

THE GENERAL EPISTLE TO JAMES

The Proofs of Faith

Introduction:

James records the doctrinal and practical truths that are generally aimed at the Jews of the last days (1:1; 5:3). The religious basis of the letter is the religion of Judaism. The words religion and religious occur three times in the letter of their seven occurrences throughout the Bible.

The law of the Mosaic Covenant is quoted and some similarities to the Sermon on the Mount are evident. Christians may receive spiritual instructions from the letter, but the Epistles of the Apostle Paul provide the doctrinal standard for the Body of Christ.

The Epistle of James gives insights into the trials and tribulations of the Hebrews as they will be scattered throughout the world during the Tribulation (Deuteronomy 28:64; Isaiah 11:11-12; Zechariah 7:14; James 1:1; Revelation 7:4-8).

Statistics: 5 Chapters, 108 verses, and 2,304 words

Author:

In the New Testament there are four men named James who enter the discussion about the authorship of this epistle.

First, there is James, the father of Judas (not Iscariot), mentioned twice (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13). He is usually eliminated because he is unknown apart from these references.

Second is James, the son of Alphaeus (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; 15:40; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13) who does not appear to be the authoritative figure behind the epistle since he is only named when the apostles are listed.

Third is James, the son of Zebedee and the brother of John (Matt. 4:21; 10:2; 17:1; Mark 3:17; 10:35; 13:3; Luke 9:24; Acts 1:13). Though he was one of Jesus' inner circle of three, he was martyred too early (about A.D. 44) to be a likely candidate.

The fourth choice is best. This is James, the Lord's brother (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3; Gal. 1:19), who was a leader in the church at Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; 15:13-21; 21:18; Gal. 2:9,12). Support for this view is abundant.

Tradition favors the Lord's brother as does the evidence of Scripture. Many have noticed the similarities between the language of the epistle and James' speech in Acts 15:23-29.

THE GENERAL EPISTLE TO JAMES

The author also shows familiarity with the sayings of Jesus which are not quoted but appear as part of the author's consciousness.

Moreover, James had the unquestionable authority and reputation among the early church (Cf. Jude 1). Objectors claim the Greek of the epistle is too polished for a Galilean such as he, but there is no reason why James could not have learned and become proficient in this universal language. The external and internal evidence thus favors James decisively.

The Date and Place:

James was martyred about A.D. 62, so the epistle was written before this event. Furthermore, it was probably written before the Jerusalem Council in A.D. 49 because there is no hint of the controversy over Gentiles and circumcision. This would set the date at about A.D. 44-48 making this the earliest epistle.

Other support for the early date comes from the lack of distinctive Christian phraseology and theology, the mention of a "synagogue" as the assembly place for Christians (2:2), the slight line between Judaism and Christianity, the lack of mention of Gentiles, and the allusions to Christ's teachings instead of quotes which may indicate it was written before the Gospels. Jerusalem seems to be the fixed residence of James, the Lord's brother (Acts 15:2ff.; Galatians 2:1,9), and is thus the most likely place of writing.

The Destination:

James addresses "the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad" (1:1). This is better understood as a reference to early Jewish Christians and not as a metaphor for the church in general. Jewish Christians were scattered early from Jerusalem because of persecution (Acts 8:1).

The epistle is full of Jewish symbolism and flavor. There is the reference to their meeting place as a "synagogue" (2:2), the significant argument from monotheism (2:19), the reference to Abraham as "our father" (2:21), much mention of the law, the use of a Hebrew title "Lord of Sabaoth" (5:4), and the mention of Jewish oaths (5:12).

The epistle was designed as an encyclical letter to the Hebrew Christians scattered outside of Jerusalem. It cannot be proved whether these lived in the eastern regions as some conjecture.

The Occasion:

THE GENERAL EPISTLE TO JAMES

James was prompted to write upon his discovery of many unsatisfactory conditions in the Jewish-Christian congregations scattered around Palestine. They were undergoing various trials (1:2), many of which were social injustices due to their displacement (1:9-10; 2:6-7; 5:4).

