

## *Second Baptist Church of Doylestown*

### *Bible Study Notes: Book of 1 Peter*

*6/14/17*

#### *Chapter 1*

##### **Praise to God for a Living Hope - Verses 1-2**

<sup>1</sup> Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, <sup>2</sup> who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

**1:1** The apostle Peter wrote this letter to encourage believers who would likely face trials and persecution under Emperor Nero. During most of the first century, Christians were not hunted down and killed throughout the Roman Empire. They could, however, expect social and economic persecution from three main sources: the Romans, the Jews, and their own families. All would very likely be misunderstood; some would be harassed; a few would be tortured and even put to death.

The legal status of Christians in the Roman Empire was unclear. Many Romans still thought of Christians as members of a Jewish sect, and because the Jewish religion was legal, they considered Christianity legal also—as long as Christians complied with the empire's laws. However, they became the target of persecution when they refused to worship the emperor as a god, refused to worship at pagan temples (so business for these moneymaking enterprises dropped wherever Christianity took hold), or exposed and rejected the horrible immorality of pagan culture.

Many Jews did not appreciate being legally associated with Christians. As the book of Acts frequently records, Jews occasionally harmed Christians physically, drove them out of town, or attempted to turn Roman officials against them. Saul, later the great apostle Paul, was an early Jewish persecutor of Christians.

Another source of persecution was the Christian's own family. Under Roman law, the head of the household had absolute authority over all its members. Unless the ruling male became a Christian, the wife, children, and servants who were believers might well face extreme hardship. If they were sent away, they would have no place to turn but the church; if they were beaten, no court of law would uphold their interests. Peter may have been writing especially for new Christians and those planning to be baptized. Peter wanted to warn them about what lay ahead, and they needed his encouraging words to help them face opposition. This letter is still helpful for any Christians facing trials. Many Christians around the world are living under governments more repressive than the Roman Empire of the first century. Christians everywhere are subject to misunderstanding, ridicule, and even harassment by

unbelieving friends, employers, and family members. None of us is exempt from catastrophe, pain, illness, and death—trials that, like persecution, make us lean heavily on God's grace. For today's readers, as well as for Peter's original audience, the theme of this letter is hope.

**1:1** Peter (also called Simon and Cephas) was one of the 12 disciples chosen by Jesus (Mark 1:16-18; John 1:42) and, with James and John, was part of the inner group that Jesus singled out for special training and fellowship. Peter was one of the first to recognize Jesus as the Messiah, God's Son, and Jesus gave him a special leadership role in the church (Matthew 16:16-19; Luke 22:31-32; John 21:15-19). Although during Jesus' trial Peter denied knowing Jesus, Peter repented and became a great apostle.

**1:1** This letter is addressed to "God's elect, exiles" or "the Jewish Christians scattered" throughout the world as a result of persecution against believers in and around Jerusalem. The first believers and leaders of the early church were Jews. When they became Christians, they didn't give up their Jewish heritage, just as you didn't give up your nationality when you became a follower of Christ. Because of persecution, these believers had been scattered throughout the Roman world (this scattering is described in Acts 8:1-4). Persecution didn't stop the spread of the gospel; instead, persecution served as a way to introduce the gospel to the whole empire. Thus, the churches to whom Peter wrote also included Gentile Christians.

**1:2** Peter encouraged his readers by this strong declaration that they were chosen by God the Father. At one time, only the nation of Israel could claim to be God's chosen people; but through Christ, all believers—Jews and Gentiles—belong to God. Our salvation and security rest in God's merciful choice; no trials or persecutions can take away the eternal life he gives to those who believe in him.

