



*Life – group notes – 1 Peter*  
*From denial to declaration – introduction to the study.*

*John 13:36-38: Peter's boast and Jesus' prediction*  
*John 18:13-27: Peter's denial of Jesus*  
*John 21: 15-19: Jesus reinstates Peter*

*Read John 13:31-38: Peter's boast and Jesus' prediction*

This incident (the boast and the prediction) is found in all four gospels (Mark 14:26–31; Matthew 26:30–35; Luke 22:31–39 and John 13:36-38). It is only in John, however, that it comes after the famous “New Commandment” to love one another (John 13:31-35). In the other three gospels, it comes after the institution of the Lord's supper.

- What do you think is the significance of John's change of placement of this section?

Peter, and the others seem to be less concerned about that than Jesus saying he is going somewhere the disciples cannot go.

- What is the significance of Peter's boast that he will lay down his life for Jesus?

*Read John 18:13-32 – Peter's denial of Jesus*

Peter and another disciple who is not named, possibly John himself, follow Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest. This is clearly a very risky thing to do and one would have expected, given Peter's earlier declaration, that he would be willing to admit that he was one of Jesus's followers. However, this turns out not to be the case

Peter is confronted by a servant girl (Vs. 16–17); By a group of servants and officials who were standing around the fire (vs. 25) And by one of the high priests servants, a relation of Malchus, Who had his ear cut off in the garden (vss. 10 & 26-27). Each time we are told that Peter denies being a disciple of Jesus or even being in the garden of Gethsemane when Jesus was arrested. Clearly the third person who confronts Peter would remember him, Peter having attempted to murder his relative.

- Compare the actions of Peter and Jesus. What significant difference are there in their actions?

*Read John 21:15-19 – Jesus restores Peter*

It is clear, that Peter was keen to talk with Jesus when he jumps out of the boat and runs to meet him after the miraculous catch a fish. So, after eating some of the fish that Peter and the others had caught, Jesus moves to reinstate Peter.

- Although Peter's declarations of love for Jesus are important, it is Jesus who initiates this conversation, and clearly wants Peter to know something. What do you think Jesus wants to communicate to Peter? Why?

Further Questions

- Have you ever made an extravagant promise to somebody and regretted it later?
- What was behind Peter's denials of Jesus? If it was simply fear, why did he stick around?
- Why do you think Jesus decided to restore Peter by asking him whether he loved him?
- How do Jesus' instructions to Peter [feed my lambs] restore him?
- How did Jesus' restoral of Peter affect him?



## 1 Peter 1:1-2 – We are Chosen

This is a traditional introduction to an ancient letter but with certain significant differences. They would begin with the introduction of the writer of the letter. Then there would be a part saying to whom the letter is addressed and finally there was a blessing, often of grace and peace [Charis and Eirene].

Peter, who presents himself as an Apostle of Jesus Christ, then introduces the recipients. Although an “Apostle” is simply a messenger or ‘sent one’, Peter is almost certainly emphasising the authoritative nature that he possesses as one of the original Twelve.

Peter is writing to people in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, all regions of the ancient Roman province of Asia Minor. However, Peter refers to them with three interesting descriptions: elect, strangers and dispersed. In the New Testament these words are mainly used to refer to Israel as God’s *chosen* people. Peter may be referring to Jewish Christians but due to the way he speaks to his readers later in the letter, it is more likely that he is referring to the Church as the people of God.

- What does it mean to you to be chosen by God?

He then calls them ‘*strangers*’, other versions refer to ‘*aliens*,’ or ‘*exiles*’. Others use the old word, ‘*sojourner*’. The Greek word is literally, somebody who is passing through. The classic biblical expression of this is found in Jeremiah’s letter of Jeremiah 29. Jeremiah tells them to settle down, marry and pray for the good of Babylon. So, they don’t belong there but are encouraged to do good for the place where they are.

- In what ways do you feel at home in this world? Or, in what ways do you feel a stranger in this world?

The final word is ‘*diaspora*’. Again, literally, to be spread abroad. This word seems to imply that there is a purpose behind their dispersal. This seems to mean that the Christians that Peter is writing to are the people of God who are residents of this world, but with a home beyond this world, whom God has dispersed throughout Asia Minor.

- How does the realisation that we have been placed here by God, change the way we think and act?

Verse 2 is written in a trinitarian form. We have been chosen according to the Foreknowledge of *God the Father*, through the sanctifying work of *the Holy Spirit*, in order that we will be obedient to *Jesus Christ*. this gives us a hint of what it means to be chosen we are not chosen for our own benefit or in our own strength. We are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the father, and we are obedient to Jesus Christ through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. So, God the father is the *source* of our election, the Holy Spirit is the *means* of our election and Jesus Christ is the *purpose* of our election.

