

Peter's Gospel of Christ (Part 1)

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Preacher: Tom Holland

[0 : 00] Tonight we're going to look more extensively at the text.

! Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father and the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with His blood. May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

So we've already covered two verses in chapter 1 of 1 Peter. Let's do a little background in this. Let's do a little bit.

And let me start by giving you a rather infamous date. July 19th, 64 A.D. Probably none of us were alive then unless it was Oscar.

But 64 A.D. And that was the day that Rome burned while Nero fiddled. Now I don't know if Nero really fiddled or not, but I grew up being told that.

[1 : 45] Yeah, Nero fiddled while Rome burned. The great city of Rome, and I've been there, didn't look that great to me, but was consumed by a holocaust of fire.

Here's the thing about Rome. As a city, it had very narrow streets. It had a lot of people. Millions of people. On both sides of those streets, there was wooden structures, tenements, if you will, that went up.

And that's where the people lived. And when the fire hit Rome, it consumed the city.

It could leap easily across those narrow streets and consume the wood buildings, which really were nothing more than kindling.

[2 : 58] And they'd probably been there drying out for hundreds of years. The first three days and nights, the fire spread rapidly.

It was somewhat checked, but they couldn't ever get it totally put out. And it broke out again, even worse.

And before it was over, it had consumed most of the homes and buildings in Rome and killed most of the people.

The Roman people believed that their emperor Nero, and by definition, they considered him to be a maniac.

They thought, well, he set the fire, or got his people to set the fire. They believed that he did that because he had a lust for building things.

[4 : 09] He wanted to build things. Probably named him after himself. And for him, the great challenge of life was to build. And you know, in order to build, you have to destroy what already exists so you can build again.

Well, that's what he did. Now, for his part, he was in a protected tower. He had a front row seat in the Tower of Messina.

I have no idea if I did that correctly. And he watched the raging inferno as it consumed the city of Rome. Historians tell us that he was charmed by the flames.

They almost were like a hypnotism to him. And he just loved watching. He talked about how lovely the fire was. Well, people were being consumed down there. Babies and mothers.

People tried to put out the fire. And they were hindered. And when they'd finally get the fire put out in one area, it would start in another area.

[5 : 28] Well, that's because Nero's people were setting fire to another area. The people were devastated.

The city they grew up in, they were born in, they loved, was destroyed. And their culture, in a sense, went down with the city.

They had all these temples located everywhere. The temple of Luna. The era maxima, the great altar. The temple of Jupiter. The shrine of Vesta. These were the pagan religious elements of their life. They were all destroyed. And each home in that culture had household gods. Little bitty gods. They were all consumed. [6 : 32] Burned up. So you saw in the destruction of Rome by fire, tremendous economic loss. Significant social loss. But it also created, in many respects, a religious chaos. And confusion. To realize that their own deities had been unable to do anything about the fire. I mean, we've been praying to these idols all these years and they couldn't put out the fire. They couldn't save us. Save our homes. So now the people that survived were basically homeless. They had not only lost their homes, but they'd lost neighbors and family through death by fire. [7 : 37] Horrible way to die. And in a very real sense, they lost their gods. Because they too were burned up. So there was a lot of resentment.

It ran very deep among the Romans. And it was deadly. And Nero realized something. The people were mad at him. They were blaming him. So he had to redirect that hostility. And he knew that he had to come up with a scapegoat to blame, so everybody else would go after the scapegoat and leave him alone. And to Nero, the best group to blame were Christians. And he spread the word as fast as he could that Christians set these fires. Take your anger, your hostility out on them. Now, choosing Christians as the culprit was very ingenious. [8 : 58] Number one, Christians were already hated by the Roman populace. Christians they were already slandered. They had a lot of things that angered the Roman citizens who were essentially pagan Gentiles.

First of all, they associated with Jews. And there was much anti-Semitism in Rome even before the fire. And in the second place, Christians were seen as those who would never fully cooperate in emperor worship. They couldn't do that. And those who rejected all the other gods of the Romans, they rejected all the gods, even the little statues in the homes. We entertained a guy one time. He was from India. And he gave me a little thing and he said, that's not a god. That's not a Hindu god. [10 : 14] I assure you. And he was a nice guy. I found out later he was one of the richest men in India. Didn't know at the time I would have asked him for room and board. But we brought him to church.

