

## NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP STUDY IN THE FIRST LETTER OF PETER –

### CHAPTER FIVE

If the church of Jesus Christ is not only to survive a terrible ordeal such as faced the Christians of Peter's time, but to emerge stronger and better able to influence the world, it needs to be in top condition like an athlete prepared for the Olympics. Like a coach preparing his team, Peter moves one by one around the different groups that make up any fellowship. Always his approach is not to tell them what they must do but to point them back to the grace of God, the secret of what the Lord can be in them.

Peter recognises how easily stress from outside pressures can lead to immorality which seems for the moment to release people from tension.(4:1-4) But the old ways no longer suit us because of the new life inside us.(4:5-6) Keeping a clear focus on the truth of the gospel produces that fervent love rather than furtive lust which characterises real Christians.(4:7-9) Spiritual gifts are the presents God has given us for each other. Whether we serve with our mouths open or closed they can be God's means of lifting one another up in times of intense trial.(4:10-11) The secret is to be ready beforehand to suffer as Jesus did rather than to be taken by surprise when hard times come. Peter uses his fourth 'therefore' to underline the simple secret of being ready for suffering, entrust your souls to a faithful Creator.(4:12-19)

As before it is very worthwhile to stop and review your titles for the sections of the previous chapter before going further. You will always be surprised how much you see the second time which you missed the first.

In this final chapter, Peter addresses two more groups within the church whose roles will be vital in bringing the whole fellowship through difficult times. He begins the chapter with his fifth 'therefore'. I suggest the following three divisions - verses 1-4; 5-11; 12-14.

#### Section 1 - verses 1-4

Q.1 To which group does Peter now speak first? Why will they be vital to whether the church survives persecution? How does he address this group? Why doesn't he just give them orders? After all he was Peter, the leading apostle!

Q.2 What according to verse 1 are the qualifications of an elder? How can we 'partake also of the glory that is to be revealed'(I Pet.1:5-7; 4:13) How were elders chosen and on what grounds, in the New Testament church?(Acts 14:23; I Tim.3:1-11; Tit.1:5-9)

Q.3 How does 'loving fervently',(1:22) show in the attitude of an elder towards those he leads? What mistakes are frequently made by elders? Why is this? To what job in the society of his day does Peter compare the task of an elder? What do we know about how that job was done which would help us to understand the real nature of eldership? What pitfalls does Peter warn against in verses 2 and 3? Shouldn't elders be strong characters who can get obedience from the congregation? What sort of example would help most?

Q.4 What according to verse 4 should an elder always keep in mind in playing his role?(2:25) What is the crown we will receive?(I Pet.1:4; I Cor.9:24-27; Rev.3:11) Will we wear it permanently in heaven so that others can tell we were elders on earth?(Rev.4:4,10)

## Section 2 - verses 5-11

Q.5 To which second group does Peter now speak in the first half of verse 5? What is asked of them? How does Paul say much the same thing in Titus 2:6? Why would their role be so important in the coming few years when so many of their elders would die for their faith?

Q.6 What one attitude, introduced by his final 'therefore', does Peter foresee will be the key to how every group within the Christian fellowship maintains an effective unity? What picture does he use this time to describe the new and the old ways? How does this relate back to the idea of being born again?(1:23; 2:1-2) Consider again how this attitude will look in each of the groups within the church to whom Peter has spoken? As usual it is worth looking up the source of the quote in verse 5 from Prov.3:34. How does the original wording particularly fit the circumstances of these Christians?

Q.7 All of us find that the harder we try to be humble the prouder we feel about our humility! How does verse 6 show the secret of true humility? What is the connection between anxiety and pride?(Matt.6:25-34)

Q.8 Was their real enemy in Peter's time the Emperor? Who always lies behind trouble in our lives? What other stories in the Bible illustrate the reality of this constant threat to us?

Q.9 How are we to handle this enemy? Can we resist him in our own strength? What happens if we try? What must we always remember about the character, purpose and technique of the roaring lion?(II Cor.2:11; 11:14; Jn.8:44) What end result of suffering are we to be confident about?

## Section 3 – verses 12-14

Q.10 How does this acknowledgement help us to understand why First Peter is in more fluent Greek than Second Peter? What else do we know about the writer?(II Cor.1:19; Acts 15:22, 27, 32, 40; 16:19; 17:10,14,15; 18:5; I Thess.1:1; II Thess.2:1) What did the writer know first hand about standing firm in the face of persecution?

Q.11 What does Peter really mean by 'Babylon'?(Rev.17:3-7) Why is it a surprise that Peter should describe Mark as his son?(Acts 12:25; 13:5,13; 15:38) What does it suggest had happened to Mark in the meantime? What had he learned about Peter's message in this book?

Q.12 How were they to greet one another? What other kind of kiss was there?(Lk.22:47,48; Rom.16:16) What special meaning would these greetings have for those facing lions and the fires of persecution?