- What do these great truths mean to you?

*1 Peter 1:3-12 – We are hopeful*

- if you are willing to share, please share what are your hopes for your own life, perhaps for your children's' lives or even for the country in the world.

'I hope everything will be alright.' 'I hope that my friend comes to visit me today.' 'I hope I get a nice present for my birthday.' These "hopes" are really expressed desires. The Christian's hope, however, is different. It is so different that the Apostle Peter describes it as a new birth that came about because Jesus rose from the dead. And this hope is an inheritance that cannot rot, be ruined in anyway or can't evaporate. The reason for this is that it is kept in heaven. This hope, however, is not fulfilled yet, but will be revealed in the last days.

- How do you understand this Christian hope?
- What is the relationship between hope and suffering?
- How does hope in suffering lead to the praise and glory?

Verse 8 is fascinating because it reveals what the Christian hope truly is. I hope is to see Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ and him alone is the object of our hope.

- In the light of this what does this mean for the way we live and hope for today?

Verse 9 mentions the salvation of our souls. We tend to think of the soul in Greek terms: as the immortal part of the human being. The soul, in both Old and New Testaments means the very centre of our being?

- What would this mean for you?

Verses 10-12 really demonstrate that we, as Christians are privileged. The prophets of the Old Testament and even the angels are interested in what this salvation looks like. We have seen this salvation and hope.

- Take time to praise the Lord for this great salvation.
- Pray for each other that we will experience this kind of hope even in our sufferings.



### *1 Peter 1:13-2:3 – We are Holy*

Holiness in the Bible is a concept based in temple worship. Everything was either for everyday use [referred to as profane] or for the use in worship [referred to as holy]. These 'holy' things were consecrated for worship.

- In the light of this, what would 'be holy as I am holy' mean?

This phrase, used here by Peter, is from Leviticus 11 and 19.

- Look up and scan through Leviticus 11 and 19. What do these instructions deal with?
- What does this mean for us?

God's holiness and ours are related to one another in 1 Peter 1:15

- What does the fact that Peter refers to this holiness in relational terms mean [children, father, ancestors, etc]?

1 Peter 1:17 refers to us as foreigners. This is the same word used earlier in chapter 1. This means we are in the world not of it.

- What does this mean to you?
- 1 Peter 1:22 - What link does Peter make between purity, obedience and love? Why?
- 1 Peter 2:1 – What are the opposites of malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander? In what way could these be an expression of holiness?
- What does it mean to "crave pure spiritual milk?"
- Pray for each other that we would be able to be holy in our own context.

### *1 Peter 2:4-10: Community with a mission*

This is a very famous passage which uses a lot of old Testament analogies such as the temple, the elect, the priesthood and holiness. You will notice that most of these analogies are collective analogies which is why we are community.

- What does the word community mean to you? What sort of activities does being part of the community envisage?

At the beginning this passage Jesus is called the Living Stone and being part of Jesus Christ by believing in him, Peter says that we have become living stones being built into a holy house, i.e. the temple. But not only a temple but also a holy priesthood. So, we are both the temple and those who serve in the temple. The important thing here is to recognise that both temple and priesthood are qualified by the adjective "Holy".

- What do you think being a holy temple and being a holy priesthood means in practice for our daily lives?

The themes of being chosen and being rejected are strong in this passage. Christ is both chosen and rejected and that is what Peter's readers would have expected as well. So, Peter is preparing them for rejection, but encouraging them that they are still elected.

Verses 9 and 10 are lifted almost directly out of Exodus chapter 19.

- Read Exodus 19:1-6 – What is the significance of these verses in the light of the fact that they come before the 10 commandments (20:1-17)?

Each of these titles that Peter gives to his readers have implications for the relationship of the church with the world. Chosen people means that we have been called out of the world in order to be different from the world. Royal priesthood means that we are mediators between God and the world and holy nation means that we are a nation that is consecrated to God out of the world.

- How could this look today for Bourne Baptist Church?
- Pray that we will know find ways to live this out today.

## 1 Peter 2:11-3:7 – We are Different

1 Peter 2:11-12 is the basis of the way Christians should be different. It is because of what we are (aliens and exiles) and therefore, how we act (abstaining from fleshly passions). Verse 12 demonstrates that all this is to be a witness to the Gentiles (the word can also mean 'nations;').