The readers were not bearing up under these trials, but demonstrated lack of faith. They were discriminating against poorer Christians (2:1-4), neglecting good works (2:14-16), misusing the tongue (3:1-18), fighting (4:1-3), given to worldliness (4:4) and boasting in materialism (4:13-5:6). As a leader of the church, James had a great pastoral concern for these Christians and wrote this letter to call them to a life of faith in trials.

The Purpose:

The epistle has a very practical purpose. James wrote to encourage and exhort these Christians to a life of maturity through faith and endurance in trials. Their professed faith was not visibly operative in their lives.

James shows how a life of faith should be manifested in many different areas of life. He begins with faith in trials (1:2-12), continues with faith in temptations (1:13-18), faith in response to the Word (1:21-27), faith in the midst of discrimination (2:1-13), faith displayed in works (2:14-26), faith in self-control and use of the tongue (3:1-18), faith in relation to the world (4:1-5:12) and faith in prayer (5:13-18).

James shows how faith in these various areas of life is true religion and the righteousness required by God.

Argument:

The introduction (1:1-20) indicates that the author is well known to his readers who are scattered away from their homes and into strange lands (1:1). This dispersion would create obvious financial and social disadvantages and problems for the readers. James begins his instruction by presenting the theme for his letter which is the believer's response to these tests of faith (1:2-20). He first discusses their attitudes toward trials (1:2-12).

The proper attitude (1:24) should be one of joy which produces patience and results in maturity for the Christian. The believer also has recourse to prayer for wisdom in trials, but this prayer must reflect faith (1:5-8). James realizes there are different perspectives in trials often determined by one's economic and social status (1:9-12). Riches are no reason to exult in trials. Only the one who perseveres in faith will be rewarded (1:12).

THE GENERAL EPISTLE TO JAMES

Trials occur when circumstances force a person to make a decision between serving self or obeying God. James has argued that God allows these trials to help believers mature. But when these circumstances include temptations to evil, a person could conclude that God has sent these, too. Thus, James answers this misconception with a discussion of the believer's attitude toward temptations (1:13-18). He declares that God is not the source of temptation; they come from lusts within.

At the end of this introductory section James sets forth the theme of the epistle (1:19-20). The believer's response to trials should evidence the behavior of faith which is obedience, self-control and humility that does not easily anger (1:19).

This response of faith produces the righteousness of God (1:20). The thematic verse 19 also serves as a key to the outline of the epistle: Obedience to the Word (1:21-2:26), self-control evidenced through use of the tongue (3:1-18) and humility in response to conflicts with the world (4:1-5:6).

James begins addressing the specific areas of trials with a discussion of the believer's response in hearing the Word of God (1:21-2:26). The believer should respond with obedience (1:21-27).

This means there must be an attitude of receptivity which goes beyond mere hearing to actual doing. James offers some tests to measure true obedience: the control of the tongue, the visitation of needy orphans and widows and moral separation from the world (1:26-27).

He further applies this teaching to an area of weakness with his readers. He uses the example of their practice of partiality to illustrate disobedience to God's law (2:1-13). He first rebukes them for showing favoritism in public meetings to those who are rich (2:1-4).

The result of such partiality was that it displayed inconsistency with God's treatment of the poor and the wealthy's treatment of the readers (2:5-7). God has honored the poor by making them rich in faith, whereas the wealthy have dishonored the readers through oppression.

Moreover, favoritism violates the law of love, the essence of God's law, and makes them guilty as lawbreakers (2:8-11). The author's appeal is for them to demonstrate their faith by living according to the law of love (2:12-13).

THE GENERAL EPISTLE TO JAMES

If one is living according to love instead of mere intellectual assent to the creeds of the faith, then faith and obedience will be demonstrated through works (2:14-26). James declares that this kind of creedal faith is useless and dead without works (2:14-17).

The relationship of faith to works is then worked out in an imaginary dialogue with an objector (2:18-25). The objector asserts that faith and works have no inherent relationship (2:18-19). The demons have a faith which causes them to tremble, but do nothing more (2:19).

To this James responds with a vigorous refutation (2:20-25). He argues that the essentiality of works to faith is illustrated in Abraham's obedience to God (2:21-24).

