**ENGAGE! (A Study in 1 Peter)**

 **LIVING AND PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL IN TODAY’S MORAL, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL CLIMATE.**

**Week 2: A Basic Introduction to 1 Peter (and the Christian life!)**

***Introductory Remarks:***

***Basic Data on 1 Peter:***

* **Author:** The apostle Peter; possibly written with the assistance of Silas/Silvanus (5:12) although the reference to Silvanus may simply mean he carried the letter to the churches.
* **Date:** Probably written in A.D. 62-63 (although many date it around A.D. 64-65) from Rome (“She who is at Babylon” 5:13 – almost certainly a reference the church in Rome; also see Revelation 17-18). These dates seem to fit best in a timeframe when Peter would have been in Rome and leaving time for Peter to write 2 Peter before his martyrdom in Rome which is traditionally dated around A.D. 64. The writing of the book would then have been completed before the most heinous parts of the persecution of Christians under Nero (who reigned A.D. 54-68).
* **Recipients:** Christians who lived in Asia Minor in the five regions of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. While some have suggested that those addressed were primarily Jews and not Gentiles, Peter refers to his readers in ways that strongly suggest that these Christians were primarily—but not necessarily exclusively (Acts 2:9)--from a Gentile background (i.e. 1:18; 2:10; 4:3; also Romans 9:24-25; Ephesians 2:11-12). What Peter does is to apply the covenant language of the Old Testament to these Christians in a way that emphasizes their inclusion in the people of God and all that goes along with that blessing.
* **Occasion/Purpose:**

*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia…She who is in Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings…* (1:1; 5:13)

*Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.* (4:19)

*By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.* (5:12)

“The Christians of Asia Minor were facing troubling times. Because of their faith in Christ, they were being persecuted through social ostracism. Slander and malicious talk undermined their relationships with associates and family, threatened their honor in the community, and possible jeopardized their livelihood. The issues of how to maintain a vital Christian faith in such circumstances and how to respond to such unjust treatment pressed upon them. Peter writes to give these Christians hope, consolation, and encouragement by explaining their identity in Christ and how even suffering is an integral part of that identity. In his opening salutation the apostle uses terms that describe the Christian’s relationship to God, to society, and to God’s historic people, ancient Israel.” (Karen Jobes, *1 Peter,* Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament – BECNT)

***Suffering and Persecution in 1 Peter:***

* *In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.* (1:6-7)
* *Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.* (2:11-12)
* *Servants be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. 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. 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.* (2:18-23)
* *Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct.* (3:1-2)
* *Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.* (3:8-9)
* *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. 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, have 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. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit…* (3:13-18)
* *Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.* (4:1-6)
* *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. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And “If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and sinner?” Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.* (4:12-19)
* *Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Be sober-minded, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. 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. To him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.* (5:6-11)