



TEACHING I PETER

Unlocking 1 Peter for the Bible Teacher

ANGUS MacLEAY

SERIES EDITORS: DAVID JACKMAN & ROBIN SYDSERFF



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SERIES PREFACE

Whether you are a preacher, a small group Bible study leader or a youth worker, the *Teach the Bible* series will be an ideal companion. Few commentaries are written specifically with the preacher or Bible teacher in mind, and with the sermon or Bible study as the point of reference. The preacher or teacher, the sermon or talk, and the listener are the key 'drivers' in this series.

The books are purposefully practical, seeking to offer real help for those involved in teaching the Bible to others. Section One contains basic 'navigation' material to get you into the text of 1 Peter. The two introductory chapters are: Getting our Bearings in 1 Peter (key themes, structure, literary style etc.), and Planning a Series on 1 Peter.

One of the suggested series provides the framework for the meat of the book in Section Two, with a separate chapter devoted to each sermon, talk or Bible study. The content of these detailed chapters is neither commentary nor sermon, but specifically geared to help the teacher get to



grips with the text with its intended purpose clearly in view, its proclamation as the living Word of God. Chapters follow a consistent structure: 'Listening to the Text', 'From Text to Teaching' and 'Proclaiming the Message' (which includes a suggested preaching outline and format for a Bible study).

We are delighted that Angus MacLeay has written *Teaching 1 Peter* for the series. Angus wrote the first draft of this book while on sabbatical, and then preached the material at St. Nicholas Sevenoaks and at a number of conferences. The result is a well-worked manuscript, written by a preacher, for preachers!

Our thanks to Katy Jones Parry, Zoë Moore, Moira Anderson, Anne Sydserff and Sam Parkinson for editorial assistance and, as ever, to the team at Christian Focus for their committed partnership in this project.

David Jackman and Robin Sydserff
Series Editors, London, December 2007



AUTHOR'S PREFACE

Towards the end of my first academic year at theological college in 1986 I attended a conference organised by The Proclamation Trust. That conference was formative in a number of ways. Through the talks I was able to gain a much more coherent understanding of the whole Bible and how the various parts functioned together. Through the workshops I was exposed to a rigour in handling the biblical texts which I had not known before. Through the friendships established over those few days I have since received enormous encouragement in my gospel ministry.

Since that conference I have often been grateful for the ministry of The Proclamation Trust and for the way it has sought to model the careful handling of God's Word so that God's voice can be heard. I have constantly been challenged to listen afresh to the Scriptures and to be more sensitive to the genre or setting of a particular text.

It is now my privilege to contribute to this series commissioned by The Proclamation Trust. My desire is to pass



on to others some of the lessons I have learnt through its ministry over the years. In particular, I hope that preachers will be able to pick up the thought flow of the letter (what is often called 'the melodic line') and recognise the importance of the context into which Peter was speaking as a way of unlocking the letter's significance for our own generation. The introductory chapters should help preachers get their bearings in 1 Peter and help them see how they could plan a preaching series on this epistle.

I believe that 1 Peter has a special significance for our times. Peter was writing into a situation where God's people were beginning to experience opposition and persecution. His letter not only highlights the privileges available to the believer both now and in the future, but provides practical help and encouragement, undergirded by a rich Christology, concerning how the believer should live and work in a world which was sometimes appreciative of the presence of Christians but was becoming increasingly hostile. Such is our world today in the West and it is vital therefore that we heed the lessons of this wonderful epistle.

This book was almost not written at all. Originally I had plans to spend a short sabbatical in 2006 observing a number of churches in North America. However, a severe illness the previous year derailed those plans, so that as the study leave started I found myself working on 1 Peter in preparation for a sermon series at St. Nicholas, Sevenoaks. Part way through my sabbatical an encouraging meeting with David Jackman gave me the impetus to turn my research into a book and since then I have been grateful for the constant encouragement of the staff at The Proclamation Trust – in particular David Jackman, Robin Sydserff, Zoë Moore and Katy Jones Parry for their thoughtful interaction and



Author's Preface

11

editorial assistance. I am also indebted to the Church Family at St. Nicholas Sevenoaks who have supported me in this project through their eagerness to hear and engage with God's Word preached, with particular thanks to my personal assistant Margaret Marshall for typing successive drafts of the manuscript. I am grateful to my children, Rachel and Jamie, and especially to my wife, Sue, who have given me every encouragement in my ministry and it is to them that this book is dedicated with my love.

