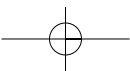
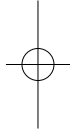
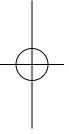


Why God's People Suffer

**—a study of I & II Peter
and Jude**



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If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

I Peter 4:14-19

1**The Apostle of Victory****I Peter 1:1-12****SCRIPTURE TO MEMORIZE**

“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (I Peter 1:7).

WALKING WITH THE LORD

Sunday	I Peter 1:1-12	Thursday	Isaiah 43:1-11; 45:17-25
Monday	John 1:29-42	Friday	Psalm 71:1-18
Tuesday	Psalm 138	Saturday	Romans 3:19-28
Wednesday	Isaiah 53		

LESSON OVERVIEW

The apostle Peter—outspoken, bold, cowardly, fisherman, husband, and leader—he was all of this and more. Each part of his personality was used by the Lord Jesus to accomplish His plans. The great doctrine of salvation formed the foundation for Peter’s life and ministry. The Book of First Peter was written to encourage suffering saints, and it’s important to know the man who wrote these words.

LIFE AWARENESS

Stresses and strains, what Peter calls trials, are a normal part of life, but at times they can seem to pile up and overwhelm us. Research has shown us that stress affects us emotionally, physically, and spiritually. It creates a physical response in our body.

Distress is harmful or unpleasant stress that results from repeated exposure to an unpleasant situation.

God knows the stresses we face. He understands our trials. He allows each for a reason and all that we might glorify Him. Do you see the trials facing you as opportunities to praise God and glorify Him? Look at Peter's life and see how even failure can make you a better servant of the Lord.

THE MAN

(I Peter 1:1-2)

The Book of First Peter is all about persecution and the way a Christian ought to respond to it. It is a practical book because it meets real needs that we face every day. Peter witnessed and shared in the sufferings of Christ and saw His glory at the Transfiguration (I Peter 5:1; Matt. 17:1-8). Peter was not merely a spectator to the things he wrote about—he lived them.

Peter said he wrote this first letter from Babylon (I Peter 5:13), a statement that has been a challenge to Bible students for years. Two views address the question. One sees the name as a reference to the city on the Euphrates River. However, there is no tradition or record that Peter visited that city.

There is a second view that identifies Babylon with Rome. Babylon may be symbolic. Peter refers to Mark as his “son,” and that is obviously figurative. It is possible, therefore, that Babylon is also figurative, and Rome was the place from which the epistle was written in about A.D. 64. There is a strong tradition that Peter visited Rome.

Peter's experiences and the major events in his life create a background from which his two books were written. Peter's father was Jonas; his brother was Andrew (Matt. 16:17). The brothers were fishermen on the Sea of Galilee and partners with James and John in the fishing business (Luke 5:10). Peter was married (Mark 1:30; Luke 4:38-39; I Cor. 9:5) and was introduced to the Lord Jesus by his brother Andrew, a disciple of John the Baptist (John 1:35-42).

Peter first declared that Jesus was the Christ, yet needed his faith strengthened when he walked on the water (Matt. 14:22-31). The many miracles Peter witnessed as a disciple of Jesus Christ made him an eyewitness of the Messiah. And God used this rugged fisherman to reassure and comfort the Jewish believers dispersed by persecution.

Peter's first epistle was written to believers scattered throughout various provinces or districts of Asia Minor. Although diverse from each other, they all had one thing in common. They

had been chosen by God (I Peter 1:2). In pointing out that his readers were elected by the foreknowledge of God the Father, sanctified by the Spirit, and saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, Peter affirmed the doctrine of the Trinity. Believers are joined to each other by faith in the triune God.

1. What are your primary personality traits?

Can God use them? How?

What were Peter's strengths?

What are yours?

2. Does God ask us to change our business or profession when we come to faith in Christ? What does have to be changed and who does the changing?

3. How do you know when you are trying to do something in your own strength or in God's?

4. What does Peter's experience of growth with setbacks tell us about the nature of the walk of faith? How might this differ from conventional portraits of the Christian life?

5. Why would Peter want to talk about trials and the future to the believers scattered throughout the world?

THE MESSAGE

(I Peter 1:3-12)

The major emphasis in I Peter is on the person and work of Jesus Christ, who brought salvation to sinners. Those to whom the letter was written were experiencing severe persecution. The apostle told them why they were suffering. He showed them that even though they suffered for the sake of Jesus Christ, they could be joyful. They did not have to fear what men might do to them (3:14). Because of this perspective of trials, Peter is aptly called the *apostle of victory*.

Peter's letter opens by pointing the readers to God the Father in a wonderful doxology centered in Christ's resurrection (1:3). The resurrection of Christ is the keystone of Christianity. Remove it and everything else shatters. It is His resurrection that gives believers a living, certain hope.

It is what the Christian hopes for and looks forward to that Peter called our "inheritance" (1:4). That inheritance is the full possession of all that God gives to us in salvation. Our faith in Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection makes us positionally complete in Christ, yet we do not fully possess all that salvation gives to us until we go to be with the Father in heaven.

Both the believer and his inheritance (the fullness of our salvation) are kept by God's power Himself (1:5). However, some readers are confused by the word "wherein" at the beginning of verse 6. It is not associated grammatically with the word "salvation" from verse 4 because the two words do not agree with each other in Greek grammar. Rather, the word refers to the whole content of verses 3-5. Because of God's marvelous provision for our salvation from sin, even though we may face persecution, we can still rejoice.

According to verse 7, the Christian who undergoes a trial of his faith and comes forth without dishonoring Christ or denying Him, will receive praise, honor, and glory when Christ appears. This is a reference to the Judgment Seat of Christ, where the believer will receive rewards for faithfulness to the work God committed to his care (Rom. 14:10; I Cor. 3:11-15; II Cor. 5:10).

Verse 8 reminds believers of Jesus' words to Thomas, who insisted on personally seeing Jesus after His resurrection before

he could believe it. Jesus' reply then was, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:25-29).

Then Peter pointed to the Old Testament prophets as an illustration of the wonderful privilege his readers had. The prophets did not fully understand the salvation that God had planned from eternity past (1:10-12). They wrote that the Messiah would come and would have to suffer, but they did not fully understand what they wrote. Their message was still true, however, and ministered to the needs of those who would believe during the age of the church, which began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2).

Our salvation means we are victors. Even in the darkest days, we have light and hope because it is anchored in Jesus Christ our Saviour.

1. In all candor, what makes you feel secure? Check the items which make you feel secure, then rank these potential sources of security in order of importance in your life.

	Makes Me Feel Secure		Rank
Your home	Yes___	No___	_____
Your bank account	Yes___	No___	_____
Your retirement program	Yes___	No___	_____
Your investments	Yes___	No___	_____
Your education/training	Yes___	No___	_____
Your job	Yes___	No___	_____
Your good health	Yes___	No___	_____
Your marriage	Yes___	No___	_____
Your friends	Yes___	No___	_____
Your salvation	Yes___	No___	_____

2. How many reasons did Peter suggest for why we endure suffering as a Christian?

What blessings does he list for those who endure?

3. What is the relationship between our suffering Messiah, our love for Him, and our salvation?

BIBLE AND LIFE APPLICATION

It can be easy for adults to take much of life for granted. A job, financial stability, supportive family, encouraging friends, fellowship with other believers, good health, education—all of these things can be taken away suddenly. When what we had isn't there any more, we begin to reevaluate the relative place such things take in our lives and values. The message of this portion of Peter's letter reminds us of the value of spiritual priorities, which sustain us when all else may be lost.

MY RESPONSE TO GOD

CLASS PRAYER NEEDS