

## *A Study of First Peter*

### Finding True Happiness in a Hopeless World

“Where your pleasure is, there is your treasure; Where your treasure is, there is your heart; Where your heart is, there is your happiness.” ~ Augustine

#### I. An Introduction

This letter was written to encourage believers to persevere in the midst of suffering and persecution. Similar to Paul’s writings, Peter uses the opening of this letter to introduce the major themes contained in the rest of this book. The apostle will stress grace, joy, and hope to his readers. These “rallying cries” will then serve as the basis for Peter’s call for his readers to live a life dedicated to the Lord rather than enjoy the fleeting comforts of this world.

#### II. Our Glorious Salvation (1:1-12)

##### A. Opening Greeting of the Letter (vv. 1-2)

v. 1 - As aptly noted by one commentator, “The opening greeting in 1 Peter is hardly a customary hello. It is theologically rich and densely packed with themes” (Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 49). As an apostle, Peter is commissioned by God to deliver this message to Christians scattered throughout modern Turkey.

v. 2 - The author provides a description of God’s chosen people by identifying the origin, manner, and extent of their election.

- *Origin*: The Father selected them. “Foreknowledge” does not mean that God knew in advance individuals would respond, but that He simply took the initiative and chose them (see 1:20).
- *Manner*: The Holy Spirit set them apart for obedience.
- *Extent*: The Son cleansed them (see 1:14, 22).

##### B. Thanksgiving: *A Call to Praise the Lord* (vv. 3-12)

###### 1. A Promise Given (vv. 3-5)

v. 3 - The reason we praise God is because our salvation solely originates with a God who is compassionate and loving. The reference to God’s great mercy reflects Old Testament thought (Exod 34:6; Num 14:18; Ps 86:5,15; also, see Eph 2:4-5).

vv. 4-5 - Observe what Peter states concerning this new birth:

- *Living hope*. Unlike physical birth which leads to death, this new birth results in hope for the future. This hope is neither empty nor vain; but rather, it is securely rooted in Christ’s resurrection.

- *Secure inheritance.* The notion behind this term is more than a mere legal claim. “To have something as an inheritance . . . indicates that we are already named in the will as those who are appointed to inherit it and that, in a sense, our name is already on it” (Marshall, *1 Peter*, 38). In the strongest possible terms, Peter emphasizes the security and certainty of our eternal state.

Our hope of salvation rests securely until the end of the age (5:4). Believers who are undergoing persecution might feel vulnerable. However, the Lord promises to protect them with the same power that raised His Son from the dead!

An important question that stems from this text is “how does the Lord protect the saints?”.

## 2. A Praise Granted (vv. 6-9)

*Observe what Peter states concerning suffering:*

- Suffering occurs periodically and is brief.
- Suffering occurs in various forms and fashions.
- Suffering occurs because the Lord allows it. Faith needs to be refined. Ironically, even gold is perishable. The Lord has no gold reserves in heaven—only our inheritances!
- Suffering occurs in order to bring glory to God. We are a testimony of His grace, mercy, and power.
- Suffering occurs in order to “sweeten” our longing to see Jesus. One’s source of joy is not because of one’s circumstances or even the promise of Heaven; but rather, true joy stems from one’s focus on Christ. Also, note that joy “bookends” this entire section (vv. 6 and 8).

## 3. A Privilege Revealed (vv. 10-12)

Speaking of this salvation, Peter turns to the Old Testament to validate the apostolic message and a future hope. In these three verses, the following points should be noted:

- The evangelistic message of the Church was foretold by the Old Testament prophets. The Old Testament is a relevant and important book for the Church (Matt 5:17-18).
- Even the angels longed to know more as they looked to the fulfillment of God’s purposes (Lk 15:10; Rom 8:19).
- The Holy Spirit who delivered the message to the prophets is now speaking through the Church leaders. This ensures the continuity and accuracy of this divine revelation (2 Tim 3:16).
- We are incredibly blessed to live in a time when the predictions of the prophets have come to pass (Matt 13:16-17).

### III. Intersect

- A. The message of salvation must be central in our lives. The theological truths of the Gospel must be on the forefront of our minds.

Revelation 7:9-10 -

- B. Our primary identity as believers is not defined by being an American, Republican or Democrat, or part of a particular racial group. Rather, our identity is found in Christ.

Galatians 3:28 -

- C. No matter what circumstance of life arises, our joy should not be tempered or eliminated. Instead, the circumstances of life should enhance our joy as we reflect on our salvation, grow in our faith, and rest in a secure future.

Psalm 92:4-5a -

“The Scriptures teach that the happiness or blessedness of believers in a future life will be greater or less in proportion to the service of Christ in this life. Those who love little, do little; and those who do little, enjoy less.” ~ Charles Hodge

**For further thought . . .**

*Based upon our study this morning, you may want to spend some additional time this week reflecting on the following:*

Read Ephesians 2:1-10. Compare Paul's words to the church at Ephesus with Peter's words in 1 Peter 1:3-12. In particular, observe how both writers describe the Lord.

Ephesians 2:1-10

1 Peter 1:3-12

Based upon your observations, what truth about the Lord resonates with you personally? Why?

Spend some time this week thanking the Lord for who He is. You may also want to share this truth with someone from Iron-2-Iron, a spouse, a child, or a friend.