I trust that you will find this book a help as you seek to be a faithful and engaging preacher of 1 Peter.

Angus MacLeay
St. Nicholas Sevenoaks
Christmas 2007





DEDICATION

for Sue, Rachel and Jamie





SECTION ONE:

Introductory Material







I

GETTING OUR BEARINGS IN I PETER

1 Peter is one of the treasures of the New Testament. Tucked away at the end of the New Testament after Paul's epistles, it makes an important contribution despite its brevity and deals with a number of extremely significant issues. It firmly focuses the believer on heaven and the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, helping us to cope with the suffering which comes to believers by showing us how such a path can lead to glory. And all the time, despite this future perspective, it is full of practical assistance and guidance as Peter wrestles with the everyday realities of how the believer should live in an ungodly world. Peter's theological vision is centred on the person of the Lord Jesus Christ whom he knows as the risen, living Lord and Saviour who will one day appear as the Chief Shepherd to gather His flock. His great concern is that in every situation believers may be found following Christ, imitating His life and behaviour



so that one day they too will move from suffering, to glory. If, therefore, you want to preach on a book which will focus on Christ and assist believers in living as Christians amidst opposition and suffering then 1 Peter is an extremely appropriate choice.

The apostle Peter

The book starts by introducing the author as the apostle Peter, known to us already through the Gospels (1:1). Elsewhere he refers to himself as an elder who has shared in the sufferings of Christ (5:1 – see ch. 17). Despite his weakness, evidenced in his betrayal of Christ, the Acts of the Apostles reveals how he has been changed into a Christian leader willing to stand and embrace suffering for the sake of Christ (e.g. Acts 4:19, 20). Acts also reveals his role in enabling Gentiles to become fully fledged members of the church, which is an important point to note when we come to consider the recipients of this letter.

Peter is partnered by Silas in the practical writing of the letter (5:12) and is almost certainly based at this point in Rome – though he chooses, for theological reasons, to entitle the city 'Babylon' (5:13) as an indication that like Christians all over the world he was still, for now, in exile.

Sources suggest that Peter died in Rome, probably at the hands of the Emperor Nero some time after the fire in Rome in AD 64. Since Nero died AD 68 it is likely that the letter was written at some point in the mid-sixties. Whatever the exact date, it is almost certain that Nero was emperor at the time of writing, which gives added extra significance to the encouragements at 2:13-17 for Christians to honour the emperor.

Peter's recipients

The people to whom Peter wrote lived in a number of territories mentioned at 1:1 – Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. Together, these five territories form a large part of the modern state of Turkey and all were within the bounds of the Roman Empire. The gospel may have come to these areas through converted Jews returning from Pentecost after hearing Peter's sermon (see Acts 2:9), but we know from Acts and Galatians that much of this area was later evangelised by the apostle Paul.

Though there may well have been a mixture of converted Jews and Gentiles within these churches, 1:14, 18 and 4:3-4 suggest that it is likely that the majority were from a Gentile background. Though not conclusive, it is unlikely that Peter would refer to converted Jews as having been 'redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers'. Also, the activities described in 4:3 – which equate to 'the flood of dissipation' of 4:4 – would have been abnormal for the Jews.

Peter is probably, therefore, writing to converted Gentiles with no spiritual pedigree, on the very edge of the empire, wanting to show these insignificant, small and persecuted groups that in God's eyes they are His chosen people – the centre of His eternal purposes.

Peter's epistle

The letter is relatively short at just 105 verses in our Bibles. It bears the traditional marks of an ancient letter with its introduction and greetings at the start and words of farewell, encouragement and blessing at the end.