Abraham's offer of Isaac "justified," or proved to be true, his faith proclaimed in Genesis 15:6. Rahab is offered as a similar example (2:25). James's conclusion is that faith without works is as useless as a body without the animating spirit (2:26). This argument concludes the section demonstrating faith and obedience as the proper response to the Word of God.

Another way that faith can be demonstrated in the believer's life is by self-control in the area of the tongue (3:1-18). James expounds the difficulty in controlling the use of the tongue (3:1-12). It is a problem, especially for those who are teachers (3:1-2). Thus, potential teachers must take this into consideration since they face a stricter judgment (3:1).

James then illustrates the importance of the tongue with comparisons to familiar things under the control of a small unit (3:3-6). His conclusion that the tongue is naturally uncontrollable (3:7-8) implies the necessity of divine help. The undesirability of an uncontrolled tongue is demonstrated by its inconsistency with a Christian's profession (3:9-12). (See also Psalm 5:9a, 40:3, 10:7; Romans 3:13-15).

The solution to control of the tongue hinted at in 3:7-8 is divulged in the paragraph about different kinds of wisdom available in use of the tongue (3:13-18). The wrong kind of wisdom comes from evil sources and produces envy, self-seeking, boasting, lying, and confusion (3:14-16). The desirable wisdom comes from above and results in fruits of righteousness (3:17-18).

The discussion of the believer's control of the tongue shows the necessity of divine assistance. James has already shown that this divine help comes in the form of wisdom (1:5; 3:17) obtained through the prayer of faith (1:6-8). Therefore, the way to handle

THE GENERAL EPISTLE TO JAMES

trials of self-control and the tongue is by faith. This will produce the righteousness which pleases God (3:17-18).

James now discusses a third major area of trials in the believer's response to conflicts with the world (4:1-5:6). He begins by identifying the cause of these conflicts as worldliness (4:1-5). The worldly attitude of the readers is seen in their quarrels with one another which are motivated by their selfish desires (4:1-3).

James rebukes such an attitude as worldly and antagonistic toward God (4:4-5). The cure for this attitude of worldly contention is humility (4:6-5:6). Humility should be demonstrated first by submission to God (4:6-10). It can also be displayed by a non-judgmental stance when speaking of others (4:11-12).

Another area for humility to be expressed is in making plans for the future (4:13-17). All plans should be submitted to God because man is limited by finite knowledge and brevity of life. Finally, humility needs to be displayed by the rich, because riches are uncertain and judgment for their indulgent and oppressive lifestyles is imminent (5:1-6).

James has shown that conflict with the world can be resolved by an attitude of humility. Humility is an expression of faith in that it submits to God and trusts Him to provide grace and exaltation for the believer (4:6,10).

James's conclusion (5:7-20) is as long as his introduction. The first half is an encouragement to be patient in trials in hope of the Lord's return (5:7-12). By way of exhortation he assures them their faith and patience will be rewarded (5:7-8). Moreover, they should not grow impatient and resort to disputing among themselves (5:9).

As examples, James holds up the patient suffering of the prophets and Job (5:10-11). In view of the return of the Judge, all dealings should be in accord with sincerity and truthfulness (5:12). James has again appealed for a response of faith in trials expressed now by an exhortation to patience in hope of the Lord's return.

The ultimate and most practical expression of faith in trials is the believer's resource of prayer (5:13-18). James closes his letter with an appeal for prayer in various circumstances. It should be used in emotional extremes (5:13) and in helping the sick (5:14-16a). The example of Elijah shows that earnest prayer produces concrete results (5:16b-18).

The implication of the final admonition is that prayer must be the resource used to restore those who wander from the truth into sin (5:19-20). As emphasized in the introduction,

THE GENERAL EPISTLE TO JAMES

prayer should be the Christian's first resort when facing trials (1:5). It is by its very nature an exercise of faith.

The epistle of James is designed to encourage such faith in the midst of trying circumstances. The problems of the readers can be resolved only as they, in faith, obey the Word of God, demonstrate self-control by appropriating God's wisdom and humble themselves during conflicts with the world. This will cause them to grow in maturity and to live the kind of righteous lives that God desires.