And he sang. And yeah. Well, he sent his kids to a Baptist school in India even though he was Hindu. So the Romans, it was easy for them to hate the Christians. Furthermore, they practiced the Lord's Supper but it was closed to anyone that didn't believe in Christ. so it was closed to almost all the citizens of Rome. And the Lord's Supper was a very vital part of their experience. And in fact, they didn't even allow unbelievers to attend. And since the pagans were not part of it, they started hearing rumors. Things like eating and drinking the flesh and the blood and the flesh of Christ. And they made a leap that, well, they must be cannibals. [11 : 29] They must be practicing some kind of cannibalism and the word spread. They helped spread the word. These Christians are cannibals.

They're eating and drinking each other. And then the story grew from there that they mostly ate babies and Gentiles at their communion services. That's why I like we do grape juice. Keep doing grape juice. And then they were hung up on greet your brother with a holy kiss. Romans called that the Christian kiss of love. The embrace that Christians commonly gave to each other. It was a greeting. They used it at the love feast as a way to express their affection. And pagans spread the word that they were unbridled orgies of lust and vice including homosexuality as men were embracing men with a kiss of love. [12 : 45] Well, we don't do that. We don't give each other a holy kiss. We give each other a holy handshake. And so the rumors spread and continued to spread.

So when they were most unpopular one of the most unpopular things was that many wives of prominent Romans embraced Christ.

And for a woman to act independently of her husband in the Roman culture was an affront that knew no equal.

Romans did not prevent that. So you had wives who were perceived as being non-submissive to their husbands.

You had children who having come to Christ were breaking off their connections with their unbelieving family. And so Christianity was then it was said that they split families apart.

[13 : 55] That brought great conflict even insubordination of wives a problem none of us have ever had. I'm not going there.

Here's another point. Christians were always talking about the days coming when the world is going to dissolve in flames.

Well it is coming. It's still coming. And it is going to happen. John MacArthur was confronted by a bunch of environmentalists and he said if you think we're bad what do you see what Jesus does with this planet?

We're a disposable planet. It was very fitting and easy to blame the Christians for the fire. So Nero picked the right group.

and there were a lot of valid reasons why they would be suspect and the blame could easily be pinned on them. Which we just covered a bunch of.

[14 : 58] Now as a result of this accusation under Nero the persecution against Christians began. There were some incidents of abuse of Christians but now it was wholesale persecution under Nero.

Tacitus the Roman historian reported that Nero rolled Christians in pitch and then set them on fire while they were still alive and used them as living torches to light his garden parties.

And that's been widely spoken about and it was written about in the rise and fall of the Roman Empire by Gibbons. He also sewed Christians up in skins of wild animals and then turned his hunting dogs loose and just tore those people to pieces.

Some were nailed to crosses. Some were lynched. All without a trial of course.

And within a few months Christians were imprisoned, racked, seared, broiled, burned, scourged, stoned, and hanged. Some were lacerated with hot knives and some were thrown on the horns of wild bulls.

[16 : 23] If you're going to be a Christian in that culture, you're going to be serious. You're going to be serious. It's a lot more serious than if the heat breaks in winter or the air conditioner breaks in the summer.

Now we cannot know precisely when, but sometime after this, Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote this epistle.

And he says in there, this is an epistle written to believers who are aliens, who are strangers, who are foreigners, and what he was referring to is they're in a hostile culture.

It is written at a time when Christians were forced to suffer severe persecution and even the loss of their lives. And the campaign of slander and the campaign of suffering for the love of Christ was already moving.

Let me read you a couple, more than a couple. a few passages that kind of sets the tone of where we're heading. We'll probably cover some of these in subsequent lessons, but 1 Peter 1.6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials.

[17 : 53] 1 Peter chapter 2 verses 21 to 23 3, for to this you have been called because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example so that you might follow in his steps.

verse 21 he committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return.

When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

Peter is saying, I know that you are suffering, but remember Christ also suffered.