A letter would have been written at a particular time and for a particular purpose, even if the recipients were scattered in various communities many miles apart. It is likely, as the exposition will highlight, that the growing pressures, ranging from ostracism and verbal abuse to physical persecution, were the occasion for Peter's word of encouragement to them.

In any letter it is not surprising to find order, purpose and development, and that is certainly the case here, since Peter has the clear aim of helping embattled Christians to keep following Christ all the way to glory.

Peter's message

The brief introduction at 1:1, 2 provides hints concerning the overall structure of the epistle. Peter describes these Christians as God's elect – His chosen people – and this is the main theme which undergirds the first section of the letter (1:3–2:10) culminating in the statement at 2:9, 10 'you are a chosen people'. Within the Old Testament we see God's chosen people emerge from Egypt following the Passover sacrifice. They are constituted as God's covenant people and then start their trek through the wilderness to the Promised Land. Peter envisages the same model for Gentile Christians as for God's chosen people in the Old Testament (see ch. 3) and many of the Old Testament quotations and allusions within this first main section are to the Exodus.

Returning to 1:1 we see that God's elect are also exiles or strangers. This theme is developed in Peter's second main section (2:11–4:11). There is a natural link between sections 1 and 2 since, if their true home is in glory, it means that their

current living quarters must not be regarded as 'home.' This is a natural development from the theological weight put upon the future in section 1. Section 2 of Peter's letter is therefore devoted to working out in practical ways how the Christian lives as an exile within a society where God is not obeyed. Time and again Peter applies the pattern outlined in 2:11, 12 (turn from sin, seek to do good ... and trust God for the results) as a model for Christian behaviour in the world. Towards the end of this section Peter also deals with the issue of how Christians should respond to opposition they faced even when they seek to do good; this is answered at 3:13–4:6.

It seems natural to identify 4:12–5:11 as a third main section of the letter (see ch. 16). However, amongst the commentators there is no clear consensus about how this final section fits together and brings it to a conclusion. My own view, developed within this book, is that the common thread linking the various units within Section 3 is the theme of Christ's sufferings. 'Sufferings' occurs in the plural three times (4:13, 5:1 and 5:9) and refers to the suffering which believers may face specifically as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Though God's elect (Section 1) are seeking to live for God as exiles in a hostile world (Section 2) they are to be reminded that there is a basic pattern for their Christian experience (Section 3), though you follow Christ now in His sufferings, you must keep following Christ because it will certainly lead to sharing in Christ's glory at the end (see 4:13; 5:1, 4 and 5:10). Section 3 therefore provides a fitting climax and conclusion to the whole letter, highlighting Peter's theological insistence that the whole of the Christian's life is to be shaped by following Christ through suffering to glory.

So, we have identified three main sections and three main movements within 1 Peter. Each is connected and develops from the other to provide a coherent framework for the Christian life which addresses the particular issue of opposition and persecution. It is vitally important therefore as a preacher to keep this big picture in mind, so that each passage can be seen in the light of the overall message.

Peter's conclusion (5:12-14) brings together various greetings; it is also linked to the opening (1:1, 2) with its references to God's 'chosen' people residing in 'Babylon' (elect exiles), and sums up what Peter thought he was doing. What he has written is an encouragement for them to keep standing in the true grace of God. As we preach 1 Peter our aim must also be to encourage God's chosen people, currently in exile, to keep standing firm as they are buffeted by all sorts of pressures and opposition to the Christian faith, because as they follow Christ even amidst their sufferings they will soon share in His glory, through God's abundant mercy and grace.

Outline of 1 Peter

The following provides a brief outline of the main divisions of 1 Peter which are explored within this book. As has been argued, Peter operates with a clear structure in mind. His three main sections are all quite different in their approach, though there are important links between them.

Introduction: God's people: chosen and in exile (1:1, 2)

Section 1: God's people: chosen for glory (1:3–2:10)

1:3-12 Remember where you're going
(future privileges)

1:13-21 How do you get there?

