
OUR SERMON SERIES ON 1 PETER

Which of these do you think we could do with at the moment?

- *Hope for the future*
- *A secure sense of who we are*
- *Guidance for maintaining healthy relationships*
- *A framework for making sense of suffering*

If, like me, you would put a tick in all 4 boxes, then I have good news for you: the first letter of Peter in the New Testament addresses all of these issues. The basis of Peter's letter is a belief that we can all enjoy the things listed above as a result of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and through responding to God's calling to follow and belong to him.

Background

It is often difficult to give precise dates and context to biblical books, but we know from the opening and closing verses of the letter that it was written to churches scattered throughout what we now call Turkey, and probably written by the Apostle Peter from Rome (code-named Babylon in 5:13), most likely in the 60's AD. There is evidence that Christians in various places are either undergoing persecution (5:9), or are simply treated with suspicion as adherents of a new religion whose values are at odds with public standards of behaviour. There is certainly a threat of a 'fiery ordeal' (4:12) looming.

Content of the letter

Peter uses language normally used for the Jewish Diaspora to identify Christians as 'exiles' in the world. Our true identity, he

argues, is as the new People of God (2:10).

We've been ransomed by the precious blood of Christ (1:18), whose sacrifice has brought us back to God (2:24-25).

Moreover, his resurrection has guaranteed us an inheritance in heaven (1:3-4), which is secure and gives us hope for the future (1:21).

So we're called to live holy lives, in other words, to honour God in everything we do (1:15-16). This will show itself in love for one another (1:22), and in respect for others that is shown in working relationships, respect for public institutions and family life (2:11-3:7). Our true identity will show in the way we respond to being treated unjustly or challenged about our faith, and in our virtuous lifestyles (3:8-17).

Peter acknowledges that suffering of one kind or another is inevitable. But if we remember how Jesus responded under suffering, and the benefits he won through that suffering (2:24, 3:18), we will be inspired to follow his example in handling our own trials (3:21, 4:1-2).

Here's an outline of the series:

- 19 April** A living hope
(1 Peter 1:1-12)
- 26 April** A call to holy living
(1 Peter 1:13-25)
- 3 May** A matter of identity
(1 Peter 2:1-10)
- 10 May** Living in the world
(1 Peter 2:11-3:7)
- 17 May** Witnessing for Christ
(1 Peter 3:8-22)
- 24 May** Sharing Christ's sufferings
(1 Peter 4:12-5:14)
- 31 May** Living as disciples
(1 Peter 4:1-11)