And he's our example of suffering. Verse 20 of chapter 2 says this, But if when you do good and suffer for it, you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.

In chapter 3, verse 13 to 17, Now who is there to harm you? If you are zealous for what is good, but even if you should suffer for righteousness sake, you will be blessed.

[19 : 14] Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.

Yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience so that when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. God's And then in the fourth chapter, verses 12 and 13, beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you as though something strange were happening to you, but rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed.

In 1 Peter 4, 19, therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

Here's another passage, 1 Peter 5, 10, And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

[21 : 07] Now, based upon what we've just read, it's clear, these people existed in a time of great suffering.

Eventually, even Peter himself would be persecuted and killed. Tradition says that Peter's wife suffered and died at the same time as her husband.

Tradition also tells us that Peter insisted on being crucified upside down. He didn't think it was worthy of him to be crucified as Christ was. We don't know if any of that happened, that that's tradition.

But we do know that Peter's wife suffered and died for their faith and for the proclamation of the gospel of Christ. So the emphasis of this epistle then is to teach believers how to live victoriously live victoriously in the midst of great hostility and do that without losing heart, without wavering in your faith, without becoming bitter, realizing where your hope is, realizing who your Savior is, always looking forward to the glorious coming of Christ when all suffering will cease.

as we move further into this book, we will read about the glory and honor of the revelation of Jesus Christ. We will see the ultimate outcome of this is the salvation of our souls when we will see the Lord.

[22 : 55] Now in that regard, we will examine passages in our study that will speak of the second coming of Christ. that's something that's very appropriate I think in our day.

And we will learn that when the chief shepherd appears, believers will receive an unfading crown of glory. So you have here the indications of suffering and the indications that those who suffer are to keep their heart and their mind set on the return of Jesus Christ.

No matter what comes in this life, we have that promise. So we're going to be looking at this epistle that was written to believers who are in persecution and it's going to tell them how to live a victorious life in the midst of it and how even though being persecuted they can focus on Christ because he's returning.

He's coming back. And in his return and his coming for them he would come to end their suffering. They will learn how to live victoriously in the face of persecution, suffering, and difficulty.

Now there's some other subjects that we're going to learn about in 1 Peter. We're going to learn about foreknowledge. We're going to learn about sanctification.

[24 : 47] Believe it or not, one of the first things we're going to study is the doctrine of election. As many pastors say, the most hated doctrine in the world.

I mean, how can you believe in that? It's only in the New Testament 37 times. We're going to learn about the significance of the blood of Christ.

What does it mean? What is the significance and why is his blood so precious? And we're going to discuss our eternal inheritance in Christ.

We're going to be taught about the proof of true faith as opposed to false faith. These are major themes.

We're going to learn about salvation. We're going to get into the second coming of Christ. We're going to discuss what it means to be holy even as God is holy.

[25 : 50] we will look at the new birth. We will study the milk of the word and how it makes us grow. We will get into spiritual growth as a subject by itself.

We will discuss the fact that we are a holy priesthood and all that that means. We're going to talk about how our behavior should be excellent.

government. We will talk about what it is to live responsibly under the particular government that the Lord has placed us under.

You take the communist nations. There's no instruction for them to be anarchists or rebellious or burn down government buildings. We will talk about marriage relationships between a husband and a wife.

not a husband and another man, not a wife and another woman, a husband and wife. We will talk about how it is to suffer for righteousness sake.

[26 : 59] We will talk about the need to be able to defend your faith out there and be ready to defend your faith.

Talk about baptism. talk about humility. We will talk about how God wants all your anxiety and all your care cast on Him.

Be not anxious. But Lord, you know what I'm going through. No, but I know what my son went through. And he's coming back. We will talk about the perfecting work that God is doing in your life through struggles.

And that is just a little bit of what we'll talk about. These are important subjects. But to begin tonight, let us meet Peter.

Let us meet Peter. It says in verse 1, Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ. Now, Peter was the leader of the twelve.

[28 : 12] There are, and you need to remember this, four lists in Scripture. Matthew 10, Mark 3, Luke 6, and Acts 1. Those are the four lists of the twelve apostles.