1:22–2:3 How do you keep going?

2:4-10 Remember who you are
(present privileges)

Section 2: Living as exiles in a hostile world (2:11–4:11)

2:11, 12 Introduction to Peter's strategy
for Christian living

2:13-17 ... in the world

2:18-25 ... in the workplace

3:1-7 ... in the home

3:8-12 ... in the church

3:13-22 How to cope with direct persecution

4:1-6 How to cope with indirect persecution

4:7-11 How to cope together as God's people

**Section 3: The pattern for Christian living; from suffering to
glory through following Jesus Christ (4:12–5:11)**

4:12-19 ... as those who suffer

5: 1-4 ... as those who lead the flock

5: 5-11 ... as those within the flock

Conclusion: 5:12-14





2

PLANNING A SERIES ON I PETER

One of the practical issues facing the preacher committed to the expository method concerns the division of a book of the Bible into appropriate sections. A number of factors must be considered:

- Would the congregation benefit more from an overview of the letter taking only a few sermons or by allocating plenty of time to the detail of the letter?
- How long would the congregation be able to cope with a particular series?
- Are there any practical constraints which need to be borne in mind, e.g. a time frame such as an academic term, church diary constraints due to special events or holidays, preaching allocations (if there is more than one preacher available)?

A number of possible series are listed below, ending with the longest which is the basis for the expositions which follow. In each series the intention is to work with the structure and flow of the epistle.



Series 1. Three Sermons

Sermon 1	1:1–2:10
Sermon 2	2:11–4:11
Sermon 3	4:12–5:14

Clearly the aim here is to provide a brief overview of the whole letter. This is a short series using Peter's three sections as its main structure. Sermon 1 could use material from 1:1, 2 and 1:3-12. Sermon 2 could use Peter's strategy outlined at 2:11, 12. Sermon 3 could use the pattern revealed at 4:13.

If the fellowship is considering doing a series of midweek Bible studies on 1 Peter, a short amount of time giving an overview from the pulpit might help the Bible study group leaders and members to see how the main themes of the letter are developed. Alternatively, this format may lend itself naturally to a day conference where you want to get to grips with a particular book of the Bible.

Series 2. Five Sermons

Sermon 1	1:1-21
Sermon 2	1:22–2:10
Sermon 3	2:11–3:12
Sermon 4	3:13–4:11
Sermon 5	4:12–5:14

Developing from Series 1 above, sermon 1 focuses on the theme of hope (1:3, 21) and the future privileges of God's chosen people. Sermon 2 continues by focusing on the current privileges of God's chosen people. Sermon 3 builds from 2:11, 12 on Peter's strategy for living within the world as exiles, whilst sermon 4 enables the preacher to give more significant attention to the Christian response to opposition, seen mainly at 3:13–4:6. Sermon 5 concludes

the series by giving an overview of Peter's final section. There are occasions when this is an appropriate length for a series, such as over a weekend. 1:1, 2 could also be used as a short 'taster' before embarking on the main teaching sessions.

Series 3. Eight Sermons

Sermon 1	1:1-12
Sermon 2	1:13-21
Sermon 3	1:22-2:10
Sermon 4	2:11-25
Sermon 5	3:1-12
Sermon 6	3:13-4:11
Sermon 7	4:12-19
Sermon 8	5:1-14

This series is an expansion of series 2 and gives more space and time to work through the letter. A series of this length might be suitable for a term of weekly Bible studies. Often the interruptions of other church events would mean that a series of eight sermons could be spread over several months. Given the way that 1 Peter is structured this series would make it possible for up to three different people to be involved in the preaching, with one preacher tackling each of the sections (1:1-2:10; 2:11-4:11 and 4:12-5:11). Each preacher could consider their own section of 1 Peter and also see how their sermons should connect with one another.