THE GENERAL EPISTLE TO JAMES

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. James records the _____ and _____ truths that are generally aimed at the _____ of the last days.

2. James was martyred in what year? _____

3. James addresses “_____ which are scattered abroad.”

4. _____ yourselves therefore to _____ the devil, and he will flee from you.

5. Knowing this, that the _____ of your faith worketh _____

6. If any man lack _____, let him as of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it _____ be given him.

7. _____ your faults one to another, and _____ one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a _____ man availeth much.

THE FIRST GENERAL EPISTLE TO PETER

Christ Our Hope and Example Amidst Trial

Introduction:

First Peter is generally written to the scattered Gentiles of the last days (1:1, 20), but the Jews and Christians are also addressed (2:9-12; 4:16). As James addressed the scattered tribes of Israel so Peter addressed the suffering Gentiles (Revelation 7:4-17).

The signal to run and scatter will be the abomination of desolation by the Antichrist (Mathew 24:13-21). The suffering of the believer in Christ is the main theme of the epistle as all godly and faithful believers suffer for the Lord (Luke 6:22; 1 Corinthians 2:2; 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 2:21-25).

Peter was given a special place of leadership in the early church, but the Lord Jesus is the Rock or foundation of the church (Mathew 6:18). This truth is confirmed by Paul and Peter under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost (1 Corinthians 3:11; 10:4; 1 Peter 2:6-8).

Peter was the first to speak to the Jews and the Gentiles about faith after Calvary (Acts 2 and 10). Peter wrote of the glorious salvation in Christ and the need for spiritual growth in grace. The most vital tool for growth is the Scriptures (1:23-25; 2:2; 3:15; 4:11; 5:2).

The powers to endure and to overcome trials and tribulations are an unfeigned faith in the Scriptures and the spirit of grace in the Holy Ghost (Zechariah 12:10; Colossians 2:6-7; 1 Timothy 1:5; 1 Peter 4:14; 5:10). Suffering for the Lord rewards in eternity (Matthew 5:10-12; Luke 6:22-23; Romans 8:17; 2 Timothy 2:12).

Statistics: 5 Chapters, 105 verses, and 2,476 words

Author:

The author identifies himself as the apostle Peter (1:1) and an eyewitness to Christ's ministry (1:8; 2:23; 5:1). The early church accepted this testimony and it is validated by other evidence.

First, there are strong parallels between expressions in the epistle and Petrine sermons in Acts (Cf. 1:20 and Acts 2:23; 2:7-8 and Acts 4:10-11; 4:5 and Acts 10:42). Also, Peter was fond of referring to the cross of Christ with the Greek word *xylon* or "tree" (2:24; Acts 5:30; 10:39).

Furthermore, Peter is the only New Testament writer to refer to church elders as "shepherds" (5:2), terminology used only by Christ in His commissioning of Peter (John 21:16).

THE FIRST GENERAL EPISTLE TO PETER

This evidence should overwhelm any objections to the authenticity of the letter. Still, some critics have questioned Petrine authorship on the claim that the Greek used is too polished for an unschooled fisherman from Galilee (Acts 4:13).

But the reference in Acts 4 is to laymen or men untrained in rabbinic tradition, not to illiteracy. Peter's widespread travels show he must have been proficient in the common languages. Besides, others like Matthew, Mark and James wrote skillfully in Greek though they resided in Palestine.

Finally, Peter's Greek went through a secretary, Silvanus (or Silas, 5:12), who was himself a Roman citizen (Acts 16:36-37) who traveled much with the apostles. Therefore, evidence remains on the side of Peter as author.

Peter is a prominent personality in the gospels and Acts. The Galilean fisherman was an early follower of Jesus Who changed his name from Simon to "Cephas", or "Peter", a Stone (John 1:40-42). Peter played a central role in the early spread of Christianity and was a leader of the early church.

He was designated the apostle to the Jews (Gal. 2:9), but also ministered to Gentiles being the first to preach the gospel to them (Acts 10:34-48; Gal. 2:12). Peter fades off the record of Acts after the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), though a reference in 1 Corinthians 9:5 mentions him as one who traveled with his wife.

