

# NEW TESTAMENT BIBLICAL LITERACY

## *Lesson 72*

### I Peter – Part Two

### Chapters 2:11-5:14

## I. REVIEW

In I Peter Part One, we set out reminders of what we know about Peter from other New Testament passages. We also examined criticisms of the belief that Peter actually authored this letter. Then, we gave a basic outline, borrowed loosely from Merrill Tenney's *Introduction to the New Testament*, which divided the letter into these sections:

1. Introduction (1:1-2)
2. The character of salvation: Preservation (1:3-12)
3. The claims of salvation: Holiness (1:13-2:10)
4. The conduct of the saved (2:11-3:12)
5. The confidence of the saved (3:13-4:11)
6. The counsel for the saved (applied to suffering) (4:12-5:11)
7. Concluding salutations (5:12-14).

We covered in class the first three sections, leaving off at 2:11. That is where we pick up today to bring the book to conclusion.

## II. THE TEXT

### A. *The Conduct of the Saved (2:11-3:12)*

Peter begins this section of his letter urging Christians to live and conduct themselves as those who are saved from this world. In a sense, that places the Christians as aliens, strangers in a world system dominated by sin and its slavery-type hold over humanity. The sinful desires of mankind wage war against the Christian, both internally and externally. Internally, we all face the struggle against sin. Externally, we suffer persecution at the hands of unbelievers. In this regard particularly, Peter tells his readers to handle the persecutions by living pure lives. That way, the pagans may “accuse you of doing wrong” but still may “see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits” (2:11-12).

What does this mean pragmatically in the world to which Peter writes? For starters, the readers are to submit themselves to the authorities as required in the worldly system. This is only to the extent the authority does not require sin on the believer's part. This applies to each authoritative institution, King, Governor, or other who is set up to keep peace in the kingdom and punish wrongdoers.

Submission is not *de rigor* because these authorities are somehow more deserving of respect. The submission is proper for "the Lord's sake." Peter calls for the submission because it "is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men." History is replete with first and second century examples of Christians being wrongly accused as lawbreakers who live ignorant and outrageous lifestyles. Peter wants the rumors of such stopped dead in their tracks as Christians live exemplar lives (2:13-15).

The Christian is still to live as a free man, for his/her allegiance is really only to God, but this freedom is never to be a cover up to do wrong. True life respecting God and in service to God is showing proper respect to everyone, loving the fellow believer, and honoring the king (2:16-17).

In the world's economy, this also applied in a special way to slaves. Their masters were an authority instituted by man. Slaves were to submit themselves to all the masters with respect. This maxim applied to those whose masters were good and considerate as well as to those whose masters were harsh. There is commendation in treating all with respect. If a slave abuses his position and is punished, then there is nothing too commendable about the slave. If a slave is punished without doing anything wrong, then that slave has been treated unfairly and has responded in a way that is worthy of accolades among the church and God. This is a slave who has truly suffered for the cause of Christ. This is a slave who has shared in the unjust suffering of the very Son of God. This is a slave who walks the path of a Messiah, who committed no sin, who deceived no one yet was insulted – a Messiah, who never retaliated or threatened, but lived and died trusting the Father.

What is the net result of the life and death of Christ? Our righteousness! His wounds heal us; we are saved. Those who were lost and wondering sheep have returned to the care of the shepherd. We are where we ought to be. We are who we ought to be (2:18-25).

After writing about governmental obedience and economic authorities, Peter speaks of marriage. Peter writes for wives to be submissive in the same way to their husbands. Peter highlighted this teaching as a way that unbelieving husbands might come to faith. Even without preaching verbally to their husbands, women could have a profound effect by the way they lived. If women would emphasize purity and reverence, inward qualities of a gentle and quiet spirit, then they would paint a prettier picture of God and his effect on lives than if they spent all day in a beauty chair getting the best hair do and clothing makeover money can buy! This is in fact the beauty that holy women in the past have walked in, and it should be the priority beauty of the woman of God (3:1-6).

Husbands are next admonished to live with the same consideration to the wives. Husbands are to treat their wives with respect. Husbands should treat their wives recognizing that even though in Peter's world the wives were the weaker partner in the marriage, in God's kingdom, they were full heirs – just as much as men – of the gift of life that is a full gift to everyone, man or woman (3:7).

