
Into Thy Word Bible Study in 1 Peter

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1 Peter 1: 1-2: Christ our Living Hope!

General idea: God's grace and abundant mercy is available to us both now and as an inheritance to come! This passage is about salutations and greetings, acknowledgments and hope. Peter writes to a group of struggling Christians, whose hope is on the verge of extinction and whose options are limited. These are mostly Jews who have been disconnected from their homeland and all that they know, but also Gentile converts who are scattered from their families, careers, and status because of their faith. They are all really aliens in a foreign land; they are all—both Jew and Gentile—scattered physically and spiritually. Now, they realize, when we are in Christ, we are all foreigners as the world is not our real or permanent home; rather, our true home is to come. We become scattered from all that we know and need so to honor and embrace our Lord Jesus Christ more firmly, more fully, and more joyfully—to enjoy Him.

Thus, Peter starts off his letter with a song of praise for what God has done, so we can express our gratitude and worship to Him (Eph. 1:2-14). Then he gives us a litany of loaded theological words filled with power and meaning, showing us who our God is and, more prevalently, what He has done for us. We have to realize—for the ability to survive and to thrive on this earth—we are precious in His sight! We have a Hope Who is real for us now and eternally. He gives us kindness, protection, and understanding beyond what we can fathom, love and forgiveness beyond comprehension, and the ultimate gift of our salvation that will never decay even when we totally do not deserve nor could ever merit it. We have a precious inheritance, expectation, privilege, and power in Jesus Christ, our loving Savior and Lord. We have HOPE!

Vs. 1-2: These early Christians were desperate and needed protection from the attacks of the world around them. Peter is reassuring them, confidently and deeply, telling them the blessing of God's special favor is upon them. The blessings are realized when the more we stay firm in our faith, the more protection is given to us. Peter tells us we are aliens in a hostile world; yet, at the same time, we have the grace and love of our merciful God at hand. Then, he springs on us the incredible, theological wonder of what Christ did for us! This passage also references the three Persons of the Trinity!

- *Peter.* This is *Simon*, whom Jesus changed to Pete (see background material for more info). He was one of Jesus' first disciples, and was a principal leader in the early church (Matt. 15:15; 18:21; Mark 1:26-37; 8:29; 9:5-6; Luke 12:41; John 6:68; Acts 10:18; 15:14; 2 Peter 1:1). Peter was given the special call of feeding the sheep and being the foundation of the church (Mark 1:16-18; 5:37;

9:2; 14:33; John 21:15-19). (See *Peter* background article for further information.)

- *Apostle*. The word, *Apostle* (*Apostolos*), means *emissary*, or *sent one*, as in Jesus' personally commissioned representatives (Matt. 10:40; 15:24; Mark 6:7-13; 30; 9:37; Luke 9:1-6; 48; John 4:34; 5:24, 30, 36-38; 6:38; 1 Cor. 1:1; 9. 1-2; 2 Cor. 8:23; Gal. 1:1; Col. 1:1; Heb. 3:1). They also had to be an eye witness of the resurrection (Acts 1:22; 1 Cor. 15:8), and they governed the early church (1 Cor. 14:37; 1 Thess. 2:13; 4:8, 15; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14; 2 Pet. 3:15-16). In 2 Corinthians, the words, *representatives/messengers*, are also used for *apostle* in a broader sense (2 Cor. 1:1; 8:23; Phil. 2:25). This title does not apply today; it is reserved only for the original twelve plus Paul. Today, all Christians are emissaries (2 Cor. 5:20). Also today, this role is filled by Elders (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 12:7, 11, 28; Eph. 4:11)! Thus, the original Apostles started the church and the Elders today continue to run the church.
- *Pilgrims/ elect, strangers* referred to the Jewish Christians who were on a journey, scattered from their mission, work, and family, some even fleeing from persecution. Chapter 2:10 gives us a clearer picture of their work amongst the Gentiles, too. The word "saints" is used in 2 Corinthians 1:1 as a general term, and here, referring to people who are in Christ. The word we use now is "Christians," which comes about later (Acts 26:28; Rom. 15:25; Phil. 1:1; 1 Pet. 4:16).
- *Dispersion* (Greek *diaspora*) means "dispersed" or "isolated," a colloquialism that referred to the Jews who had *scattered*, or moved away from their homeland (John 7:35; 1 Pet. 1:17; 2:11). For us, it means we are "resident aliens" living in a foreign world; our real home is in Heaven to come (1 Chron. 29:15; Psalm 39:12; Heb. 13:14). This epistle was an "encyclical" letter, meaning it was copied and sent out to many churches in Asia Minor. The sequence of the names of the readers in this epistle may reflect the courier's route and schedule, or those who were on Peter's heart.
- *Elect* here means our privilege to be eternally called in Christ, and that our salvation is secured by God's grace alone, received by our faith alone (1 Pet. 2:9-10). *Elect* or *election* in biblical theology means "to select" or "to choose," that God chose us by His purpose and nothing else. Because, if it was accordingly by His foreknowledge, that would mean it was by our future means, therefore the need and work of Christ would be thwarted (John 17:24; Eph. 1:3-14; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; 2 Tim. 1:9-10). Divine election is a continuous theme in Paul's Epistles (Rom. 8:29-33; 9:6-26; 11:5, 7, 28; 16:13; Col. 3:12; 1 Thess. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13; Titus 1:1).