Tradition says he ministered in Rome for the last decade of his life and was martyred there by upside down crucifixion under Nero in A.D. 67. Jesus had alluded to his violent death in John 21:18-19.

The Date and Place:

Peter had to write the epistle before the death of Nero in A.D. 68 if tradition is correct that he was martyred under him. The most likely date is at the outbreak of the Neronian persecution in A.D. 64 or shortly before.

The suffering of the Christian readers has not been underway for long and more appears imminent (1:6, 4:12,17-19; 5:9). There is no indication in the epistle that any had actually suffered martyrdom. Rather, there is a growing and widespread hatred of Christians (3:15-16; 4:4; 5:9).

The place of origin is designated "in Babylon." Some who take this literally claim Peter wrote from the city of Babylon in Mesopotamia. This view was popularized during the

THE FIRST GENERAL EPISTLE TO PETER

Reformation as a probable Protestant polemic against Papal claims. But there were few Jews in the small city of Peter's time and no record of a church there.

Most believe that "Babylon" is a cryptic reference to Rome as the central city of power, vice, and idolatry. Besides, the tone of 5:13 is highly figurative: Peter refers to Mark as "my son" and the Christian community as "she who is in Babylon".

Furthermore, Peter's companion, Mark (5:13), was in Rome during part of Paul's imprisonment (Colossians 4:10). Tradition has always supported Rome as the place of writing in as much as it was Peter's last residence.

The Destination:

Peter writes to "the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (1:1) and generally, to "all who are in Christ Jesus" (5:14). The letter is intended for circulation among these Christians scattered throughout the Roman province of Asia Minor.

That they are organized churches is indicated by the directions in 5:1-4 to elders. The readers are made up of Jews and Gentiles. Jewish readers would identify with the term in the address "Dispersion", or "diaspora", from their past dispersion. Peter's comment about appropriate conduct "among the Gentiles" (2:12) also speaks to Jews.

It is not surprising that Peter, the apostle to the Jews, should write to Jews. But the majority of the readers appear to be Gentiles. They had a former ignorance of Christ (1:14) and once "were not a people" of God, but now are a "chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people" (2:9-10).

Their behavior is now different from what characterized their past as Gentiles (4:3-4). The general thrust of the letter, however, does not distinguish between Jew and Gentile, but rather is to "all who are in Christ Jesus" (5:14).

The Occasion:

Peter has learned of the growing opposition and some persecution of Christians in Asia Minor. His letter is a response to these Christians who need encouragement and pastoral guidance in how they should conduct themselves in hostile circumstances.

Peter refers to their trials in a general way (1:6; 3:13-17; 4:12-11,16-19; 5:9-10), but also notes some specific areas of attack. It seems the readers were being accused of disloyalty

THE FIRST GENERAL EPISTLE TO PETER

to their government (2:13-17), were slandered because of refusal to join in wicked behavior (4:3-4) and were reproached for their identity as Christians (4:14-15).

There is no hint of bloodshed or martyrdom, but their trials are described as “fiery” (4:12). This fits a time period at the eve or outbreak of the Neronian persecution.

The Purpose:

There appears no urgent need that dictated the comprehensive argument which forms the bulk of the epistle. Yet it is clearly Paul’s purpose to expound in detail the gospel he preached and would soon be preaching in Rome (1:15). Most likely he wanted them to understand the gospel he would be preaching, and thus be prepared for his visit.

It has been suggested, and is likely true, that Paul was also determined to establish the church at Rome as a center for the universal gospel for Jews and Greeks. This might be seen in his arguments which place all men under sin and all men as beneficiaries of Christ’s provision. In addition, chapters 9-11 address the relationship of the Gentiles to the promises made to Israel.

Some also suggest a prophylactic purpose could be indicated in 16:17-20. Paul was constantly followed by false teachers and troublemakers who would surely attempt to interfere in Rome, given time.

Paul’s thorough exposition of the gospel could prevent doctrinal error from taking hold. In short, the main purpose of the letter is to give a clear and comprehensive theological formulation of the gospel as a revelation of God’s righteousness (1:16-17).

