

31st January 2019

Introduction

Overview of 1 Peter

Dear Brethren and Sisters of the Lord Jesus.

When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Peter, Cephas, or Petros, little rock. But upon This rock, the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ would the ecclesia be founded. This letter of Peter gives evidence of the Rock of Salvation, and also not a little of Peter's own rock like character. Through the various mentions and allusions to persecutions and sufferings, it is suggested that Peter wrote this letter to the strangers scattered abroad the diaspora, between the end of the book of the Acts, and the exile of the Apostle John to Patmos, during the savage persecutions against Christians by the emperor Nero. Peter in this letter to the elect, scattered right across Asia Minor, shows none of the old impetuous clumsy zeal of his earlier years, but in his writing shows an organised mind, a resolute and efficient practised delivery, a style borne from continual preaching no doubt. But nevertheless in this letter, we see faith in action, tried faith, as gold is tried. Peter talking from experience. Thus the letter can be broken down into three main parts. Chapter 1 and the first 10 verses of chapter 2 Peter gives huge encouragement and exhortation in explaining and emphasising the calling of Christians to salvation. He outlines the plan of salvation then, the

products of salvation, what effect it has upon the saved, and then he reasons of the purpose of salvation. The characteristic of a Christian is the subject he next moves to, a characteristic he himself had to learn, that of the duty of a disciple of Christ, through subjection, this he talks about from chapter 2:11 through to chapter 3:12. Moving on through this compact letter, the third main theme, is how Peter addresses the discipline of a Christian, so necessary in face of persecution in all its various forms. In this from 3:13, through to nearly the end of chapter 5 he writes concerning the various aspects of life, suffering must be endured, whether as a citizen, shepherd or soldier. Looking now at each chapter we attempt to introduce and open up the class for further thought, and Bible study in the coming weeks, that we can share with others. We notice Peters own introduction in verse 2 of chapter 1, a lesson in concise language and brevity. One sentence summing up the journey of a disciple from a seed in God's mind, through to being made part of Christ Jesus. We can spend considerable time breaking down just this one verse, and the careful choice of language, the order, the process laid out so clearly, but for now, we just draw it to your attention. Now in the chapter, he expounds this process. He begins most firmly emphasising the strength and rock like immovable solid alternative there is to the hopeless idolatry blood death and gore which could be seen so often in the streets and cities of the Roman provinces. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, life twice emphasised, 4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, three times repeated reserved in heaven for you, 5 Who are kept by the power of God, double sure – reserved and kept - through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Here Peter is outlining the plan of salvation. The Rock on

which the ecclesia is built. It is faith in this salvation which drives the believer to endure the temptations, in the present, though for just a season, a short time, which are so necessary which challenge the faith at all times, refining it as gold is refined, we see in verses 8 and 9 the way in which Peter echoes his Masters teaching in Matt 10:22 but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. The Apostle shows how this same salvation is rooted from the very beginning, the same salvation the prophets of old laboured for, and anxiously strove for, wanting to know the more details of the Christ, yes and that even the very angels who had no need of redemption were drawn into also. But the gospel has been revealed in the person of Jesus, and thus the past confirming the present to assure the future. So in verse 13, he begins to highlight the fruits of salvation, in this grand exhortation: Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; Hope. The promise of Salvation gives hope. We see the call to discipline – gird up the loins of the mind, be sober: and to be free from every form of mental and spiritual intoxication, from the influences of the world around, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts, not looking backward or reverting to past habits, but be holy. And this holiness is emphasised expanding upon the sanctification by God of the saints in verse 2. This holiness the second fruit or product of salvation. Not keeping the mind holy will prevent us from calling on the Father, lack of purity, afflicts our conscience too much, thus with reverence and care he must be approached in pray. Peter reminds his readers with what price they have been purchased. We are not the elect, the chosen, the sanctified through a membership based on subscriptions, or joining fees, or donations, corruptible things gold and silver etc, no all such material things belong to our past life, and are basically empty and pointless, for all flesh is as grass, and quickly fades away but instead

redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, which God purposed for our sakes from the very beginning. Should this not make an impression upon us, what God has done for us? This Peter seeks to impress upon his readers. He speaks of how we can purify our minds: verse 22: obeying the truth through the spirit. It is by wanting to please God, in endeavouring to keep the commands OF Christ, all members, all brothers and sisters draw close together as they have this in common, the unfeigned love or sincere love, not because we have to, but a deep meaningful love. In chapter two he develops upon the contrast and comparison between the temporary and corruptible present life with all its standards, culture and material values, turning our back on these values, 2:1-2 Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking, As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: Little children, and especially new born babes have no idea about such nasty values, it is this child like innocence and purity that Peter encourages. It is a theme he alluded to in chapter 1, and here he highlights it 1: 3 hath begotten us again; 14: As obedient children, ...23 Being born again by the word of God, now brought to the birth, we need to grow, and that is only possible by imbibing the Word. In this Peter continues to explain the reason for salvation. Moving on from the allegory of being born again, and being purchased, he now uses the comparison of a building. Explaining that God has elected or chosen us from the very beginning, we are compared to living stones, each stone a member of the spiritual house, but first being measured up to the living stone which was originally rejected by men, but chosen by God, Peter building upon the foundation of the Old Testament quotes from Isaiah 28, Psalm 118, and Isaiah 8, and in so doing highlights former builders who used the wrong standard and choose using the assessment of the flesh. But God being the Builder and Maker, the

architect, we accept he has a purpose a design for his spiritual house, in which he himself will dwell with men. Finally he concludes this first lesson as he has built up to the very reason for salvation: verse 9: But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; God has done the choosing: why?? What is the reason? that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light; So his wonderful kindness, and mercy can be treasured, all that is good and right, to be praised and appreciated. Now, the Apostle turns to the practical application of these good characteristics, hope holiness reverence and love. Verse 11. 11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, not estranged from God, but strangers, pilgrims, passers through this current world we live in echoing the words of the apostle writing to the Hebrews and chapter 11, abstain or resist as it can also be read, from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; 12 Having your conversation or way of life honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. The quiet and consistent godly behaviour as a witness to those in the world, acts as a testimony to our own salvation, and we act as representatives of the gospel, that is being priests in the true sense of the word, a description applied by Peter, the royal priesthood. Peter shows that submission is an attitude of mind that crosses many aspects of life and should be the consistent approach of a true Christian. Not bold, bolshy, brash, cocky and swaggering through life. He begins using the example of socio political life – everyday respect to be paid to governors, and rulers. We might not like the boss, but if God is in control of our lives, then he has allowed that situation to develop, so we have to put up with it, and give respect by dint of the position they are in. , for verse 15, it is the will of God, by the example of submission we show the Christian spirit. ,

honour all men, verse 17, the same principle applies to anyone. Respect. Staying in the work theme, verse 18, servant be subject to masters, Peter begins to address the aspect of suffering, bringing it in to this theme of submission. The subject of suffering he returns to in greater detail later in the letter, as it is evident the strangers scattered abroad in the Roman provinces of Asia Minor were suffering in many ways because of their faith. He hints at this in verse 19 For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. It does happen especially if we state upfront we can't work on Sundays, don't like pin ups, object to swearing, etc even today we can suffer. Peter explains how the Christian should be patient in these instances, stick at it. Don't react, he gives us the ultimate example of Jesus Christ, who had to submit to the authorities, even dying unjustly, not just for his own sake, but for ours, knowing that in submitting, being obedient to the faith, he would be at one with the father, and of course provide the way of salvation for you and me, which is Peters main point in this letter. So he returns to submitting, this time in the domestic situation. Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; We note the parallel with verse 15 of chapter 2. Same principle, that quiet and consistent example, overcomes the weakness of the other, and a happy ending may well be possible. To the glory of God. That is the aim. That is how submission is in fact so so powerful. More powerful than aggression. This same attitude of steady consistency, gentle yet firm, submissive but having your own mind, being subject yet remaining controlled is manifest in the conduct of sisters for example as Peter shows in verse 2 -6 of chapter 3, where Peter selects the example of Sarah, though as one with her husband and co equal in Christ, she called her husband Lord, to show her appreciation, that the role of

husbands represents that of Christ as head of the household. Her deference was a continual lesson to Abraham how he should be to his workers, and servants, neighbours and above all to God. Like Paul when he wrote to the Ephesians in chapter 5 on the same subject, Peter shows that this willingness to yield albeit within certain parameters such as obeying the commands of Christ, creates a pleasant atmosphere, a willingness to please, and in the end, shows who really is in control of themselves and ultimately the relationship. So let us not think submission is weak or passive. It is much stronger than aggression. But less husbands miss the point, Peter finds it necessary to point out that there are two sides. When one is being submissive, don't take advantage. Instead verse 7 dwell with understanding, as it can be better rendered. It is worth comparing this verse with verse 23 of the previous chapter which is in effect a parallel verse. Maybe thoughts for later. Giving honour to the wife, the weaker vessel. Yes physically weaker, and reliant on her companion in some ways, or should be, but remember the parallel. The ecclesia is the weaker vessel. Does Christ take advantage, mock or be impatient of the ecclesia? Moving on, not all are in this domestic situation of marriage. But the principle of submission applies to all. Verse 8, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one for the other. Love as brethren. Peter quotes two psalms, exhorting that God sees it all. So on one side we can be comforted that he knows we are submitting, but on the other, he knows when we are not. Returning again to the theme of suffering for Christ, the Apostle further expands developing on his earlier comments in chapter 2, , that even when enduring hardship for the sake of what is right, to still have a positive attitude 15: But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: But Peter really drives home the point, that salvation comes through

