

Study Guide for the week of Dec. 27 - Jan. 2

The next few Sundays we will be spending time in the book of First Peter. In preparation for these services we have put together an outline to help you familiarize yourself with this book and be able to come to the message on Sunday with your heart and mind ready to interact with the Scriptures. Our regular TELOS studies (for those of you who subscribe) will continue on Sunday Jan. 9.

Background to 1 Peter:

"The letter is addressed to Christians north of the Taurus mountains in present day Turkey. The order in which the five Roman provinces are named (see 1:1) may well indicate the route taken by the one carrying the message; this was probably Silas (5:12). The readers Peter had in mind seem to have been a mixed group, though mainly Gentile Christians, for he refers to their pre-conversion days in terms of ignorance of the true God (1:14), their earlier way of life (1:18), previous spiritual darkness (2:9) and pagan vices (4:3-4). The readership includes slaves (2:18) and also those who enjoyed the rights of citizens (2:13-17). Peter's use of Old Testament quotations and language likely indicates that there were Jewish Christians among his readers as well.

Peter's emphasis throughout the letter is on hope as believers scattered throughout a wide area of Asia Minor (1:1) face suffering and persecution on account of their Christian faith. As a consequence of their new spiritual life in Christ (1:3, 23), believers belong to God, and as such they can count on His power to overcome their present trials and tribulations (1:5, 4:14). Ahead of them is a divinely prepared inheritance (1:4), a life of joy and light in the glorious presence of Christ (1:7, 5:10)." (introductory notes adapted from New International Biblical Commentary: 1 and 2 Peter, Jude by Norman Hillyer)

Monday: Read through the entire book of 1 Peter today - it only takes a few minutes. Keep a pen and paper handy and jot down what stands out to you on first reading.

Tuesday: Read through 1 Peter again, this time marking instances of the words "joy" and "grace" and "glory" perhaps in red and the word "suffering" in black. What is Peter trying to teach us about the connection between joy and glory and suffering?

Wednesday: Read 1 Peter 1 in a different translation. Now go back and concentrate on Peter's greeting in 1:1-2. Notice the words that Peter uses to describe these believers: "God's elect" "strangers in the world" "scattered" "chosen" - what does that tell you about these people, their circumstances, and how God views them? Meditate on verse 2 - what does this tell you about what God is doing in their lives and what his desires are for them? Why would they be in need of grace and peace?

Thursday: Read 1 Peter 1:3-12. What is Peter's perspective on trials (v.6-7)? Note how each Person of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) is at work in our lives. What basis for a living hope does Peter give his readers? How does salvation become ours (v.8-12)? Spend some time today praying for those undergoing trials and praising God for His salvation.

Friday: Read 1 Peter 1:13-21. From the five commands Peter gives in verses 13-15, how would you define "holy"? What reasons does Peter give for his commands (v.17-21)? How can those reasons move us to obey? How does Peter's call to holiness challenge you in your life at home? Work? Community? Church? In times of stress, what helps you to "set your hope fully on the grace of God" rather than to rely on your own wits to solve the problem?