't the case that we either have the peace of God or we don't, but rather that we are constantly in the process of attaining it. And given our human nature, pursuing the peace that comes from trusting God in every moment of every circumstance will be a lifetime's endeavor.

g). Going back to Philippians 4:6 we can see that it is by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving we are to make our requests to God, the requests which would be concerning that which is causing us anxiety. But, as we saw last week, the husband who does not live with his wife with understanding, giving her honor, would have his

prayers hindered. This being the case, what would it mean for his pursuit of the peace of God?

7). And let's pay particular attention to how our Peter scripture continues -

1Peter 3:12

For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil."

a). What an incredible promise contained within this verse... and what a truly scary warning as well.

b). We can see that within the context of our Peter letter the 'righteous' are those who lay aside all malice, those who abstain from fleshly lusts, those who refrain the tongue from evil and the lips from speaking deceit, those who turn away from evil and do good, and all of those individuals in their specific roles who choose to endure suffering for righteousness' sake. In other words, the "righteous" are those who are consistent and serious about their faithful obedience as they look to the salvation of their soul -

Psalm 37:29

The righteous shall inherit the land, And dwell in it forever. 30 The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, And his tongue talks of justice.31 The law of his God is in his heart; None of his steps shall slide.32 The wicked watches the righteous, And seeks to slay him.33 The LORD will not leave him in his hand, Nor condemn him when he is judged.34 ¶ Wait on the LORD, And keep His way, And He shall exalt you to inherit the land; When the wicked are cut off, you shall see it.

c). Look at the incredible promise in Peter, 'for the eyes of the Lord are on [literally - are over] the righteous' - the eyes of the Lord are directed favorably towards, for the good of those who are righteous. And His ears are open to those who are righteous.

e). But there is another side to the coin - 'But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil' - the Holy Spirit again drawing from Psalm 34 [Ps 34:16 The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.]

f). The face of the Lord being against those who do evil should in no way be considered as passive, but an active and deliberate opposition from God Himself. A most chilling example of what this would look like can be found in -

Jeremiah 21:5

"I Myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm, even in anger and fury and great wrath.

g). So who would those who do evil be? The context tells us that it is those who are eternally saved *who should be in pursuit of the Kingdom*, but deliberately choose to refuse to put into practice the instructions we have looked at here in 1 Peter.

8). 1Peter 3:13

And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?

a). The idea contained in this verse is, 'seeing as God takes such good care of the righteous, who is it that will harm you if you desire earnestly what is good?'

b). Now not only does this suggest the idea of Divine deliverance, a theme that we see throughout Psalm 34, but if that deliverance is not forthcoming, then consistently and faithfully 'doing good' still provides Divine protection. There is no harm that anyone can do to us with respect to our entrance into the Kingdom if we remain faithfully obedient. And here will be a huge shift in our perspective if we can see this. And in order to try to understand this let's draw again from the historical context for our letter.

c). Let's remember that there was an impending Roman persecution of Christians that would result in many being martyred. Now some may have been Divinely protected from that end, just as Daniel in the lion's den, but for those who would be martyred, who were faithfully obedient, the promise is that even in their death they were not harmed as their righteousness would guarantee the salvation of their soul.

Psalm 56:11

In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?

Matthew 10:28

"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.

f). I think sometimes we believe that our physical death, if it should come by sickness or disease or accident, or God forbid the violent action of another, is to our harm. But really, it isn't. If we have been consistent in our faithful obedience to the commands of scripture and thereby producing our wedding garment, then no harm with regards to the salvation of our soul has been done. Our body maybe dead in the present, but that cannot take from us the life of our soul in the age to come.

g). And this is just what we see as our Peter scripture continues -

8). 1Peter 3:14

But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled."

a). The encouragement to us here is that the phrase 'if you should suffer' speaks of something that is possible, but not probable. But if it should come to the point that we suffer because of our faithful obedience to the scriptures, then we are blessed -

Matthew 5:11

"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.

c). And the exhortation at the end of verse 14 is taken from Isaiah Chapter 8 which deals with the impending Assyrian captivity within the context of God's purpose for His people Israel -

Isaiah 8:10

Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing; Speak the word, but it will not stand, For God is with us." 11 For the LORD spoke thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying: 12 "Do not say, 'A conspiracy,' Concerning all that this people call a conspiracy, Nor be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled. 13 The LORD of hosts, Him you shall hallow; Let Him be your fear, And let Him be your dread.

d). The word translated 'threats' is a little unfortunate as it implies an overt threatening type of behavior, which is not the meaning here. Literally, we are not to be fearful of the fear they want us to have and we are not to be agitated; instead, we are to trust God and, **Let Him be your fear, And let Him be your dread.**

9). And continuing in Peter, and ending for today in Peter, we read this -

1Peter 3:14

But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled." 15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; 16 ¶ having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. 17 For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

a) We'll continue with this next week.