Series 4. Sixteen Sermons

Part 1

Sermon 1	1:1, 2; 5:12-14	A special people
Sermon 2	1:3-12	God's people have a glorious future
Sermon 3	1:13-21	Living as pilgrims on the way to glory
Sermon 4	1:22-2:3	God's people have a glorious new life
Sermon 5	2:4-10	God's people have been chosen for a glorious purpose

Part 2

Sermon 6	2:11, 12	A strategy for living as God's people in the world
Sermon 7	2:13-17	Living as God's people in the world
Sermon 8	2:18-25	Living as God's people in the workplace
Sermon 9	3:1-7	Living as God's people in the home
Sermon 10	3:8-12	Living as God's people in the church
Sermon 11	3:13-22	Confidence in Christ's victory
Sermon 12	4:1-6	Confidence in Christ's example
Sermon 13	4:7-11	Living as God's people in the light of the end

Part 3

Sermon 14	4:1-19	Suffering and glory in the world
Sermon 15	5:1-4	Suffering and glory in Christian leadership
Sermon 16	5:5-11	Suffering and glory in the church

This series is the selection developed within this book. As indicated above, it could easily be broken into three parts for three series given over the period of a year.

My own preference is to work through a longer series (even if it needs to be interrupted once or twice), as there are many benefits from dealing with 1 Peter in this way. Shorter series inevitably involve leaving out much helpful material. Furthermore, it is so important as an expositor to be sensitive to the genre and to seek to 'go with the flow' of the letter. A longer series gives you space and time to show how Peter's message fits together, whilst also giving time for explanation and application. It gives an opportunity for the preacher to deal with shorter passages which can provide an overview of the next section (e.g, sermons 1 and 6 in series 4), whilst also giving space to unpack longer passages.

Some thematic series, and thoughts on the part they can play alongside an expository approach, will be considered in the 'Other preaching possibilities' sections near the end of each chapter. But my advice would be that this is more

safely done when the preacher has completed the hard graft of working through the whole letter. Only then will it be possible to guard against plucking texts out of context. A further chapter has been included specifically to help with a sermon on the person and work of Christ.

Structure of the chapters which follow
Each chapter within this book is based on a relatively short portion of 1 Peter and follows a consistent structure or methodology, specifically geared to help the preacher to get to grips with the text, in order to teach it. Some brief comments follow which will help explain how this process seeks to serve the purpose of proclaiming God's Word.

(1) Listening to the text

i) Preliminary observations

Careful attention to the text is critically important. What we think is there, or what our systematic theology informs us should be there, may not necessarily be present at all. An attempt has been made to look as sensitively as possible at the text in order to highlight significant words or themes as well as connections with other parts of Scripture. It is often useful to ask why a passage has been included or to consider the links with preceding and following passages. Finally, it is vital to see how each text forms part of the overall flow of 1 Peter. These preliminary observations are not meant to be exhaustive, but provide helpful insight which should be borne in mind before tackling the passage.

ii) Exposition

The intention here is not to produce a full, technical commentary on 1 Peter, but simply to give an explanation of how the text fits together so that the preacher can see

the main ideas within the passage. The titles and headings aim for clarity and are not chosen with the pulpit directly in mind.

(iii) Summary

A brief paragraph is included to try to draw together the various strands within each passage. The summary also seeks to highlight the way in which each individual passage contributes to the flow of the whole epistle.

(2) From text to teaching

By this point we should have got to grips with the essentials of the passage and now have a 'text to explain'. However, if that is the end point our sermon is likely to be presented like a lecture or commentary. To preach a passage we need to move from a 'text to explain' to having a 'message to proclaim'. To assist in this process a number of steps can be identified.

i) Get the message clear

The main concern here is to nail down the essential message of the text. A helpful way to do this is to identify the big idea or the main theme. We can then consider what main question(s) the text addresses. If our preaching is to be engaging then our sermons must answer questions, and these should be the questions addressed by the passage. It is good to state the big idea of the passage in one succinct sentence, and then to express this as a question. The preacher can go on to show why the big question is important and relevant for listeners.

ii) Engage the hearer

Point of contact

It is important to give careful attention to the introduction to a sermon. Rather than start immediately in the Bible, my preference is to start with ordinary life situations and then raise the issue to be addressed by the Bible passage.

