

An Introduction To 1 Peter

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Preacher: Tom Noteware

[0 : 00] And so we are going to take a step out of the Gospel of Luke and we are going to step into the New Testament book of 1 Peter.

And so we are going to take a step out of the Gospel of Luke.

And so we are going to clearly make our way through the book of 1 Peter. 1 Peter is basically, it's a letter that Peter wrote to Christians who were experiencing various kinds of persecution and whose stand for Christ made them feel like aliens and strangers in a world that's basically anti-God.

And I think that's something that all of us here today can relate to. Because it just seems to get a little more evident every day that the world is getting more and more hostile to God and hostile to the truth about Jesus Christ.

So in this letter, Peter encourages Christians to be steadfast in their endurance for Christ and to behave in a way that is beyond reproach.

[1 : 54] And like so many other places in Scripture, the instructions that he gives to his readers for that specific time, for those specific problems that they were facing, can be so helpful for all of us today in the situations that we face every day.

Did we ever tell the kids they could go? They went on their own.

They know. They're trained. We're a few slides behind. Sorry. And on this rock is the name of this series that we're starting.

First Peter. So Peter starts out his letter, obviously, with an introduction of himself.

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ. And we're going to spend our time today just kind of getting to know this man, Peter. We're not going to get too far into this letter today.

[3 : 13] We're going to take a look at some of the highlights of his time that he spent on earth with Jesus and also some of the lowlights, some of the bad times.

We'll also look at how and why he became qualified, so to speak, to write this letter.

Now, we know from Scripture that Peter's given name was Simon. But Jesus changed that for him during their very first encounter.

He changed that the first time that they met. In the Gospel of John, where John the Baptist was talking about Jesus calling his first disciples, we see this. The next day, again, John, John the Baptist, was standing with two of his disciples.

And he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, Behold, the Lamb of God. The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.

[4 : 24] Skip a few verses down to verse 40. One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother, Simon, and said to him.

He first found. First thing he did after he found Jesus was he went to find his brother to tell him. We have found the Messiah, which means Christ. He brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, You are Simon, the son of John. You shall be called Cephas, which means Peter. Now, the Greek translation of the Aramaic word Cephas is Petros.

And the word in both languages means rock or stone. And so Jesus' description of Peter's future strength actually became his personal name.

And it's interesting that he is the only man in the New Testament called Peter. He's kind of one of a kind. And notice that I said Peter's future strength, future strength of character.

[5 : 46] Because it isn't until much later that the strength actually shows itself. Even while Peter lived and breathed and walked and talked with Jesus here on earth, he struggled with some of the same things that you and I struggle with.

He struggled with fear. He struggled with doubt. He had a hard time keeping his mouth shut at times. He made rash decisions.

He had a hard time making sense of certain things that later would seem so obvious. Anybody here ever struggle with any of those things?

I know if I'm being honest, I have trouble with probably all of them at different times. And Peter struggled with these things just like we do.

But even though very early on, even though he believed, even though Peter believed very early on that Jesus was who he said he was, he still struggled with these things.

[6 : 59] And we saw this exchange several months ago when Pastor Rich was back in Luke chapter 5.

On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret.

Jesus was standing by the lake of Gennesaret. And he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets.

Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

So just try to picture this in your mind. It says the crowd was pressing in on him. And if he's standing by the shore, at least right at the water's edge, it's got to be pretty flat, I would think.

[8 : 05] So if you're in this crowd, if you even have one or two people in front of you, it's going to be pretty hard to see them. Right? So people are probably jockeying for position, you know, trying to see them.

And it's even harder if you're as short as I am. So people are trying to see them and probably talking, hey, move, you know. And so Jesus kind of commandeers Peter's boat.

And he says, hey, just shove us off a little ways, okay? Okay. So they drift out a little bit from shore. And I'm just kind of picturing that probably as they drift out a little bit, the crowd kind of comes up to the shore, you know, and fans out along the shore.

So it's like single file. And we know from being in a boat that sound probably travels a little farther, a little easier over water than over land, right?

So it says that he is teaching from the boat. But we know from the story that that's not all he's going to do, right?

[9 : 28] And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.

And I have to think right about this time that there's at least a little bit of a smile that's forming in the corner of his mouth because he knows what Peter's reaction is going to be here.

But, and Simon answered, Master, we toiled all night and took nothing.

But at your word, I will let down the nets. Now, good fishermen go fishing when the conditions are right.

