

**1<sup>ST</sup> & 2<sup>ND</sup> PETER**  
**STUDY GUIDE**  
**LESSON EIGHT – 1 PETER 4:12-5:5**

*Linda Pringle*

Peter's letter prepared the Christian church for many kinds of persecution, from slander to death. Even before Christ was beaten and crucified at the hands of the Romans, by the urging of the Jewish leaders, persecution of believers had already begun with the beheading of John the Baptist by Herod (Matthew 14). After the death and resurrection of Christ, Stephen was stoned to death by a Jewish mob while Saul, who later became the apostle Paul, looked on with hearty agreement (Acts 7). Because of Stephen's death, great persecution of the church began in Jerusalem and Christians were forced to scatter throughout Judea and Samaria. Fox's Book of Martyrs suggests that two thousand Christians were killed during this uprising. Acts 12:1-2 tells us that Herod put James, the brother of John, to death by the sword. James, the brother of our Lord, was murdered at the temple in Jerusalem by the Sadducean high priest, Ananus, around the same time that 1 Peter was written. The first century church understood the risks of standing for their faith.

Today, Christians living in the USA and many other countries can lead quiet lives, getting along with most everyone. But outspoken Christians, who look for ways to share their faith, are often seen as troublemakers. As we've seen in previous studies, we need to stand for righteousness politically, at work, in our families, and with our acquaintances. Being outspoken doesn't mean being obnoxious or "holier than thou," needing to prove the truth. A good witness is one who has love and wisdom, *"always ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence."* (1 Peter 3:15b)

**Read 1 Peter 4:12-14**

- 1) This passage of scripture becomes more meaningful when you remember the difficult times in which Peter wrote. Knowing what fellow believers went through to establish the Gospel should give us courage to share our faith today even though we may take heat for it. Verse 12 talks about fiery trials. The Greek word actually means ignition or smelting to refine. Why does God allow fiery trials (verse 12)?
  
- 2) Look back at 1 Peter 1:6-7. What is the purpose of trials according to this passage? What is the result of being tested? If you like, look back at the note in Lesson 1 on page 5 for definitions of three important words used in this passage.
  
- 3) Read John 15:18-19. What truth does Jesus convey?

Note: Persecution makes the church stronger. Persecution makes individual Christians stronger. Many godly characteristics can only be developed in us through trials. We cannot learn godly, sacrificial love when we are surrounded by people who love us. We can only learn sacrificial love when people hate, mock, or sin against us in some way and yet we love them anyway. We cannot learn godly peace when life is always happy. We learn true peace and contentment when we face hardships and yet trust in God's goodness. When we genuinely love people who turn around and mistreat us, we relate to the suffering of our Lord in a small way. Instead of becoming angry and defensive, we are filled with compassion and we see the situation from an eternal perspective.

- 4) From verse 14, why are we blessed when we are reviled for the name of Christ?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 5) For an Old Testament example of the glory of God read Exodus 40:34-35. Then read Acts 6:15 and Acts 7:54-59. From Acts 7:55, what was Stephen full of? What did Stephen see?

Note: Be comforted to know that if it is God's will for you to suffer, His Spirit will rest upon you and give you the strength and peace to endure it.

**Read 1 Peter 4:15-19**

- 1) There are different types of suffering. Verse 15 speaks of suffering as a sinner while verse 16 says we suffer as a Christian. Name other kinds of trials we suffer through.
  - a) If you are in any kind of trial right now, name the trial and describe how you can glorify God's goodness through it.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) Have you ever been ashamed of being a Christian (i.e. you didn't really want someone to know or you wanted to avoid talking about it)? Why?

3) From verse 17, where does judgment begin?

Note: The judgment spoken of in verse 17 is not the judgment of God's wrath. Peter is referring to the fiery trials or difficulties that God allows into our lives. In other words, if Christians have as many problems as this on earth, can you imagine what the wrath of God will be like to those who reject Him? Verse 18 is a quote taken from Proverbs 11:31, "*If the righteous receive their due on earth, how much more the ungodly and the sinner!*" (NIV)

4) Read 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9. Who will God repay? Write down the words or phrases that describe what this repayment will be like.

Note: Think back to the idea that trials begin with the house of God. If every Christian got every prayer answered with a positive outcome producing wealth, health, and stress-free living, unbelievers would want to become Christians so they could have a happy life as well. That would only feed our self-centered sinful nature. However, when unbelievers see a Christian going through a trial with joy and peace as they glorify God, the focus is not on self but on a trustworthy Savior.

God does not want fair-weather friends who only come to Him for what they can get out of Him. God is not worthy of my praise because of what He can do for me. He is worthy of my praise simply because He is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty! (Rev 1:8 and Rev 22:13)

5) The word entrust (or commit) in verse 19 is a banking term meaning deposit into a trust. When we deposit our souls into God's bank we can trust that He has an eternal plan that is good. How is God described in this verse? How does this comfort you?

6) What should we continue to do even if we are suffering according to the will of God?

7) Read Philippians 1:21-25. Paul is hard-pressed between two desires. What are they?

- a) What is the desire of your life? Do you live with a passion to further the kingdom of God? Do you look for opportunities to share the Gospel with others? Do you always “play it safe” when witnessing so that you don’t take any heat? If you feel led by the Holy Spirit, write a prayer asking God to give you compassion for sinners and then opportunities to share the Good News!

**Read 1 Peter 5:1-3**

Note: Peter’s letter has touched on many aspects of our lives, showing us how to bring hope to our little corner of the world. He touched on how to be a light in our government, our places of employment, our marriages, and even our former social life. Finally, he now turns to our church life.

- 1) From verse 1, even though Peter was one of Jesus’ closest disciples, how does he indentify himself with the elders he is writing to?
  
- 2) The church in the first century was coming under all kinds of persecution. Why do you think it was necessary to have strong leadership who would shepherd the sheep within each church unit?
  
- 3) As Peter wrote verses 2-3 he probably remembered Jesus’ instructions to him in John 21:15-17. Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved Him. Each time Peter declared his love, Jesus told him to take care of His sheep. From 1 Peter 5:2-3, list the phrases that show selfish motives in leadership. Then list the phrases that show loving motives in leadership.

Selfish Motives	Loving Motives

**Read 1 Peter 5:4-5**

1) Jesus is the Chief Shepherd and an example of good leadership. Read John 10:11-15. Using this passage as inspiration, describe a good leader in your own words.

2) From verse 4, what will elders receive as a result of exercising oversight in a church?

Note: There are several crowns mentioned in the New Testament. The crown (or garland in the Greek) is described in figurative language. The chart below shows believer' crowns (from *Dr. Constable's Notes on 1 Peter 2010 Edition*). As you look this over, remember that Jesus received a crown of thorns for you.

<b>BELIEVERS' CROWNS</b>		
<b>Title Reference</b>	<b>Reason</b>	<b>Reference</b>
An Imperishable Crown	For leading a disciplined life	1 Corinthians 9:25
A Crown of Rejoicing	For evangelism and discipleship	1 Thessalonians 2:19
A Crown of Righteousness	For loving the Lord's appearing	2 Timothy 4:8
A Crown of Life	For enduring trials	James 1:12; Rev. 2:10
A Crown of Glory	For shepherding God's flock faithfully	1 Peter 5:4

3) God's design for social institutions is to have loving people responsible to lead and serve. Those who are not in leadership need to respect those whom God has placed in authority. From verse 5, what are the younger people to do?

4) What are all of us, both elders and the flock, to be clothed in?

5) A humble person is one who doesn't need to be seen as important. Why is humility an important trait of a leader? Why is it an important trait of a follower?

