

Strangers on the earth

Getting to grips with the message of 1 Peter

This first letter of Peter speaks right into the challenges Christians face in the western world in the 21st century.

Its aim is to encourage you as a believer, and to instruct you in how to live in such a way that you *“declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.”*

You can find the background to this short series [here](#).

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8. 1 Peter 4.12-19 [w/b Sunday 24th March 2019]

“.. the fiery ordeal ..”

Peter’s concern has been to help us, as followers of Jesus, to ‘declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light’ (2.9). He’s already explained how in both our *submitted* living (2.13-3.7) and our *selfless* living (3.8-4.11) we’re able to do just that.

In this section he now goes on to explain why, as followers of Jesus, our lives will be marked by *suffering* as well: moreover, our very suffering, like our submissiveness and our selflessness, serves to ‘declare the praises’ of God.

[Despite your best intentions, there may not be time for all the questions to be addressed in your Community Group! It may be helpful to try and ensure that in this study you cover questions 2, 4 and 6. As always try to leave good time for shared prayer!]

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1. Read 1 Peter 4.12-19. Before looking at the verses in detail, it’ll be helpful to read the whole of this passage and get a sense of the flow of Peter’s thought.

How would you summarise the message of these verses?

How do you handle it when the theme of suffering crops up in conversation with others?

2. Read 1 Peter 4.12. The apostles were no less ‘up front’ than Jesus had been in making it clear that following Him would be no bed of roses and that “*in this world you will have trouble.*”

What is the ‘fiery ordeal’ to which Peter is referring here?

Why are we not to be surprised by it?

In what sense does such a ‘fiery ordeal’ ‘test’ us?

3. Read 1 Peter 4.13. There’s no thought of our choosing to be a masochist or seeking to be a martyr: nonetheless, Peter exhorts his readers, we’re to rejoice in such sufferings.

What does Peter mean by saying that we “*participate in the sufferings of Christ*”?

This sounds fine in theory - until you are suffering! What have you found helps you to remain joyful in and through times of suffering?

4. Read 1 Peter 4.14. It’s not only *joy* that we may know in the midst of suffering, but *blessing* as well: Peter adds a further paradox to the experience of suffering!

What blessedness is there in being insulted because of the name of Christ?

Why do you think Peter makes reference here to the 'Spirit of glory and of God' resting on believers?

5. Read 1 Peter 4.15-16. Peter draws a clear distinction between suffering in consequence of sin, and suffering which flows from our following Jesus.

What sort of suffering might Peter be envisaging as likely to result from sinful conduct?

What sort of suffering might we expect today in our society as a result of our being a Christian?

6. Read 1 Peter 4.17-18. *"God will begin the process of judging humanity with His own people, to see which are truly Christ's"* [Karen Jobes]. The focus here moves on from the experience of the individual Christian to that of the church more corporately

What does Peter mean by saying that *'it is time for judgment to begin with God's household'*?

If Jesus has already secured salvation for us, why (or in what sense) is it *'hard for the righteous to be saved'*?

7. Read 1 Peter 4.19. A right perspective on suffering affects the way we respond to situations: Peter rounds off this section with a practical application.

Why is it so important in the face of our suffering to *'continue to do good'*?

Why do you think Peter speaks of God here as *'their faithful Creator'*?

How does our suffering according to God's will serve to *'declare the praises'* of God (see 2.9)?