

1 Peter 1 ¹ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of 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, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood:

Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

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. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, (like a crate of port) 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 all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ 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 honour 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 end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

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 the Messiah 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.

¹³ 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. 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."

¹⁷ Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners 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 ancestors, 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.

²² 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. ¹ 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 people 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 endures forever." ¹ And this is the word that was preached to you

Intro

In many ways it's been a discouraging week – return of lockdown, rise in cases, restrictions on meeting together and how we can be the church we want to be, sharing the love and good news of Jesus in our community.

This is why we are looking at the 1st letter of Peter who was writing to small groups of Christians – scattered throughout what is now modern-day Turkey, often discouraged and sometimes persecuted. Peter was probably writing in the AD 60s during the reign of the notorious Roman emperor Nero. Peter himself was of course no stranger to persecution having been thrown into prison more than once in Jerusalem and eventually facing the likelihood of being sentenced to death, which led him to flee Jerusalem and end up in Rome. The early Christians were used to being mocked and ostracized, but under Nero things became a whole lot worse.

In the month of July in the year 64 A.D., a great fire broke out in the city of Rome and the entire city was engulfed in flames. It seems Nero set that fire in order that he might destroy the ramshackle buildings of Rome and give him room to erect some marble palaces and other monuments that he thought would establish his name in history.

The populace was incensed, they were ready to revolt and overthrow him, so Nero quickly looked around for a scapegoat that he could blame for the fire. There was in Rome a group of people who were just in the right situation to lend themselves to take the blame for the fire. They were called Christians. It was during this time that Christians were dipped in tar and burned as torches to light the gardens of Nero when he threw an outdoor party.

Now it was during this time of the outbreak of the persecution of Christians in Rome that the Apostle Peter wrote this letter, in about 67 A.D. And if Nero was burning and killing Christians in Rome, this gave the signal to the Roman governors of provinces throughout the Empire that they could do the same. So it seems the Christians Peter was writing to were being hounded and persecuted because of Nero's proclamation, and so the apostle wrote to encourage them in the face of their difficulties. Poignantly, Peter of course, himself ended up being sentenced to death on a cross, probably less than 2 years after he wrote this letter.

We do not have to face such terrible persecution but what Peter writes is highly relevant to us in our present situation: How can we followers of Jesus cope when the situation makes it so difficult for us to meet together - in a society that either does not believe in God or considers him irrelevant to their daily lives, a society which often misunderstands and sometimes misrepresents Christians? What is God doing? How can we continue to grow in faith? What resources are available to us.

How are we to live ? 3 key themes in this passage: *faith, hope and holiness.*

1. be faithful

- a. Peter gives a definition of faith: *v.8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him*

Faith = Seeing things through God's eyes. We cannot physically see Jesus, but we see him through the eyes of faith because we trust in all that God has told us through his Word

- b. Seeing ourselves through the eyes of faith

Celebrity at the Savoy: 'Don't you know who I am ?' Receptionist: 'I'm afraid I don't sir, but I'm sure we can find someone who does.'

We sometimes forget who we are. Peter addresses his letter to Christian exiles *scattered* throughout the provinces *APPLY*

- i. Note how Peter addresses these oppressed followers of Jesus:
vv.1-2 To God's elect, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, EXPAND
- ii. You may feel like exiles are so privileged
- *vv.3-4 In his great mercy he has given us **new birth into a living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into **an inheritance** that can never perish, spoil or fade.*
 - The prophets of old only had a glimpse of the grace and glories that you enjoy today *vv.10-12 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 the Messiah 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***
 - *Even angels long to look into these things.*
 - *v.18 you have been redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors*