**1:2** This verse mentions all three members of the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ), and God the Holy Spirit. All members of the Trinity work to bring about our salvation. The Father chose us before we chose him (Ephesians 1:4). Jesus Christ, the Son, died for us while we were still sinners (Romans 5:6-10). The Holy Spirit brings us the benefits of salvation and sets us apart (sanctifies us) for God's service (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

**1:2** How did God "choose" us? Don't we make our own choices? God alone originates and accomplishes our salvation because of his grace; we do nothing to earn it. Being "chosen" in no way removes the necessity for people to choose to follow. The fact that God knows all events and decisions beforehand, even ordains them beforehand, does not mean that he forces the actions of his creatures or leaves them with no choice. Instead, God's foreknowledge means that he took the initiative and chose people before they had done anything to deserve it. God had intimate knowledge of these future believers; he knew who would believe, and he knew them personally. Those chosen ones were known by God the Father as a father knows his children, except that God knew about them from eternity past. God is not trapped in time—what he knows is from eternity past into eternity future. Believers are chosen, but not against their will. When the time comes, they accept the gospel message.

## Praise to God for a Living Hope - Verses 3-12

<sup>3</sup> 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, <sup>4</sup> and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. <sup>7</sup> These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. <sup>8</sup> 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, <sup>9</sup> for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls. <sup>10</sup> Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, <sup>11</sup> trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. <sup>12</sup> 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.

**1:3** The term "new birth" refers to spiritual birth (regeneration)—the Holy Spirit's act of bringing believers into God's family. Jesus used this concept of new birth when he explained salvation to Nicodemus (see John 3). This term is a wonderful metaphor of new life from God. You cannot be a Christian without a fresh beginning based on the salvation Christ brings. To be born again is a magnificent gift from God.

**1:3-5** Do you need encouragement? Peter's words offer joy and hope in times of trouble, and he bases his confidence on what God has done for us in Christ Jesus. We're called into a living hope of eternal life (1:3). Our hope is not only for the future; eternal life begins when we trust Christ and join God's family. God will help us remain true to our faith through whatever difficult times we must face. The "last time" is the judgment day of Christ described in Romans 14:10 and Revelation 20:11-15. No matter what trials or persecution you may face, your soul cannot be harmed if you have accepted Christ's gift of salvation. You will receive the promised rewards.

**1:4** The Jews had looked forward to an inheritance in the Promised Land of Canaan (Numbers 32:19; Deuteronomy 2:12; 19:8). Although the nation had received that right of inheritance, eventually they defiled their faith through the influence of foreign nations. The people's sins had caused the promise to become only a fading memory. Christians now look forward to another inheritance—eternal life in the eternal city of God. God has reserved the inheritance; it will never fade or decay; it will be unstained by sin. The best part is that you have an inheritance if you have trusted Christ as your Savior.

**1:6** Why were Christians the target of persecution? (1) They refused to worship the emperor as a god and thus were viewed as atheists and traitors. (2) They refused to worship at pagan temples, so business for these moneymaking enterprises dropped wherever Christianity took hold. (3) They didn't support the Roman ideals of self, power, and conquest; and the Romans scorned the Christian ideal of self-sacrificing service. (4) They exposed and rejected the horrible immorality of pagan culture.

**1:6-7** Peter mentions trials and suffering several times in this letter: 1:6-7; 3:13-17; 4:12-19; 5:9. All believers face such trials when they let their light shine into the darkness. We must accept trials as part of the refining process that burns away impurities and prepares us to meet Christ. As gold is heated, impurities float to the top and can be skimmed off. Likewise, our trials, struggles, and persecutions refine and strengthen our faith, making us useful to God. Instead of asking, "Why me?" we should respond to suffering with a new set of responses: (1) Confidence that God knows, plans, and directs our lives for the good. It's hard to calculate sometimes, but God always provides his love and strength for us. God leads us toward a better future. (2) Perseverance when facing grief, anger, sorrow, and pain. We express our grief, but we don't give in to bitterness and despair. (3) Courage because with Jesus as Brother and Savior, we need not be afraid. He who suffered for us will not abandon us. Jesus carries us through everything.

**1:8-9** Jesus had said to his disciple Thomas, who came to believe after touching the resurrected Christ: "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29). Peter, having heard those words, repeats them here: "Though you have not seen him, you love him." That faith brings both salvation and the promise of a day when pain will end and perfect justice begin. Faith will be rewarded and evil will be punished. But what should we do until then? The Bible's answer is simple but not easy: Because we know the future, we must faithfully serve God here and now. If today that means resolving a conflict, mending a hurt, working a dull job, confronting a belligerent child, rebuilding a marriage, or just waiting for guidance—do it all with the joy of God, who will return with his reward!