We cannot fathom this true implication, meaning, or reasoning. We have to trust that God is God and we are not; thus, we have no idea of His plan or purpose. All Christian groups who use the Bible teach election; the division is in its meaning and purpose, which God has not revealed to us, and about

which we can only speculate. We only know what He has revealed and that He does elect; our call is to trust and obey (1 Cor. 1:8-9; Phil.1:6; 1 Thess. 1:3-6; 5:23-24; 2 Tim. 1-12; 4:18; 2 Pet. 1:10). Our purpose is not to argue over this, but to accept His amazing grace.

- *Foreknowledge* refers to God as sovereign and “omniscient,” meaning He is all-knowing, crossing time and space; thus, He knows the future. This is where “predestination” comes from, (Gen. 4:1; Psalm 90; Amos 3:2; Mal. 1:2; Matt 1:25; 1 Cor. 1:9;) that God's plan is sovereign and eternal. We have a personal plan and agenda to follow, a purpose that is God's. The argument in theology is not that He elects us; rather by what means God uses His foreknowledge or His purpose. The book of Romans says it is by His purpose. Human reason says it is by God seeing ahead.
- *Sanctification* here means the application of our redemption, of setting us apart from sin (Gal. 6:14; 2 Thess. 2:13). This is the growth we have and do in Christ—in our trust and obedience that He provides. This is not saving action; it is a response action where we become more like Christ's character. The work of the Spirit intercedes in us; our response is our progressive growth and spiritual formation in Him (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:1-10; Luke 24:26; John 15; 17:2; Phil. 3:10; 1 Thess. 4:3; Heb. 2:10).
- *Obedience* means our continual acts of trusting in God and obeying His precepts (John 6:28-29; Eph. 1:3-4; 2 Tim. 1:9). We are chosen for obedience! This is not initiated by us, only a response by us. This is our part—our result, answer, and responsibility to His election and sanctification. This leads us to the Will of God, which is God's sovereignty and control, and He places us where we need to be for His glory (2 Cor. 1:1-3).
- *The blood of Christ* refers to the O.T. rituals of sacrifice and the sprinkling of blood for redemption, which Christ now takes the place of. It was the initiation of the Covenant of God to Israel; now, it is the Covenant of God to us. It also now means we have a covenant that we are forgiven (Gen. 4:10; Ex. 24:7-8; Luke 9:23-24; 23:34; Heb. 9:11-14, 18-28; 12:24; 1 John 1:7).
- *Grace...peace* is a standard greeting meaning a pronouncing of a blessing or God's special favor upon someone. These would be cool, quenching words for Christians in distress! The blessing is that we are right with God, no matter what happens, when we are in relationship with Christ our Redeemer (Isa. 44:6; Jonah 4:2; John 14:27; 20:19; Rom. 5:1-2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2)!
- *Suffering, Glory*. The greater our suffering, the greater we become in Him. We shine in His glory and shine His glory to others when we endure trials and learn and grow from them.