And the right time to fish in this place at this time was not in the middle of the day when the sun was directly overhead. The best time to fish for what the disciples were fishing for was in the middle of the night.

[10 : 36] And that's what Peter and his buddies had already done. And they had caught nothing. So at this point, Peter's tired.

He's been up all night long. He's finally got the nets cleaned and put away. And he's probably not in the greatest mood. I mean, it says that they fished all night long and they caught nothing.

And he does this for a living, right? And no fish. Fish means no pay. Right, Kessel? No fish, no pay. But, you know, in Peter's mind, he knew they weren't going to catch any fish.

But for some reason, even though he knew that, he obeyed what the Lord told him to do. And we know what happens next.

And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish and their nets were breaking. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them.

[11 : 51] And they came and filled both the boats so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees saying, depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

And it seems like right off the bat, Peter kind of gets it.

Because he realizes two of the most important things that any human being on this earth needs to realize.

One is that Jesus is who he says he is. Jesus is the Son of God. And the second thing was that he was a sinful man.

We are all sinful. We all are in desperate need of a Savior. Passage goes on.

[13:09] For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken. And so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon.

And Jesus said to Simon, do not be afraid. From now on you will be catching men. Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.

And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him. Says he left everything and followed him.

They left everything right there on the shore. And, I mean, not an easy thing to do, right? To just walk away from your career.

From, you know, I'm sure there were family things going on. I mean, how do you explain that? How do you explain that to your wife? I mean, yeah, this guy showed up.

[14:10] We caught more fish than we've ever caught ever. At the time, you're never supposed to catch fish. I'm taking off. I'm going to follow him. But anyways, they did.

They left everything and followed him. Fast forward a little bit to a conversation that Jesus is having with the disciples probably maybe a year, year and a half.

He's having this conversation with the disciples after they've witnessed a whole lot more of the miracles that he's performed.

This is from the Gospel of Matthew. Now, when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, who do people say that the Son of Man is?

And they said, some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets. He said to them, but who do you say that I am?

[15:26] Okay, guys, I know. I know that's what people are saying. But I'm asking you. Who do you say that I am? And Peter boldly steps up with this confession, with the good confession that he is famous for.

Simon Peter replied, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered him, blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, Simon son of John.

For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. In other words, you didn't figure this out on your own.

God allowed you to realize it. And the fact that you realize it, just that fact in itself, it's a gift from God. And then Jesus kind of reiterates what he had said the first time that he and Peter met.

And I tell you, you are Peter. And on this rock, I will build my church. And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

[16:48] And it almost seems about right now that Peter might be kind of starting to live up to this name change that Jesus gave him.

I mean, you could, Jesus tells you this, you can almost kind of picture him, you know, kind of getting a little puffed up, you know. I mean, Jesus told him this in front of all the disciples.

So, I mean, Peter might be kind of starting to think a little higher of himself than he ought. But he's, we all know that he's got a lot of rough water, so to speak, that's on the horizon.

He still has some things ahead of him that he is not going to be very proud of and that will shake him to his core.

Some things that will show that in and of himself, Peter was probably just as human as all the rest of us. So, fast forward just a couple verses in Matthew.

[18:03] From that time, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised.

And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, far be it from you, Lord, this shall never happen to you. Peter's rebuking the Son of God.

But he turned, Jesus turned and said to Peter, get behind me, Satan, for you are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man. And Peter, right about now, has got to be saying, wait, what?

What, Lord? You just told me that I'm going to be the rock that you build your church on and that the gates of hell are not going to prevail against it.

[19:16] And now, you tell me this, and Peter, he goes right from the mountaintop to the pit just in one quick swoop.

But Jesus said this to him because Peter was trying to keep the Lord from dying because he didn't realize that was the primary reason that Jesus came into the world, to die, to pay the price for our sins.

The disciples can't quite seem to understand what Jesus is talking about, and they won't understand until after he's crucified and raised from the dead.

Jesus goes on.

This discipleship thing, this following me thing, it's going to cost you something. And then, shortly after that, Peter goes from the pit that he's fallen into to another mountaintop experience, quite literally.

[20 : 48] Because Jesus takes him to the transfiguration, just the very next chapter in Matthew. And after six days, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, his brother, James' brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.

And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.

And behold, there appeared to them, Moses and Elijah, talking with him, talking to Jesus.