Paul does this by showing man’s need of righteousness, God’s provision in Christ, the role of faith in obtaining this righteousness, and the provision for a life of righteousness. He also explains the relationship of Gentiles to the Jewish promises and gives practical exhortations for individuals and the church in view of God’s revealed righteousness.

This central purpose does not preempt the secondary purposes discussed above, nor his practical purpose of preparing the Romans for his visit.

Argument:

As early as the introduction, Peter reminds the readers of their salvation and privileged position in Christ (1:1-2). Then, in his first section, he will exhort them based on an

THE FIRST GENERAL EPISTLE TO PETER

exposition of the greatness of their salvation (1:3-2:10). Peter begins with an explanation of the nature of their salvation in Christ (1:3-12).

The future benefit of their salvation is an inheritance guaranteed for them by God (1:3-5). This hope is to temper the readers in their present circumstances of trials and give them joy (1:6-9). The greatness of this salvation by grace in Christ was anticipated by the prophets and is a source of curiosity for the angels (1:10-12).

Based on an understanding of the nature of their great salvation, Peter now exhorts his readers to a new life consistent with this salvation (1:13-2:10). The primary exhortation is to live a godly life (1:13-2:3), and the most essential element of a godly life is holiness before God (1:13-21).

Peter appeals for holiness on the basis of their future hope (1:13), their calling as sons to be holy (1:14-16), the preciousness of their redemption (1:17-19) and their place in God's unfolding plan of redemption (1:20-21).

After holiness before God, Peter urges love for the brethren based on their new birth through the Word of God (1:22-25). Since the Word gave them birth, it is also the means of growth, so Peter continues by exhorting them to grow in their new lives (2:1-3).

The first section closes with a colorful description of the new position of believers in Christ, a portrait Peter paints as a motivation to live the godly life he has been exhorting (2:4-10). He pictures Christians as living stones in God's spiritual house (2:4-5) of which Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone (2:6-8).

He further describes the readers in lofty terms as those now selected by God as a special people (2:9-10). The emphasis on the superlative nature of the Christian's salvation, the new life and the new position in relation to God, should encourage the readers in their present trying circumstances and motivate them to godliness.

Such a life should silence charges against them by adversaries and thus prevent further persecution.

Peter has discussed the heavenly position of the readers and in view of this now exhorts them to submission in the world (2:11-3:12). He reminds them that they are "sojourners and pilgrims" in this world, and should conduct themselves honorably (2:11-12). His specific applications show that Peter has in mind an attitude of submission.

THE FIRST GENERAL EPISTLE TO PETER

First, he exhorts them to submission in civil relationships (2:13-17). If they submit to authorities, the readers will silence much of their opposition (2:15). This may imply the readers face accusations of sedition against the Roman government.

A similar exhortation is to servants to submit to their masters (2:19-21). Evidently, servants who became Christians were subject to abuse by unbelieving masters, much of which was unfair and harsh (2:18-19). Peter's exhortation is based on the commendation which comes from a good conscience and the example of Christ Who suffered under unjust persecution (2:19-25). It should comfort Christians to know that Christ submitted Himself to God's fair judgment and was vindicated.

Peter also exhorts submission in marital relations (3:1-7). Wives, by their submission, may win their husbands to Christ (3:1-2). Their submission can be demonstrated by modest dress and a gentle and quiet spirit after the manner of past holy women and Sarah (3:3-6). The husband reflects his submission by understanding his Christian wife's position before God and treating her accordingly (3:7).

Peter's summary for Christian behavior is expressed by his exhortation to loving behavior in all relations (3:8-12). He appeals for love instead of vengeance with the motivation that such behavior is rewarded by God.

It would be easy for the readers to answer false charges against them with anger and vengeance. But foremost in their minds must be their future inheritance and the example of Christ Who preceded them in suffering and vindication.

In the last section of his letter, Peter exhorts his readers specifically about their response to suffering (3:13-5:11). If the readers are faithful in righteous living they will eventually suffer for the sake of righteousness (3:13-4:6). Since they must suffer, it is blessed and better to suffer for good than for evil (3:13-17).