The key words of *chosen*, *elect*, *foreknew*, and *predestined* have been topics of hot debate amongst many Christian groups over the centuries. The principle theme is agreed upon, that God does choose us and makes us holy—to which this passage attests and the rest of the Bible clearly proclaims. If He did not, we could never obtain salvation on our own (Gen. 45:8; 50:20; Job 14:5; Psalm 33:13-14; 115:3; 147:5; Prov. 5:21; 15:3; 16:1, 4, 9, 33; Is. 14:26-27; Dan. 4:33-34; John. 1:13; Acts 2:23; Rom. 8:29-30; 9:9-18; 1 Pet. 1:1, 20).

The debate rages over how He chooses: by His Sovereign purpose (which the Reformers believed) or by His foreknowledge (as many Evangelicals today believe.) Such debates, although invigorating and insightful to know more and establish a position, sometime cause us to ignore the main thing—that God is God, He loves us, He chooses us, He makes us holy, and now, because of what He did for us, we are to spend our energies growing and serving Him. What we are not to do is make a nuisance of ourselves by spending all of our energies in supercilious debate, and ignoring what Jesus did, so it does not impact our lives. The key thing we forget is our obedience and faith development, which is far more important in God's eyes than getting the particulars of theology correct. Correct theology is very important because it teaches us who God is! But, our faith development is even more important, because it is our response to what God did!

This passage is a call to continue in prayer and faithfulness. In that way, we can continue to be better used by our Lord. We are to remain firm in our stand of faith even when life is falling apart around us, and when we do not see hope or the light at the end of the tunnel. The call is to be encouraged and to stand firm. When we persevere in our faith, we allow God to use us even more where we are. Then, we learn and we grow further in Him, which helps us grow and be used more. This is circular. The more we endure, the more we grow. Then, the more we are used, the more we go through and so forth. This is the spiral of our faith-building that draws us higher in Him. When we are growing, we are ministering, too. As our faith grows, we are more likely to hear God's call, see the needs of others, and find opportunities to serve. Our faith development is not to be selfish, although the primary benefit is for ourselves, but we also are to see how it affects others. When we grow, then we inspire, encourage, and minister to others faster and better!

So what is our call in this? To be joyful, thankful, and glad! To honor and enjoy our inheritance and love that we have received, so it overflows to others around us. Then, we can grow and endure through all things! Why? Because, we *will* face trials and sufferings, they are a part of this world and life. There is no escape from them. We can either learn to grow or withdraw and stagnate!

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see [Inductive Bible Study](#)):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me? How am I encouraged and strengthened?
4. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
5. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
6. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
7. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
8. What can I model and teach? What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. How scattered is your family and how often do you have reunions? Have you ever felt disconnected from your home and all that you know?
2. Why do you suppose Peter starts off his letter with a song of praise? Have you ever done that in your correspondences? Why, or why not?
3. What would a blessing or God's special favor mean to you? What is it? How could you receive it?
4. What does it mean to you that God's grace and abundant mercy are available to you now as well as being an inheritance to come?
5. If your hope was on the verge of extinction, your options limited, and you felt desperate, what would it take to reassure you? How have you responded to people in these circumstances?
6. Have you realized that when we are in Christ, we are all foreigners? This world is not our real or permanent home; rather, our true home is to come! What does this mean for your trust and growth in Him?
7. A lot of Christians today do not see the importance of theology. Why is that?
8. Why is correct theology very important? Why is responding to what God did even more important? How do these two go together?

9. Have you realized the incredible, theological wonder of what Christ did for you? Who He is and what He is? Well, this is all about theology; thus, to know, grow in, and worship Christ, we have to know Him, and that is to know theology. So, what do you think of this? What are you going to do about theology?
10. Some misguided Christians think they are “apostles.” Why do you suppose that a person would make that claim when Scripture tells us clearly what an apostle is?
11. How does it make you feel that the greater our suffering, the greater we become in Him? Does this scare you? What can you do to take comfort in this and not be scared?
12. How can the favor of God speak cool, quenching words to Christians in distress? So, what can you and your church do to be better at being a cool refresher to others in need or distress?

Remember, the continual acts of trusting in God and obeying His precepts are our part and responsibility. This will help us enjoy our inheritance and love in Christ and receive a blessing of God’s special favor.

I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. Psalm 18:1-2