And Peter said to Jesus, Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here. One for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. And it just, it makes me wonder if, like, I mean, Jesus is talking to Moses and to Elijah.

[22 : 00] And did Peter interrupt this conversation? I mean, I guess that might just be how my goofy mind works.

But, I mean, think about it. Was he that impulsive that he's going to interrupt that conversation? I don't know. Anyways, he was still speaking.

Peter was still speaking. When, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.

Listen to him. When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, Rise and have no fear.

And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. So, Jesus' inner circle, we'll call them, Peter, James, and John, they were eyewitnesses of this event.

[23 : 18] They saw Jesus in his transfigured glory, as the text says. They saw Moses and Elijah and witnessed Jesus talking to them.

They saw Jesus talking to a couple dead guys. And they heard the very voice of God from heaven confirm who Jesus was.

But then, as they're coming down the mountain, Jesus tells them something that has to seem so strange. And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.

And they had to be wondering, Why does he keep talking about dying? Because they just didn't understand yet the real reason that he'd come.

Some people had already tried to make Jesus king by force. And Jesus knew that if this occurrence got out, that people might try to do that again.

[24 : 32] And that would get in the way of what he truly came here to do. Anyways, fast forward again. Quite a ways.

To the upper room. Jesus is sharing the Passover supper with his disciples. The last supper, as it's known.

The night before he's crucified. And he says these words to Peter. Simon, Simon, behold.

And notice, he's not calling him Peter. He's not calling him the rock here. He's calling him by his old name for some reason. Simon, Simon.

Behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.

[25 : 40] Keep that little verse right there. Just burn it into your mind. We're going to see that again here. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.

Peter said to him, Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death. And Jesus said, I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day until you deny three times that you know me.

Just a little while after that. Jesus takes his inner circle, we'll call him, his three amigos with him again to the Garden of Gethsemane.

And he brings these three with him. And he tells them, I need you to pray with me.

I need you to watch out for me. I need you to keep watch while I pray. And this is, Jesus is basically agonizing because he knows what's coming.

[27 : 01] He knows that this is what he came for, but it's finally here. So he asks these guys to pray and to keep watch for him.

And he withdraws from them a ways to pray by himself. And a little while later, he comes back and he finds all three of them sleeping, not keeping watch, not praying, asleep.

He came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, so you could not watch with me one hour? And then Jesus withdraws again, it says.

That he went and was praying alone. One account of it says that this was the point where he was in such torment and such anguish that he sweated blood.

This was the point where he was praying to the Father, Lord, if it's possible, take this cup from me, but not my will, but your will be done.

[28 : 15] This is what's going through Jesus' mind. And he comes back a second time and they're sleeping again. All three of them.

And that time, he just leaves them. And he goes back again and he prays again. And when he returns the last time, this is what happens.

Then he came to the disciples and said to them, sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Jesus. Jesus, Jesus here is basically saying, OK, guys. This is it. Time to go. This is what I came here for.

And so Judas shows up with a bunch of soldiers and officers from the chief priests to arrest Jesus. And when they go to arrest Jesus, Peter, who just before that, who probably 10 minutes before that, was laying there snoring when Jesus had told him to keep watch.

[29 : 42] He couldn't keep his eyes open. Now, Peter does this. Oh, missed one.

Peter does this. Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear.

Servant's name was Malchus. So Jesus said to Peter, put your sword into its sheath. Shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?

So on the one hand, Peter can't stay awake while his Lord is agonizing in the garden. And on the other hand, he's going to kill somebody.

So, I mean, dude, which is it? OK, you're kind of all over the place here. And, you know, Peter's not that good of a swordsman that he could just reach out and, you know, take an ear.

[30 : 59] I mean, Peter was trying to kill the guy. He was trying to take his head off, right? But anyways, story goes on. And Jesus is led away.

He's taken to the house of the high priest and the disciples scatter. And we're told that Peter followed at a distance in the shadows, right?

And then this happens to poor Peter. And when they had kindled the fire, this is the probably some of the guards, some of the people that were gathering to see, hey, what's going to happen to this guy?

What's going to happen to this? And when they had kindled the fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them.

Then a servant girl. OK, not some big tough guy.

[32 : 19] Not the high priest, but a servant girl. Seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him said, this man was also with him.

But he denied it, saying, woman, I do not know him. And a little later, someone else saw him and said, you also are one of them.

But Peter said, man, I am not. And after an interval of about an hour, still another insisted, saying, certainly this man also was with him.