When suffering, they should be ready to give an answer for the hope that they have (3:15). The readers can draw encouragement from Christ's example of suffering, for though He suffered unjustly, He was vindicated by resurrection and exalted to a position of victory over His enemies (3:18-22).

The application drawn from this is that the readers can have the same perspective on suffering as Christ had (4:1-6). Such an identity with Christ should also mean a break from the old way of life (4:3).

THE FIRST GENERAL EPISTLE TO PETER

Peter continues his exhortations for proper conduct in suffering by appealing for the continuation of ministry to one another (4:7-11). The Christian's anticipation of the near end of all things, including suffering, should motivate him to watchful prayer (4:7). He should also be diligent to exercise love, hospitality and his spiritual gift for the benefit of others (4:8-11).

Another appeal is made to accept suffering as normal for the Christian life (4:12-19). Fiery trials are not the unusual, but the usual, and should be considered part of suffering for Christ (4:12-13). If anyone suffers for Christ's sake, Peter promises the blessing of the Spirit (4:14).

When a person suffers as a Christian, not an evildoer, there is the assurance that God's judgment is being meted out fairly first to believers, but more severely, to unbelievers (4:15-18). This should foster trust in God so that those suffering can commit themselves to His divine justice and faithfulness (4:19).

Peter also appeals for proper conduct in the church in the midst of suffering (5:1-12). He first addresses the elders reminding them of their duties and their reward from the Chief Shepherd to Whom they are accountable (5:1-4). Then he addresses church members to exercise submission to the elders and submissive humility toward each other (5:5a). God rewards the attitude of humility with grace to endure the consequences of subjection (5:5b-6).

The appeal is thus to cast cares and concerns about outcome on God and let Him exercise His care for the believer (5:7). Satan is the ultimate enemy in persecution and must be resisted through proper responses and steadfastness of faith (5:8-9). A final encouragement comes through a prayer for the readers' spiritual confirmation after their short experience of suffering (5:10-11).

Peter's closing remarks (5:12-14) first remind the readers about their position and resource in the grace of God (5:12). He then extends greetings from the church in Rome and from Mark (5:13-14a). Peter ends with a benediction (5:14b).

In Peter's view, the grace of God is sufficient for his readers' trials. It is evident in their salvation, and should be manifested not only in their general conduct, but also in their response to suffering.

This is accomplished by a submissive attitude toward God and others and the acceptance of their sufferings as a participation in Christ's sufferings. Christ should serve as an

THE FIRST GENERAL EPISTLE TO PETER

example to the readers of how the grace of God can be appropriated in suffering and how the one who suffers will be rewarded by God.

THE FIRST GENERAL EPISTLE TO PETER

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his _____ mercy hath begotten us again unto a _____ hope by the _____ of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an _____ incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, _____ in heaven for you, Who are kept by the _____ of God through _____ unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a _____, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold _____: That the _____ of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with _____, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the _____ of Jesus Christ.

2. As new born _____, desire the sincere _____ of the word, that ye may _____ thereby:

3. Who his own self bare _____ sins _____ his own body on the _____, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness _____ whose stripes we are healed.

4. Beloved, think it not _____ concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you: But _____ inasmuch as ye are _____ of Christ's sufferings; that, when his _____ shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding _____.

5. But the God of all _____, who hath _____ us unto his eternal _____ by Jesus Christ, after that ye have _____ a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be _____ and dominion for ever and ever, Amen.

THE SECOND GENERAL EPISTLE TO PETER

Christ Our Hope and Example Amidst Trial

Introduction:

Second Peter like First Peter generally focuses on the circumstances and events of the last days (3:3). The last days will be characterized by abomination, anarchy, apathy, apostasy, many apparitions of angels, and much apprehension. The key weapon to combat the assault of confusion is the authority of the written Word of God (1:19-21).

Peter recorded the only true Interpreter of the Book is the Author of the Book, the Holy Ghost. No church, college, priest, pope, professor, and any other private institution qualifies for a true interpreter of the Word.