Remember the original twelve. One of them was a devil, Judas Iscariot. But when you read those lists, Peter is at the head of every list.

He was the leader of the twelve. His name is always first. And there is no other consistent order beyond Peter. It wasn't always Peter and then Andrew or Peter and James.

It was Peter and then the hodgepodge. No consistency there. But he was the leader. Now the apostles were a unique group of men.

They were specially called servants of Christ. And there were some criteria to be an apostle. First of all, they had to have seen Jesus.

[29 : 29] Now we may say, well, you know, the original twelve, they all saw Jesus, including Judas. Yeah, but there's a problem. They also had to have seen him after his resurrection.

Now, Judas didn't see him after the resurrection. He was in the place where he was going to spend eternity. But they had to see him after his resurrection.

You might say, well, wait a minute, Paul came along later, he was an apostle. Well, yeah, and he met him on the road to Damascus. It's like after his resurrection. They knew him.

You had to know Jesus. And he personally called and commissioned them to go and preach. They were first generation direct apostles of Christ.

Christ sent them personally. He personally called and commissioned them and sent them out to preach. These guys were the foundation of the church.

[30 : 43] In fact, in Ephesians chapter 2 verse 20, it says, the church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets and Christ is the chief cornerstone.

Cornerstones were important. If you didn't have a good cornerstone, the building wouldn't stand. And Jesus was the chief cornerstone.

According to Ephesians 3 5, the apostles had received direct revelation from the Lord. in fact, the New Testament was written by apostles or those associated with apostles.

I mean, the great Dr. Luke, one of the greatest historians that ever lived, although he was a physician. No evidence he ever saw Jesus, but he saw the men who saw Jesus.

So they were specially called and personally commissioned by Jesus himself. They were the foundation of the church because they laid the doctrinal foundation down.

[31 : 58] And their life of ministry was the first order of ministry in the church. They received direct revelation from God. They gave that revelation to us through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit on the pages of the New Testament.

They were also the source of the teaching of divine truth. The early church, according to Acts 2, the apostles doctrine, they studied the apostles doctrine.

They framed the doctrine of the church. Furthermore, they were examples of virtue. These guys were called holy apostles in Ephesians 3.5 and Revelation 18.20.

They were models of spiritual virtue. They were not sinless, by the way. Furthermore, they were able to confirm their teaching as true by signs and wonders and mighty deeds.

God gave them miracle power to attest to the validity of their ministry. That was a crucial thing.

[33 : 14] Why would you believe an apostle? They didn't have a New Testament to look up to see if what he said is true. It hadn't been completed yet.

If Peter came into town and he taught a lot of things, how are you going to figure out what he teaches and really the truth? How would you know that he represented God and Christ?

There might be ten teachers in town teaching ten different things. Kind of like we have today. you would know because they had the power to do the supernatural miracles.

God granted them certain signs and wonders and mighty deeds that belong to an apostle to attest to the validity of their teaching. Miracle power is to attest to the validity of a true teacher.

Now, in their generation, those things started passing away. After the Bible was complete, the New Testament, you didn't need those. If somebody comes into town and preaches a message, open up your New Testament to see whether or not what he's saying is true or not.

[34 : 32] We have Scripture now. I said to someone the other day, if all of the so-called teachers running around today who are supposedly doing signs and wonders were really able to do signs and wonders, then God would be busy authenticating false doctrine.

And he's not going to do that. Ever. God would not do that. If there were any people in this generation who had the ability to do signs and wonders and mighty deeds, they would be the truest, purest, most exacting teachers of the Word of God.

God. They would not be fly by night traveling salesmen, hawking religion and selling miracle power or handkerchiefs or water from the Jordan River.

These would be teachers of the Word of God. God. If God was attesting to anything, He would be attesting to the truest and purest representatives of His truth.

And so when someone comes along with an aberrant or an erroneous theology, why would God authenticate error? The apostles taught the truth and God confirmed it by signs and wonders.

[35 : 59] I heard Dr. MacArthur preaching one time. He said, God is not handing out miracles, miracle power to Paula White or Kenneth Copeland and he went down a whole list and Dr.

