

A Study of First Peter
Week One
1 Peter 1:1-25

Day One

1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, 2 who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

v. 1 – There is some dispute among experts whether Peter really wrote this and the second epistle. I don't waste my time worrying over the issue. I don't think the Holy Spirit would allow His inspired word to be tarnished or misrepresented. Remember, the same Spirit who inspired the Word is capable of protecting the Word from the time it was written to this very day. So if the first verse says Peter wrote it, that's good enough for me.

Peter identified himself as an apostle—one who was “sent forth.” But the “sent forth” ones didn't always want to be sent. For the first years after Jesus' ascension, the apostles stayed in Jerusalem and had to be “sent forth” by persecution, as we have just seen in the study of Acts. These first apostles, referred to as apostles of the Lamb, weren't that eager to engage the Gentiles, being good Jewish boys.

Now Peter was writing a letter to believers, both Jew and Gentile, who had been scattered throughout several provinces. The general assumption is that Peter's audience had been scattered due to persecution, thus making it difficult for them to assemble together. And they were referred to as “strangers,” since they were no longer friends with the world's system as believers. **Are you a stranger in this world? Do you fit in with the system around you or do you feel out of place? While others cheat, do you maintain your integrity? While others lie, do you speak truth? While others covet, do you give freely? If so, then you truly are a strange person in the world's eyes!**

v. 2 – There appears to be a mention of the Trinity here, with Father, Son and Holy Spirit each playing a role in human salvation. There are two “camps” where salvation is concerned. The one, called the Arminians, believe that man's choice and freewill must play a part in the salvation process. The other, the Calvinists, believe that God's choice is paramount, with man's' choice simply cooperating with God's predetermined will. I believe that both sides get so entrenched in trying to prove their position that they do damage to the Scriptures trying to force their position on certain passages.

My understanding is that I was chosen, predestined if you will, to come to know Jesus, for reasons that God only knows. Yet my free will can choose to ignore or reject this saving grace. If I so choose, God would then raise up another to fulfill the purpose that He assigned for me:

(All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right, because they had been baptized by John. But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.) (Luke 7:29-30).

Day Two

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

v. 3 – It is good to give God praise and honor regularly. It is good to acknowledge what He has done through Jesus Christ. **Why not stop right now and give God thanks for His blessings in your life?**

The resurrection is the key event in the life of the believer. For our hope comes from the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead, for we will be raised in like manner. We have a foretaste of that resurrection life and power now in the power of the Holy Spirit.

And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you (Rom 8:11).

Can you imagine? We have the same Spirit in us that raised a dead man back to life! That should change your prayer life, your outlook and your expectations. That Spirit has made us new creatures and gives us hope that the promises of God will be fulfilled, including our being raised from the dead.

v. 4 – The promise of this resurrected life will never fade away or change. It is kept for us in heaven, Jesus being the proof. Our flesh sits at the right hand of God in Jesus! If He made it, we can make it, too. Our inheritance can never fade away unless somehow Jesus fades away and that is impossible, for He is alive yesterday, today and forever! Hallelujah!

v. 5 – Our faith that we have put in Christ is what shields us from harm until the day our salvation is finalized, which is either our death or the return of Jesus. At this point, we see a hint of the main theme of Peter's letter: Only those in a war need a shield; only those under attack or under the threat of an attack need the protection of a shield. I don't think that our faith is what protects us. It is putting our faith in the shield, which is Jesus in the power of the Spirit.

v. 6 – Here it is: the theme of suffering is introduced. This remnant that has been scattered abroad is being persecuted and Peter is writing to encourage them in their trouble. **What can you do today to encourage someone in his or her trouble? What can you do that will encourage you if you are in the midst of a hard time?** Peter tried to get the readers to look beyond their grief, to look toward the great promise of eternal life and resurrection power. He didn't advise them to ignore their troubles, but to look beyond them. I think that is good advice. He further advised them to rejoice, not in their trials but in the truth that laid beyond their trials—the resurrection and hope that are preserved for the faithful in the Jesus.

Day Three

7 These have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, 9 for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

v. 7 – We see here why the trials and grief come: to prove that our faith is genuine and the work of God in our hearts and lives are real. **Think of a trial you are enduring right now. Now think of where you were five or even ten years ago. Could you have endured the trial then as you are now? If your answer is “no,” then today’s trial is proving the reality of what God has done in your life the last five years.**

A test in a biblical sense isn't like a classroom exam. A test in a biblical sense is more like gold or silver being tested by fire. If someone wanted to see how pure gold or silver was, they would test it to melt it. Then the impurities would come to the top so they could be skimmed or, if there were no impurities, the metal would pass the test. The same is true for your tests.