Peter closes this section addressing the readers' behaviors with each other in their daily lives. Peter wants them to live in harmony together. They should sympathize with each other's problems, as family does. They were to care with compassion and humility. If someone treats them wrongly, then they are to respond with blessing. This is the Christian response. We know sin. We know its power and hold. We also know the freedom from sin in Christ. We know the future of the Christian. This gives us the balance and perspective to live above sin. When others sin, we understand. But we do not answer with sin. We are in a different place. We answer from the grace in which we live – with answer; with blessing. Our tongue stays from evil; our actions seek peace. We know God's eyes are on us, and he hears our prayers (3:8-12).

*B. The Confidence of the Saved (3:13-4:11)*

Why can the Christian live with confidence the life that Peter has set out? Because of Jesus! We live knowing our blessings. If we are not harmed by this world, then praise God. But if the world harms us, then even though we may deserve it, we still praise God because we know his blessings on our lives. We are not afraid of this world and what it can do. With our hearts in Jesus, we know our eternity.

We have an answer that we can give to anyone who asks us why we hope in the face of despair, why we confidently proceed in the face of persecution and pain. We can answer those who question with gentleness and respect. We can explain our lives knowing that in deed we have done nothing of which we should be ashamed. Our suffering is for doing good, not evil.

So, we give an answer. Our answer is simple: Jesus is our Lord. He has died for our sins – one time for all sins – and brought us before God himself. Jesus died physically but was brought to life again by the Spirit. His death accomplished that for us, and it accomplished even more. In ways we do not have explained, Christ went through the Spirit and preached “to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built” (3:20). Peter does not go into detail, but he seems to be referencing Genesis 6:1-3 where God’s wrath is declared coming because the “sons of God” [traditionally considered angels] were wrongly intermingling with the “daughters of men.”

While going back to Noah, Peter explained that as the water saved Noah (not in the sense of bringing forgiveness of sin, but in the sense of separating him from the sinful world being destroyed) so baptism saves us. Not that baptism magically removes dirt from our souls, but that it separates us and sets us apart from those in the world destined for destruction (3:13-22).

So, Christians are not confident of life because of our self-sufficiency. We are confident because we are armed with Christ and his attitude. Christ suffered in his body. So when we suffer, we understand that we are no longer bound up under sin’s power and curse.

We are suffering because of our faith in Christ, the very faith that declares and shows us free from sin. SO, when people mock us or think it strange that we live with different convictions and a different life, we can know with confidence that we are on the right path. Those on the alternate path are those destined for destruction.

Regardless of when we live, this destruction is near. So we need to keep clear minds, remember and understand the ramifications of our faith, and live controlled by that belief. This means we love each other deeply, regardless of their sin. We are hospitable to each other – without grumbling about it! We take the gifts God has given each

of us and we use them for the common good. In other words, we use them for God's purposes. This is in praise to God, and to the glory of Jesus Christ (4:1-11).

C. *The Counsel for the Saved (applied to suffering) (4:12-5:11)*

Before closing his letter, Peter gives some final counsel for the saved in reference to their suffering. HE wants them to not think it strange or surprising. They are to rejoice to the extent they are participating in the sufferings of Christ. Whenever they are insulted because of Christ, they should know God blesses them. There is no shame in suffering because you are a Christian. We should know that we in the house of God are judged first, then the world. We suffer because we are saved. We are post judgment but in a world of the unjudged. We should not be surprised we hurt. We should continue to commit ourselves to God and his will.

Peter sets out special encouragement and instruction for the elders in the church. Peter, who had been told by Jesus to feed Jesus' sheep, passes that role on. Peter tells the elders they are to be shepherds in God's flock. This is not out of greed for personal gain (monetary or egotistical). It is to be from eagerness to serve.

Before closing, Peter leaves the eldership and adds a special note for the young men. He urges them to be submissive to the older men. They are to wear humility, knowing God opposes the proud, but "gives grace to the humble" (5:5). With that in mind, they are to humble themselves in God's sight and let God lift them up.

Peter urges his readers to be self-controlled and alert. There is an enemy afoot, Satan. Satan prowls around like a roaring lion seeking those he might devour. Peter says to resist him, standing firm in the faith. As they do so, they can be confident that God is in control and God will make them strong and steadfast (5:1-11).

D. *Concluding Salutations (5:12-14)*

Peter ends noting that Silas helped him with the letter. He adds that "she who is in Babylon" (which most scholars understand to be the church in Rome) sends greetings as does Mark. Peter closes with affection and a prayer for peace to those in Christ.

### **III. POINT FOR HOME**

1. There is substance behind our faith.
2. That substance changes the way we live.
3. That substance changes the way we handle suffering.
4. That substance holds us up against the enemy.