- What do these verses have in common with Deuteronomy 4:5-8?

Peter emphasises that submission to authority is the way we demonstrate our difference. Christians were being accused of being anti-Roman. They were accused of atheism (because they didn't have idols); of incest (because they called each other brother and sister yet married) and of cannibalism (because they ate the flesh and drunk the blood of their saviour)!

- In the light of these facts, read 1 Peter 2:13-17 again. How would following Peter's instructions prove the Gentiles to be wrong about Christians? How can we apply this to ourselves today?

Slavery was essential to Roman society. Peter asks the slave to be respectful even to those masters who didn't deserve respect. Verse 20 shows that Peter thinks endurance under injustice is a gracious thing and verses 21-24 hold Jesus up as the example.

- As Christ was the example to the Christian, the Christian must be an example to the world (Gentiles). How could this work in practice—back then and today?

These words about the wife and husband are very difficult for us as contemporary people. 1 Peter 3:1-2 are emphasising the importance of the witness of a Christian wife to non-Christian husbands. Verses 3-6 seem ultra-conservative but put another way they may be liberative. Today, women are almost always judged upon looks and criticised for what they wear, etc. Here Peter is correcting this and showing that beauty to do with the spirit not the external looks.

- It would be good for the group's women to comment on their reactions to this passage.

1 Peter 3:7 is also difficult in places, however, once again, although Peter refers to women as 'the weaker sex' (I think he is referring to physical strength, which is generally true), he says that 'they are heirs with you of the grace of life.' Rarely were women able to inherit anything in the ancient world. In Christ women are co-heirs.

- Pray about how we at Bourne Baptist can put these things into practice.

### *1 Peter 3:8-12 – We are loving*

- What does a good life mean to you?

Verse 8 - The word for '*like-minded*' can be translated 'single-minded' although in the context of community, it is probably right to say, like-minded or have the same way of thinking (Philippians 2:2). '*Sympathetic*' means 'feeling together'. '*Love one another*' is literally to have 'brotherly-love'. 'Tender-heartedness' or 'compassionate' is literally to have 'good bowels'! This is a gut-level feeling towards one another. Finally, 'humble' means 'lowliness of mind'; i.e. not thinking over-highly of yourself.

- How would each of these potential characteristics improve the quality of community?

Verse 9 – This verse would certainly have been a challenge for the early Christians who were often insulted and mistreated in Roman society.

- What do you think the link is between inheriting a blessing and 'repaying insult with a blessing'?

Verses 10-12 are a quote from Psalm 34:12-16, which is an acrostic poem (each line starts with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet). Read the Psalm. Analyse whether the verse is a statement of faith; a declaration of the character and actions of God or an instruction.

- Why is the person who does good in the face of evil blessed, according to Peter and David?

Pray for each other that we would be able to fulfil this type of life.

## *1 Peter 3:13-22 – We are prepared, we are vindicated*

### Verses 13-17

- Share together how you feel when you are hard done by.
- In what way do you think we are blessed when we are wronged for doing good?

We are told not to fear threats but, literally “consecrate” Jesus Christ as Lord. So the cure for fear of threat is the consecration of Christ in our hearts.

- How do you think this works in practice?

We are also told to be ready to give an account of our hope in Christ in gentleness and respect. Our confidence in being vindicated by God, should not result in the impression of aggressiveness or arrogance.

- How would this attitude, were we to have it, change the way our accusers see us?

Peter tells us we should have a clear conscience, which should then shame our accusers. So it should be our righteous actions, not our words which should shame our accusers.

- Why do you think it may be God’s will that we suffer for doing good (vs. 17)?

### Verses 18-22

Verse 18 is a wonderful summary of the gospel. Before, launching into this rather difficult and confusing passage, take moment to praise God together for his wonderful salvation.

These verses are much debated and draw heavily on the apocryphal book of Enoch. I have counted at least 10 different ways of viewing these verses. Some are complementary, others are contradictory. I don’t want to go through them, as (1) it will be confusing and (2) it will be boring, both to write and to read!

Verse 19 suggests that after being made alive in the spirit, Jesus goes and visits the evil spirits (either fallen angels or the children spoken of in Genesis 6). The location of this prison is not mentioned and therefore no important. Jesus proclaims his victory over them in his death and resurrection. There seems to be the idea that the evil spirits are linked to those persecuting the Christian Peter is writing to. They have influence but ultimately are defeated (vs. 22) so Peter’s readers have nothing to fear from their persecutors, they are held accountable by God. Noah’s family were small in number and were saved through the flood as Peter’s reader are saved through their baptismal faith in the resurrected Christ.