As Peter pointed out, your faith, which is more valuable than gold, is proved genuine when it is put to the test: when the flames of trial show that it is pure. I know that the flames hurt, but they serve a valuable purpose.

v. 8 – Your faith is proved true because during trials you stand firm in the Lord, whom you have never seen, yet love and believe in Him. Your faith is rendered true and valid when you ignore what you can see—your difficulties—and focus on what you can't see—the Lord Jesus. When you choose to walk in the reality of the unseen and ignore the seen, you are truly a child of God:

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

How effectively are you focusing on the unseen at this point in your life?

v. 9 – The ultimate objective of your faith isn't a new car or house, it isn't victory over all your enemies, or a ministry. Your objective is the salvation of your soul. That is the prize and we must keep our eye on that prize at all times. **So are you filled with “inexpressible joy” at this point in your life? Do you rejoice if for nothing else than the salvation of your soul? Can you look past the seen toward the unseen and do it with joy and peace?** If not, read on, for Peter is writing to those who must have been wavering in their faith due to the circumstances around them. Allow God's word to minister to you during this study and allow the Spirit to instruct you concerning trials, faith and endurance.

Day Four

10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, 11 trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

vs. 10&11 – It isn't evident to which prophets Peter is referring. It seems that all the prophets, while delivering a word about the future, were consumed with the matters of their day. But Peter told us here that some were consumed with trying to find out what they were talking about. Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel and the like spent some time seeking the Lord so they could better understand their message of salvation. Which leads us to the whole subject of study.

I had a seminary professor who told us to study the whole Bible, but choose one book about which we could become “experts.” He urged us to take that one book apart, so to speak, put it back together, and then take it apart again. For me, that book is Proverbs. I wrote a daily devotional from Proverbs in 1997, but continue to study that book. Even now I am doing more research on wisdom literature in general and Proverbs specifically. I would like to write another book on it, but feel I must study Hebrew before I can do that.

What are you studying at this point in your life? Do you have anything that you have studied for years and will continue to study? Is there one book of the Bible that is your specialty? One theme or topic about which you have spent more than a little time researching? Or maybe you have considered furthering your education by taking classes at your church or Bible school? Why not start your classes as soon as possible or resume them if you have taken a break?

v. 12 – The prophets who searched were all given the same answer: The message they were preaching was to be fulfilled in the future, in the time of Christ. At that time, the Spirit would empower individuals to go and preach the good news to that and future generations. Even angels longed to look into what has been preached to every generation since Jesus. **So if angels are so anxious to study the matters of salvation, why aren't you that anxious? If you are, what are you doing to systematize your studies?**

What if God wants you to serve future generations and not your own? This is what the prophets had to do. Although they had an immediate impact, for the most part their greatest impact was to be in the future. As I write these studies and my other material, it is my hope that God will use them today. There is a chance, however, that my work may be more useful in the future to a generation now maturing or even unborn. So I write in faith, trusting God to use my labors for His glory now or later (or not at all), according to His divine purpose.

Something good always happens when we seek. When we seek the face of God, we are changed, whether we obtain what we are seeking or not, and that's always a plus. My writings have furthered my development into the image of Jesus. You may not receive what you are seeking, but you will be better off for the search.

Day Five

13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. 14 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

v. 13 – How much better the Church would be if we took this command to heart: Prepare your minds for action. Too often the Church has prepared their mind so that they can learn more and prepare their minds to learn more. Our pastor on Sunday talked about the gap that can exist between profession and performance. We can too easily profess something that we don't do. Take missions, for example. There are two billion people who don't know about Jesus and most churches spend their time with programs that will keep the members and those attending happy.

The King James translates this "gird up the loins of your minds," which is an image from the Greek world. The men wore long robes, but tucked them into their girdles when there went into action or served at table. The words translated here "self-controlled" are rendered "be sober" in the King James. The opposite of sober is frivolous or light-hearted in a time of seriousness. As I write, I am attending my father-in-law's funeral, and many of the family members are sober. They aren't crying, but they aren't wildly happy either. It is a time that requires sobriety.

We are then to focus our hope not on other people, not on a government, leader or friend. Our hope is to be placed squarely in God and in His grace that is revealed and yet to be

revealed in Jesus Christ. How often I have been disappointed when I've placed my hope in something else other than Jesus. **Are you disappointed today?** I would imagine it is because you have done the same thing. I should only expect that He will reward my labor and sacrifice—no one else. Yet I constantly tend to put my hope in many other things, only to be disappointed regularly.

vs. 14-16 – God commands that we be holy as He is holy. That is a high standard and some have stated that we can attain a sinless state in this lifetime. I don't agree with that interpretation. Do you? Otherwise why would John feel the need to write the following?