**1:11** The Spirit of Christ is another name for the Holy Spirit. Before Jesus left his ministry on earth to return to heaven, he promised to send the Holy Spirit, the Counselor, to teach, help, and guide his followers (John 14:15-17, 26; 16:7). The Holy Spirit would tell them all about Jesus and would reveal his glory (John 15:26; 16:14). The Old Testament prophets, writing under the Holy Spirit's inspiration (2 Peter 1:20-21), described the coming of the Messiah. The New Testament apostles, through the inspiration of the same Spirit, preached the crucified and risen Lord.

### **Be Holy - Verses 13-25**

<sup>13</sup> Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. <sup>14</sup> As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. <sup>15</sup> But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; <sup>16</sup> for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." <sup>17</sup> Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live

out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. <sup>18</sup> 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 ancestors, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. <sup>20</sup> He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. <sup>21</sup> Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

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

**1:13-14** The imminent return of Christ should motivate us to live for him. This means being mentally "alert," disciplined ("fully sober"), and focused ("set your hope"). Are you ready to meet Christ, living as God's obedient child?

**1:14-16** The God of Israel and of the Christian church is holy—he sets the standard for morality. Unlike the Roman gods, he is not warlike, adulterous, or spiteful. Unlike the gods of the pagan cults popular in the first century, he is not bloodthirsty or promiscuous. He is a God of mercy and justice who cares personally for each of his followers. Our holy God expects us to imitate him by following his high moral standards. Like him, we should be both merciful and just; like him, we should sacrifice ourselves for others.

**1:14-16** Peter's words mean that all parts of our lives and character should be in the process of becoming conformed, both inwardly and outwardly, to God's standards. After people commit their lives to Christ, they sometimes still feel a pull back to their old ways. Peter tells us to be like our heavenly Father—holy in everything we do. Holiness means being totally devoted or dedicated to God, set aside for his special use and set apart from sin and its influence. We're to be set apart and different, not blending in with the crowd, yet not being different just for the sake of being different. God's qualities in our lives make us different. Our focus and priorities must be his. All this is in direct contrast to our old ways (1:14). We cannot become holy on our own, but God gives us his Holy Spirit to help us obey and to give us power to overcome sin. Don't use the excuse that you can't help slipping into sin. Rely on God's power to free you from sin's grip.

**1:17** "Reverent fear" is the healthy respect of a believer for the all-powerful God. Because God is the Judge of all the earth, we dare not ignore him or treat him casually. We should not assume that our privileged status as God's children gives us freedom to do whatever we want. We should not be spoiled children but grateful children who love to show respect for our heavenly Father.

**1:18-19** A slave was "redeemed" when someone paid money to buy the slave's freedom. God redeemed us from the tyranny of sin, not with money, but with the precious blood of his own Son (Romans 6:6-7; 1 Corinthians 6:20; Colossians 2:13-14; Hebrews 9:12). We cannot escape from sin on our own; only the life of God's Son can free us.

**1:20** Christ's sacrifice for our sins was not an afterthought, not something God decided to do when the world spun out of control. This plan was set in motion by the all-knowing, eternal God long before the world was created. What a comfort it must have been to Jewish believers to know that Christ's coming and his work of salvation were planned by God long before the world began. This assured them that the law was not being scrapped because it didn't work but that both the law and the coming of Christ were part of God's eternal plan.

**1:22** "Sincere love" involves selfless giving; a self-centered person can't truly love. God's love and forgiveness free you to take your eyes off yourselves and to meet others' needs. By sacrificing his life, Christ showed that he truly loves you. Now you can love others by following his example and giving of yourself sacrificially.

**1:24-25** Quoting Isaiah 40:6-8, Peter reminds believers that everything in this life—possessions, accomplishments, people—will eventually fade away and disappear. Only God's will, word, and work are permanent. We must stop grasping the temporary and begin focusing our time, money, and energy on the permanent: the Word of God and our eternal life in Christ.