Simon Peter is unfortunately elevated to an extreme position of homage by the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic church, a common game played by children called Simon says... and the humor that depicts Saint Peter at the pearly gates of heaven. The actions and words of Simon Peter reveal his objection to this unworthy adoration by people.

Romanism claims Peter went to Rome and he was the Vicar of Christ or Pope, but there is no proof of either claim. Simon Peter or Simon says the Rock of the church is the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:4-8). Simon says there is no need of a special priest-class or religious hierarchy because every saint is a spiritual priest (Hebrews 13:15-16; 1 Peter 2:4-5).

Peter told an Italian to stop giving him any homage (Acts 10:25-26). Simon says the Scriptures are more sure than any apparition, dream, miracle, phenomenon, relic, or vision (1:19-21). Simon also encouraged believers to believe the writings of Paul. Peter also discerned that unstable religionists will wrestle with the truths of the writings of Paul unto their own destruction (3:15-16).

Statistics: 3 Chapters, 61 verses, and 1,553 words

Author:

The authenticity of 2 Peter has stood the test of time and arguments of critics. It is clearly far superior to any pseudonymous writings. No reason exists to doubt Peter's claims as author (1:1) and the verifying claim of his witness of the Transfiguration (1:16-18).

The Date and Place:

THE SECOND GENERAL EPISTLE TO PETER

Since 3:1 probably refers to 1 Peter, the destination is the same: the churches of Asia Minor (1 Peter 1:1). However, the general address in 1:1 shows a wider audience may be included. As seen from 1 Peter, the churches contained a mixture of Jews and Gentiles.

Dr. Peter S. Ruckman states, “The epistle is a match for the book of Jude; both deal doctrinally with the Great Tribulation, although some church age doctrines can be found in some places, just as they can in 1 John and Hebrews.”

Key Word: Knowledge

Occasion:

Peter is alerted to an outbreak of heresy in the churches of Asia Minor (2:1-3) and takes up his pen to help them in this immediate danger. Some urgency in writing may be attributed to Peter’s anticipation of imminent death (1:13-15).

But it is also clear he was prompted by the dangerous nature of the false teachers. They denied the Lord (2:1), were daring and irreverent (2:10-12), immoral (2:13), seductive (2:14,18), scoffers at Christ’s return (3:3-4) and promised liberty though they themselves were slaves to sin (2:19).

The false teachers were already at work (2:12,18; 3:5,16) and threatening to increase in influence (2:1-2; 3:3). The false teaching itself cannot be labeled, but certainly matches the description of false teaching elsewhere in the New Testament.

The Purpose:

Peter writes to warn the readers about the false teachers and to encourage them to cultivate the Christian life so as to prevent them from being influenced. To do this he explains the grounds for the Christian life (1:3-21), exposes the wickedness of the false teachers (2:1-22) and renews the readers confidence in the Lord’s coming (3:1-18a). In this way Peter intends to prevent apostasy (3:17).

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THE SECOND GENERAL EPISTLE TO PETER

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. Second Peter like First Peter generally focuses on the _____ and the events of the _____ days.
2. What is the key word of Second Peter? _____
3. Knowing this _____, that _____ prophecy of the scripture is of _____ interpretation.
4. For the _____ came not in old time by the will of man: but _____ of God spake as they were _____ by the Holy Ghost.
5. But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there _____ be false teachers among you, who _____ shall bring in damnable _____, even denying the Lord that brought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.
6. And many shall follow their pernicious ways: by reason of whom the way of _____ shall be evil spoken of.
7. And through _____ shall they with feigned words make merchandise of _____: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their _____ slumbereth not.
8. For if God spared not the _____ that sinned, but cast them down to _____, and delivered them into chains of _____, to be reserved unto _____.

THE SECOND GENERAL EPISTLE TO PETER

9. The Lord is not _____ concerning his _____,
as some men count slackness; but is

_____ to us-ward, not willing that any
should perish, but that _____ should come to repentance.

10. But the day of the Lord _____ come as a thief in the night; in the which the
heavens shall _____ away with a _____ noise, and
the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the _____ also and the
works that are therein shall be _____ up.