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives. My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world (1 John 1:5-2:2).

I don't think we excuse our sin and we strive to be sinless. Yet a sinless state isn't possible this side of Jesus' return. As one preacher said, "When you sin, that's not the time to run from God, but rather the time to run to Him." Don't deny the truth if you sin. Go to God, ask forgiveness and apply and allow the Spirit's help to not sin again;

For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father" (Romans 8:13-16).

I never try to conquer sin in my own strength. Rather I call out to God, asking His grace to change me and further grace to cooperate with the change.

Day Six

17 Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear. 18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. 20 He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. 21 Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

v. 17 – God does not play favorites. I have felt at times that my “doctrinal correctness” gave me special standing with God. It does not. First of all, anything I see is because God opened my eyes to see it. Then I am all the more accountable for correct behavior when I have some insight into God’s will for my life. My only claim to God’s favor is my standing in Christ.

Also, this world is not my home; I am a “stranger” here, a pilgrim passing through on my way to a more lasting life and world. So I should invest more in my eventual home than my current one, as Jesus advised:

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:19-21).

Are you storing up treasures through your holy obedience?

vs. 18&19 – Peter reminded the readers that they were “redeemed.” The word here is used to depict the act of buying a slave’s freedom, thus paying a price that enabled them to move from bondage to freedom. We have been set free by the blood of Jesus, redeemed (both Jew and Gentile) from empty lifestyles without God. Peter spent a lot of time convincing the reader that they are indeed special, carriers of a special deposit of God’s love and grace. He is setting the stage to encourage them in their distress by reminding them of the precious life they have inherited in Christ. Do you need the same kind of reminder as you face hard times?

v. 20 – God foresaw man’s Fall and ordained Jesus to come before the foundation of the world. Some believe that this refers to the time before Abraham was called to be the father of those who have faith; others believe it refers to before the world was created. I believe the latter. Christ was not an afterthought, a move God had to make when man fell. Man fell by free choice, but God had foreseen that act and prescribed the remedy well in advance of it actually happening.

When I face verses like this, I feel so inadequate to understand the things of God. How can I explain what Peter meant here? Do I know? How could God call Christ from before the foundation of the world, yet Adam and Eve’s choices be freewill?

Lord, I pray that you would give me wisdom and insight into your Word. I want to know Your ways, and understand Your acts? I am so limited, Lord. Expand my capacity to understand and explain.

v. 21 – We believe in God through Jesus. That would seem to eliminate any other means to God.

For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men — the testimony given in its proper time (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

I can't explain what happens to those who never heard the gospel. **If they don't know Jesus, it would seem that they have no access to God. Is that the matter of a cruel God or a cruel Church that doesn't do all in its power to preach to as many as possible around the world?**

Day Seven

22 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. 23 For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. 24 For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, 25 but the word of the Lord stands forever." And this is the word that was preached to you.

v. 22 – I found out many years ago that it wasn't in my heart to love the brothers. There were certain people about whom I had to pray, "Lord, I can't do this. I can't love them, but You can. So I ask you to change my heart where this person is concerned. I will obey Your command but I want it to be from the heart. So I will walk in obedience as I can, but I'm asking You to change my heart!" **Do you need to utter that prayer concerning someone in your life right now?**

v. 23 – Being a Jew and descendant of Abraham did not qualify anyone to have right-standing before God, according to Peter, himself a Jew. He wrote that everyone needs to be born again, regardless of their ethnic or spiritual heritage. This is according to the word of God and it will not change! There is no new revelation concerning how men may be saved—no new Messiah, no new doctrine.

vs. 24-25 – All men, along with their ideas, doctrines, and systems of how to reach God and win His favor, are worthless. They are destined to pass away, along with their concepts, like the grass. It is only God's word that transcends each generation and His word is Jesus! Jesus is the only way to God and this will not change, no matter how enlightened man becomes. Peter quoted Isaiah 40:6-8 in this verse, and the rest of the passage went on to predict the preaching of the gospel as man's only means to God.

If that's true, what are you doing to spread the gospel? If you can't go, can you give? If you can't give, can you pray? You and I have the only hope for lost people, but we must declare the truth or help those who are doing so. **What can you sell to support a worker in the vineyard?** We are getting ready to move out of our house, and I am reminded again just how much "stuff" I have, and much of it I don't use or wear. I want to downsize so that I can give my latter years to furthering the cause of Jesus around the world. I am working to simplify my lifestyle. **Will you join me in this effort?**