suffering. No pain no gain to put it crudely. Using of course the supreme example of Christ, who suffered for his own well doing, for the sins of others, suffering for the bad doings of others, paid the greatest price in his life, but being resurrected showed that salvation from death was possible, through the long suffering of God, who is the most tolerant and compassionate. Providing a way of escape for all those who answer a good conscience and submit to the waters of baptism, willing also to die even for well doing, to give up their life for righteousness. So in chapter 4 Peter urges his readers to follow this example Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: Have the same attitude. Being willing to submit to life's experiences, and suffer, make sacrifices, fight against our own desires, means we are overcoming sin, and seeking the will of God. Compared to in the past where we were perhaps unrestrained in some respects, like the world is now, when we live in a controlled way, people are amazed, what's happened to you! They may mock, tease and laugh. But they will learn whose standards will remain, God's and not mans. Verse 7 Peter says: But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. It may well be that Peter is referring to the end of the Judean state which came about two years after the death of Nero, in AD70 when Jerusalem was destroyed, and the whole system of Jewish politics and religion irreversibly purged, and verse 17, when judgement would begin at the house of God, possibly referring to Jerusalem. But equally the end applies to the end of the day of opportunity, when we are forced to submit to death. Thus Peter explains the need to appreciate the urgency of life in Christ. To try and maintain the highest standards, in the way we deal with one another, and in our efforts to ensure that it is God who is glorified and our will, human nature. Peter perhaps hints at an increasing level of persecution, or upheaval, in verse 12 where the world would

be effectively turned upside down. Although they, far away in the provinces, far from Jerusalem, all would be affected by the fall out, in public opinion towards Jews and by association Christians. Beloved, Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. But again equally this is the experience of every Christian who takes on the attitude of submission, and who fervently seeks salvation, so applies to us also, to be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of prayer. In chapter 5, Peter specifically addresses those who have had more experience, as shepherds. Feed the flock of God and do so eagerly or be of a ready mind. We recall Jesus saying the same thing to Peter, Feed my lambs, feed my sheep. In verse 1, we can see he is mindful of his own experiences He did not forget and passes on the same advice. To be examples. The same as the citizen should be, the same as a wife should be, the same as a servant should be. Peter is using this same principle of submission all the way through this letter. Verse 5: Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. It is true that the inexperienced might say, all this submission business, right, so everyone is just going to walk all over me right? So am I supposed to just let that happen? The answer to that is, that is what faith is for. Trust that God is watching, he is in control. Submission means let it go. Let God deal with it. Verse 7 Cast all your care upon God, for he cares for you. Comparing the disciple of Christ to a soldier, Peter describes the need to be alert, on guard against the enemy, the false accuser, the diabolos, is like a roaring lion ready to pounce on the weak, but resist, and fight back. Peter reminds, you are not alone. Verse 9 the same afflictions are being shared by all other brethren, we are in this together he is saying. And so he concludes, arresting his plea to his fellow suffering

servants, salvation through suffering : But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. It is the transforming power of submitting to the will of God, that ensures that we are tried as gold is tried, to be pure and sanctified, to be saved. Peter signs off giving notice of his fellow disciple Silvanus who would deliver his letter and sends a greeting from the ecclesia at Babylon. If Peter meant Rome, he would have said Rome. All other place names are literal and not cryptic or symbolic. And seeing there was a large Jewish population in Babylon, it seems obvious that it was where Peter went to minister, as Paul went to the Gentiles, including Rome. So Catholic tradition is baseless. Greet one another with a kiss of love. Indeed, Peter witnessed the kiss of betrayal. It is the need for fervent love to one another, this is Peters call throughout his letter, whether a kiss, handshake, hug, or smile, it must be sincere, and in love and compassion. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Yes, though sufferings are not peaceful, having peace of mind is everything.