For he too is a Galilean. But Peter said, man, I do not know what you are talking about. And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed.

And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times.

[33 : 30] And he went out and wept bitterly, it says. And it makes me wonder if any Christian anywhere at any time was ever more ashamed of what they'd done than Peter is right now, right at that very moment.

Try to imagine how he had to feel when, I mean, he can probably still hear in the back of his mind. He can still hear what Jesus had said to him just a couple weeks earlier.

But it's not the end of the story, is it?

Thank goodness, it's not the end of the story. And because it's not the end of the story, it's another one of those beautiful examples in Scripture of how God chooses to use very imperfect people to carry out and to accomplish his perfect will.

And now we're going to compare Peter in the courtyard denying Jesus to Peter, who we see in the book of Acts, maybe as little as 45 or 50 days later, after Jesus has risen from the dead and ascended into heaven.

[35 : 11] So one day Peter and John were entering the temple to pray as a man lame from birth was being carried up to the steps where he could beg.

And he asked Peter and John for money. And, you know, I love this line that Peter basically tells him, silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give to you.

In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk. And he did. Instantly, completely and totally healed.

And as this guy jumped around and was praising God, Peter used it, perfect opportunity to preach. So he did just that. And it really ticked off the religious leaders. And they had Peter and John thrown in jail for it.

[36 : 28] And now we pick up the morning after. On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem with Annas, the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander and all who were of the high priestly family.

So all who were of the high, high priestly family. This is a top dogs here. So these are the guys that they took Jesus to the night before he was crucified.

And remember just probably 40 days before this? Peter couldn't stand up to these guys, little servant girl, even.

But something's changed. And when they had set them in the midst, when they had set Peter and John in the middle of everybody, they inquired, by what power or by what name did you do this?

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, and there it is. The reason that Peter is now the rock.

[37 : 51] After Jesus' resurrection and just before his ascension into heaven, he told the disciples this. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.

And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth. And the Holy Spirit will lead you into all truth.

The same Holy Spirit that indwells every believer the minute that you are saved. And now, led by the Holy Spirit, Peter boldly, confidently, powerfully speaks the truth.

No matter what it might end up costing him. And you can just picture it in his voice.

As he tells them. Rulers of the people and elders. If we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed.

[39 : 07] Let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by him, this man is standing before you well.

This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And this, this is kind of a little, he's actually quoting scripture to him here. This is from Psalm 118, verse 22. The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

And Peter drops it on him. And there is salvation in no one else.

For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. And there it is.

[40 : 21] Peter is now a changed man. Peter has become the rock that Jesus knew from the beginning of time that he would be.

The truth is, Jesus didn't give him the name Peter because of anything good that originated in Peter. He gave it to him because of what the Holy Spirit would eventually produce through him.

Now, when all of the big dogs, now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished.

And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. Lord, may that somehow be true of us as well.

Amen. May people recognize that we have been with Jesus. One last thing I want to look at before we wrap this up this morning.

[41 : 38] That verse that I told you to kind of burn into the back of your mind. Remember, just before Jesus told Peter that he was going to deny Jesus, he'd said this, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you that he might sift you like wheat.

But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.

Peter never forgot that command. And he took that to heart. And that's why we have this letter. That's why we have 1 Peter. He wrote it to strengthen his brothers. And the cool thing is that his brothers are also me and you.

And what he has to say in this letter is just as relevant, just as helpful, just as true today as it was when he wrote it over 2,000 years ago.

[42 : 52] And the next time that I'm here instead of back there, we'll start to unpack that letter a little bit.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for what you did at the cross, for imperfect, undeserving people like all of us here.

We thank you for the gift of your word as well that tells us about people like Peter. Lord, he is just one of so many examples throughout your word of how you choose to use imperfect people to carry out and to accomplish your perfect will.

Lord, we all have a past. We all have shame. We all have guilt. We all have any number of reasons and excuses to think that you couldn't use us.

We all have reasons to follow from a distance and hide in the shadows. But if we have trusted you for salvation, we also have the Holy Spirit residing inside of us, the same Holy Spirit that changed Peter.

[44 : 16] Lord, may we listen to you. May we be guided by your Holy Spirit every day of our lives.

May we live in a way that the people around us will take note that we have been with you. Lord, we love you.

We could never, ever thank you enough. It's in Jesus' name I pray. Amen. Amen.