

The 1st Letter of Peter (Week 4)

In chapter 2, verse 11 to chapter 4, verse 11, Peter gives guidance on living a life honouring to the Lord Jesus Christ. Chapter 4, verse 11 closes with a benediction as Peter recognises that in all things God should be glorified through Jesus Christ.

There is a possibility that chapter 4, verse 11 was to be the close of the letter. In that case 4, verse 11 to 5, verse 14 was written as a “P.S.” These closing verses were certainly written at a time when persecution was already happening! Again, it is likely that this letter was written by Peter from Rome (“Babylon” in 5, v. 13). This would be the beginning of the vicious persecution under the Emperor Nero, when Christians were nightly burned as torches in the emperor’s gardens.

Read 1 Peter 4, verse 12 to 5, verse 14

Chapter 4, verses 12 – 19

As Christians Peter exhorts us identify with Christ who suffered as a human being for our salvation. Persecution has always been a possibility for the Christian Church. An “easy ride” in our own country has, to a certain extent blinded us to the common suffering which is taking place in many communities overseas. In Nigeria alone the [International Society for Civil Liberties and the Rule of Law](#) (Intersociety) said that 620 Nigerian Christians have been killed since the beginning of the year, and mapped a campaign of destruction and arson carried out against churches in the African nation, some 32,000 Christians have been killed in Islamist attacks since 2009.

As we read these verses in this letter of Peter, let us unite in prayer for our Christian brothers and sisters facing destruction of their property and death because of their faith.

In verses 17 -18 we are reminded that persecution does lead to a shaking out of individuals, according to their genuine commitment to Christ. Peter suggests that the judgement to come at the end of time will be severe enough for those of us who believe. What then will happen to unbelievers?

Chapter 5

This chapter begins with an exhortation to the “elders” of the congregations. (verses 1 – 4) along with a reminder to younger members, and to all of us, to respect and honour one another as fellow members of the body of Christ. (verse 5)

Verses 6 – 11 remind us that whatever happens in our lives, God the Father cares for us! In the dark days of gloom and despondency, He is near and His hand is there, ready to lift us up. For our sisters and brothers suffering under severe persecution, this should be our prayer for them, that the “*God of all grace . . . will Himself, restore, establish and strengthen*” them in their faith.

For them and for us the reminder in verses 8 – 9 needs to be taken to heart. It is so easy to drop our defences and ignore the possibility of spiritual attack! The practical teaching of some of the indigenous (Amerindian) pastors in the Chaco of Northern Argentina has stayed with Valerie and I over the years. “The Evil One like a wild beast, prowling round the outside of the thorn-bush fence surrounding our precious garden. Probing for a weakness. Pushing and thrusting his way through to destroy and trample that which we hold most dear.”

This is a reminder not to drop our guard! Peter, the apostle, so human in his frailty in denying his Lord, now fulfils his God given ministry as he writes to strengthen the brethren. (see Luke 22, verses 31 - 32)

His is the final word:- “*I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.*” (Chapter 5, verse 12)

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I am taking a “week off” next week. Having had a request to look in detail at “The Lord’s Prayer”, I will do my homework and begin (the Lord willing!) in two weeks time!