Starting the sermon in this way provides a 'hook' so that people can immediately see that this sermon and Bible passage may have immediate relevance to their lives. A good introduction should therefore establish a point of contact with the listeners and connect with the big idea or the big question of the passage.

Dominant picture

Rightly handled, illustrations can provide windows within the structure of our sermons and bring light, clarity and understanding. My own general rule is that each point needs to be carefully illustrated and applied so that those listening can more easily understand what Peter is saying to them. However, illustrations often date quickly and may arise out of the preacher's own observations, reading, experiences and setting. I have tried to assist the preacher by providing one illustration which helps to explain and throw light on one of the central teaching points in the passage.

(3) Application

The purpose of including this section is as a reminder that 1 Peter contains a message which is to be preached so that lives are changed as a result. Of necessity the application is fairly general and would need to be sharpened up considerably for use in any given situation. Readers will see that each of the application points links to a teaching point made in the exposition earlier within the chapter.

(4) Proclaiming the message

i) A preaching outline

A title and preaching outline based on the exposition are suggested.

ii) Other preaching possibilities

This section is designed to assist in the process of deciding how to divide up 1 Peter. Various possibilities are suggested indicating where and how one passage can be linked with another. Also, although the assumption is that preachers will want to tackle 1 Peter in an expository fashion moving from passage to passage through the whole of the letter, from time to time themes are suggested which it might be profitable to explore.

iii) Leading a Bible study

The final part of each chapter includes a Bible study with some suggestions for questions which could be used by the leader. The Bible study works through four logical steps:

- ✦ Introduce the issues – an opportunity to think about one of the main issues which will be raised by the text in order to engage the group members.
- ✦ Study the passage – questions designed to help the group to dig into the text for themselves.
- ✦ Think it through – questions designed to help members reflect on what they are discovering in the Bible passage.
- ✦ Live it out – questions designed to sharpen the application of the lessons learned from God's Word.

(5) Peter – the model preacher

Before moving into the text of 1 Peter it is helpful to see that 1 Peter has much to say directly to the preacher. Peter is a model to guide us in the way we undertake our preaching ministry.

i) Expounding God's Word with conviction

Clearly Peter was an energetic and powerful preacher. Though regarded by the Jewish authorities as unschooled

and ordinary (see Acts 4:13), his preaching was used by God in dramatic ways. Luke records for us edited highlights of his sermons at Acts 2:14-41; 3:12-26; 4:8-12; 5:29-32; 10:34-43 and 15:7-11. He is passionate about the Lord Jesus Christ and salvation through His cross and resurrection, now made available by God's grace to all, both Jew and Gentile. That same focus on the Lord Jesus Christ is very evident within his first epistle.

In both his Acts sermons and 1 Peter we see him constantly referring back to the Old Testament. This is God's Word which needs to be understood because of the light it sheds on the Lord Jesus Christ and the salvation now available. Though the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ has changed everything, Peter firmly bases his teaching on God's revealed Word given in the past, knowing that this is the foundation for God's unchanging purposes (see 1:10-12; 1:15, 16 etc.). Peter is clearly committed to expounding all of God's Word.

Furthermore, his understanding is that the Word he brings both from the Old Testament and now also revealed to him in these New Testament days is a living and enduring Word (see 1:23): 'living' because as it is preached God Himself (by His Spirit – see 1:12, 25) is at work bringing new birth and life (1:3, 23); 'enduring' because the results of this Word are permanent and last for all eternity (1:23-25).

Peter's conviction is that as the Word of God is preached the work of God is done and so his passion is to explain that Word and see it take root in the lives of his hearers. On the basis of his teaching at 4:11 he would have been only too aware that the preacher is one who is handling the very words of God. No doubt Peter would have embarked on

every sermon with the desire that God's name rather than his own would be glorified in the process (see 4:11).