MacArthur said this 15 or so years ago, but he said, if God was giving any man in our generation that sort of power, he said, it wouldn't be me.

It wouldn't be R.C. Sproul. He said, I'll tell you who it'd be. I didn't know who he was going to say. He said, it'd be Billy Graham.

Not one shred or taint of error or anything amiss.

Every penny accounted for. Dr. Graham once said, I can't write a \$10 check on the Billy Graham Association. I have no access to the money. Now, Dr. Graham in his old age, got to give him a little leeway, he said a few things he'd probably like to take back now.

[37 : 17] But I don't buy into this. I see every now on the internet, Billy Graham's in hell now. I don't no more believe that than the man on the moon. I don't believe that.

He devoted his life to the gospel. Well, lastly, just discussing the apostles, they will be eternally honored.

They will be eternally rewarded. They have a very special place in eternity. I don't know if you remember this.

Years ago, we studied the book of Revelation, but on the wall of the city in the new Jerusalem in heaven, it had twelve foundation stones and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Well, Judas isn't on there. Who is? I don't know. Matthias, maybe? He got elected. Maybe Paul, he's sometimes referred to as the thirteenth apostle.

[38 : 16] I don't know. But these were unique men that God called through Christ to be special in that first generation to lay the foundation of the New Testament.

And Peter was their leader. By the way, the four gospels are full of things about Peter. And we can't begin to exhaust them.

here's a thought. The only person in the New Testament in the gospel record mentioned more than Peter is Jesus himself. And then Peter.

In that regard, he's kind of the second leading character. And sometimes he was quite a character. Just speaking generally about him, our Lord spoke more often to Peter than any of his other disciples.

Sometimes he spoke to him in praise and sometimes he spoke to him in blame. No disciple was so pointedly and directly reproved by our Lord as was Peter.

[39 : 29] And no disciple ever ventures to reprove his Lord but Peter. No disciple ever so boldly confessed and outspokenly acknowledged and encouraged our Lord as Peter.

Peter and he repeatedly did that and no one ever intruded and interfered and tempted the Lord as often as did Peter.

I used to say he's got foot and mouth. You know, he was always putting his foot in his mouth. So our Lord spoke words of approval and praise and blessing to Peter, the like of which was never spoken of any of the other apostles.

And at the same time and sometimes almost in the same breath, the Lord said harsher things to Peter than he ever said to the other twelve except Judas.

But you know what? We all love Peter. And why do we do that? We can identify with him. We can identify with him. He's so human.

[40 : 39] Now all the rest were human. It's just that we know so much about Peter that his humanness always comes through.

And he was well equipped to speak. So well equipped to be the author of this epistle. Because he was close to Christ, he was the leader of the twelve.

He always liked to talk. Sometimes you kind of wanted him to shut up, but he didn't do it. Now God wanted to build him into a leader because when the Lord Jesus left this world to go back to heaven, Peter was his hand selected key man.

And he was strong both physically, life of fishing and all fishermen, well, muscular, likes of fishermen, or used to be.

God was strong. But Peter was a key man. The first twelve chapters of Acts unfold, the early beginnings of the church, the main character is Peter.

[41 : 47] He's the driving force. So it was vital that the Lord shape him into a leader so that when he went back into heaven and the Spirit came and filled the life of Peter, he could be all that God wanted him to be.

And remember when that happened, Peter preached his first message and three thousand people got saved. And the church was being built. Now I'd like us just to get to know Peter by looking at his life and discerning how the Lord shaped him into a leader.

And the first thing that had to happen is he had to choose him. And we find in that first listing of the disciples in Matthew chapter 10, he summons his twelve and he lists them.

And you just need perhaps to touch that passage in your mind sometime because there he identifies the twelve and he begins by saying he's going to build a leader by first of all choosing him. It will be a man that the Lord will call to himself. And he chooses that man. And Christ specifically chose Peter.

[43 : 13] He chose Peter. And Jesus is the omnipotent God. He knew all the things Peter was going to do, good and bad. And when Peter told the Lord, I'm going to let you do that.

And what did Jesus say? He's behind me, Satan. Well, we're going to leave it there for tonight. Pick it up next week.