I know that this explanation will not satisfy some people, however, taking into account the Book of Enoch and Peter’s concerns for his persecuted readers, is seem to me the best solution.

- What does this teaching mean for us today?

*1 Peter 4:1-11 We are servants – Freedom from sin, freedom to serve.*

- What is a truly fulfilling life for you?

The passage can be divided into two major sections: verses 1-6 and 7-11. I see it like this.

1. Verses 1-6 - Decide that you are willing to suffer for righteousness
  - a. For a Christian who has suffered for doing right has made a clear break with sin (4: 1–2)
  - b. Give no more time to sin (4:3)
  - c. There is a judgement coming the Gentiles were abusing (4:4–5)
  - d. For the gospel is preached to Christians who have died to save them from eternal judgement (4:6)
2. Verses 7-11 - This final judgement is near, so act this way within the church (4:7–11)
  - a. Pray more and love each other more (4:7–9)
  - b. Glorify God by using your gifts (4: 10–11)

- Read the passage and see whether you agree with me.

Verses 1-6 are celebration of life rather than death. The Christian is made free from sin and therefore also from death.

- Read Romans 6:1-14. In what ways does Paul clarify Peter's point?

Verses 7-11 declare that because time is short before Christ returns, Christians should live lives as a witness to those who are opposed to them. Read 1 Peter 2:11-12.

- In what ways do you think we can do this during this period of lockdown?

### *1 Peter 4:12-19: We are suffering*

- If you are willing, please share about a time when you felt that you had suffered for being a Christian.

“Why me?” is often the cry when somebody is suffering in pretty much any way. “Why do I have to be picked on?” “Why do I have to get this disease?” “Why do I have to suffer the consequences of somebody else’s wrong doing?” For the Christian, suffering does have meaning.

Peter first of all tells us that it is normal for a Christian to suffer because they are ‘aliens’ or foreigners. They will be pick out because they are different. He doesn’t tell them not to be different but to continue to put themselves ‘out there.’

Pick out the three things that Peter says are true of the Christian in their suffering (vss. 13, 14 and 16).

- In what ways do you think it is a privilege to ‘participate in Christ’s sufferings?’
- What does ‘the Spirit of God rest on you’ mean? What are the consequences?
- Why do you think God may want a Christian to suffer (vs. 19)?

As the group leader, please do some research about the persecuted Church. Then pray for the persecuted Church in the world.

### *1 Peter 5:1-14: We are standing firm in the grace of God*

Peter's focus throughout his letter has been the behaviour of the people of God, dispersed among the nations, experiencing persecution and attempting to react in a manner worthy of the Gospel of God.

There are difference of opinion as whether the word, "so" or "therefore" is to be used in verse 1. If it is, then these verses are based on the previous verses (12-19) on judgement. If not then they are stand alone verses. On balance, and in the light of Peter's mention of the glory to be revealed, I think it is more likely that Peter is saying that in the light of coming judgement elders, oversee willingly, younger people submit.

The passage can be divided into two sections each with two subsections. We will look at each in turn.

1. How to conduct yourself in the light of coming judgement (5:1-9)
  1. Message to elders (5:1-4): Oversee as an example as Christ pastors us.
  2. Message to younger people (5:5-9): Submit humbly, resisting the devil

The word for 'elder' is 'presbyter'. Many argue that this is an official role; as we have Kate and Roland. If this was written by Peter, as I believe it was, this would have been quite a sophisticated church structure which had developed quickly. Also, I think he is referring to the whole church in elders and younger ones. Therefore, I would argue that Peter is referring to those more and less mature in the faith.

- From what we know of Peter, do you think he would the role of an elder easy?
- Of the qualities Peter mentions for an overseer to have, which would be the hardest for you and why?
- Do you find it easy to submit to authority?
- Humility is mentioned for both elders and younger people, why do you think that is? How is humility cultivated?

Pray for each other in our different roles within the church.

## 2. Final blessing and greeting (5:10-14)

1. A Blessing (5:10-11): God will restore you to make you strong, firm and steadfast
2. Final greetings (5:12-14): Stand firm in the grace of God and have peace.

This blessing and greeting are linked by the reference to standing firmly or being established. This is only possible when we stand in the grace of God in Jesus Christ. This means know his promises and his strength through Spirit but by also being in fellowship. This is the reference to the 'holy kiss'.

- Give some time to thinking about what has challenged you, comforted you and what you have learned through the studies in 1 Peter.

End by praying for each other.