Confidence that what we are preaching to our people is the very Word of God is at the same time both an awesome responsibility and an amazing privilege. Taking our cue from 1 Peter we are to preach with passion and conviction.

ii) Expounding God's Word with illustration

In 1 Peter we also see how Peter constantly illustrates his material. Sometimes he uses a picture from the Old Testament; in 1:13 he wants his readers to see themselves as God's people emerging from Egypt 'preparing themselves for action' (lit. 'girding up their loins') in order to head towards the Promised Land. At other times he uses contrasts and comparisons to illustrate. For example he speaks of the value of Christ's sacrifice (1:18, 19) by referring to it as so much more valuable than the gold and silver that is exchanged at the local marketplace. Elsewhere he uses illustrations from the farm or garden (e.g. 1:23 – the seed) or from the home (e.g. 2:2 and the intimate picture of the baby feeding from the breast). They all help preachers to see the importance of illustrative material and give pointers to where such material can be gathered. Peter's teaching is neither dry nor academic; it is alive with pictures and images which enable us to appreciate and understand his message.

iii) Expounding God's Word with application

Peter is not interested in teaching for its own sake. His great desire is that believers know how to live an authentic Christian life amidst all the pressures of the pagan society which surrounds them. With that in mind he gives plenty of time to careful application, for example, highlighting the type of godly lifestyle he wants to see at 2:11, 12. He follows this with by a section showing how this lifestyle

is to be worked out within society, at work and in the home (see 2:13–3:7). Careful and thoughtful application to the different groupings within our own church family needs to be modelled on Peter's approach. Furthermore it is evident within his application that Peter is sensitive to some of the awkward situations which many are facing. He is aware of intimidation in the workplace (2:19f) and of the frustration felt by the Christian wife about her unconverted husband (3:1ff). Peter understands his people and directs his teaching to them so that all can see the direct relevance of the Word of God to their everyday situations.

iv) Expounding God's Word with a love for people – compassion

Added to all this is a sensitivity to the real suffering which he knew many of his hearers would be facing. Aware of their suffering and persecution in its various forms, he gives careful application based on good theology (see 3:13-22 and 4:1-6), undergirded by a love for these fellow believers whom he regarded as his brothers and sisters (see 1:22; 2:17; 3:8; 4:8 and 5:9 for the theme of brotherly love). He addresses them as his 'dear friends' and as someone who has gone through the fires of persecution himself (see 5:1) he lovingly and sensitively encourages them not to be surprised at what they might need to go through (see 4:12ff), fully aware himself of what it might involve. This sympathetic and loving approach also applies to the local church leaders. Rather than flaunting his apostolic authority, Peter simply draws alongside as a fellow elder (5:1), seeking the same reward as them from the Chief Shepherd. His love for these people is a model for today's preacher. It should inform their preparation of sermons and their direct interaction with God's people from the pulpit and during informal conversations.

v) Expounding God's Word with a love for God – passion

Yet over and above his love for God's people, Peter reveals his passion for God. He begins with an outburst of praise for what God has done in Christ (1:3ff) and the second and third sections end in climaxes of praise of God (4:11 and 5:11). Peter is passionate about the God he serves and that passion is focused especially in his delight in everything which relates to the Lord Jesus Christ. As chapter 19 seeks to show, the whole letter is centred on the Lord Jesus Christ; the note of joy in the Lord Jesus both now and in eternity (see 1:6, 8; 4:13), seems to transfuse Peter's whole approach to living the Christian life. The way Peter communicates God's Word reveals a preacher on fire for God and the gospel, informed by a clear vision of glory to come and the prospect of seeing the Lord Jesus face to face.

Like Peter, we need to use the gifts God has given us faithfully (4:10, 11), confident that God's Word is living and enduring (1:23). We will want to use illustrative material as we carefully apply the Word so that in every way it is accessible. People will then be able to feed on it and will be strengthened in their pilgrimage to glory. All this must be done with both compassion for the flock and passion for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us make sure that we ourselves have come under the influence of 1 Peter in the way we go about preaching it.