- You have the privilege of knowing Jesus, who v.20 *was revealed only in these last times for your sake.*
- c. Seeing God through the eyes of faith
- i. v.3 *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* We need to look at God through the eyes of Jesus – a God of mercy and compassion, a God who is committed not only to rescuing us but transforming us into the likeness of Jesus
 - ii. *a God full of mercy*
 - iii. a God who is watching over us – v.5 *shielded by God's power*
 - iv. A God who keeps his promises: *enduring word of God word of the Lord endures forever*
- d. Seeing God's plan through the eyes of faith.
Faith changes our perspective on time. *Early Christians might have felt they had been suffering forever. We sometimes feel like that even though it has been only 6 months!* But God's plan for us extends from eternity to eternity.
- i. **Look back: v.20 *Jesus was chosen before the creation of the world***
 - ii. vv.10-11 *the prophets ... predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow*
 - iii. **Look forward v.4 *inheritance that can never perish***
Changed perspective: v.6 *now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials*
- e. Faith changes our perspective about the things of the world which Peter constantly points out are perishable, whereas the things of God which are imperishable
- i. **v.4 *an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.***
 - ii. **v.7 *than gold, which perishes***
 - iii. **v.18 Peter contrasts *with perishable things such as silver or gold with v.19 the precious blood of Christ,***
 - iv. v.23 *you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable,*
 - v. v.24 *All people 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 endures forever*

2. This faith, this change of perspective leads us to **be hopeful**

- a. For Christians hope is not an uncertain wish as in '*I hope life will soon return to normal.*' Our hope is something certain and definite: it is this imperishable inheritance that one day when Christ returns we shall be brought into his household and made like him.
- b. Challenge to us: where does our hope lie ?
- c. Our hope in Christ is completely certain. Why ?
 - i. because our hope is not rooted in us, who we are, or how we behave, but in the death of Jesus 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 ... ¹⁹ **but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect***
Viz being redeemed from slavery in ancient times and in our present day through people's own efforts. Our own efforts equally ineffective, but the precious blood of Jesus is perfect and imperishable i.e. its effect lasts for ever
v.13, *set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming*
 - ii. Certain because part of God's eternal plan v.20 *before the creation of the world* God knew before he created world that it would entail His Son going to the cross in order to rescue us.

- iii. Certain because v.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.*
Our hope relies on God's power as God raised and glorified the dead body of Jesus so we can be certain he has the power to raise our dead bodies, however weak and feeble we might feel we are.
That power has been implanted in us! (imperishable) The word by which God said let there be light and there was light The word by which Jesus said to Lazarus "Come out"
- iv. Certain because v.4 Jesus is keeping this inheritance for us safe in heaven.
Like a case of port laid down for a child when it is born for the day he turns 21

3. Be holy

- a. v.2 *chosen...to be obedient to Jesus Christ*
- b. ¹⁵ *But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; ¹⁶for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."*

What is your picture of holiness ? Often: boring, irrelevant, naive, unable to relate to ordinary people, old fashioned sandals - and nylon socks pious, patronisingly superior – in fact, the kind of person you would run a mile to avoid!

If that is your view - one question; Who was the holiest person ever ? Jesus. Was he boring, naive, unable to relate to ordinary people ? When Peter calls us to be holy he calls us to be like Jesus

C. S. Lewis: *How little people know, who think that holiness is dull. When one meets the real thing ... it is irresistible. If even 10 percent of the world's population had it, would not the whole world be converted and happy before a year's end?*

Another preacher said to his congregation: *"I wish all you were holy. It would be so much fun coming to church!"*

v.22 Peter makes clear that the sign of true holiness and obedience to Christ is *sincere love for our brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.* The prime quality of holiness is love.

Sadly down through the ages Christians seem to have forgotten that and sometimes we do as well. If ever we find ourselves becoming aggressive or judgemental over what we consider to be a point of principle, then let's remind ourselves that obedience to the truth includes sincerely loving our brother – or sister.

Holiness also means daring to be different v.14 *As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires* We are all called to be non conformists - even us Anglicans

Evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance - OTT ?

Ambition or greed or pride or deceit or envy or lust that leads to breakdown of marriages and the break-up of families, drunkenness, drugs and behaviour which follows. At the very least it will lead to an empty way of life - glossy, attractive, but empty

How can we be more holy, more like Jesus? What might well think it is impossible.

Oswald Chambers (1874-1917) It is quite true to say, "I can't live a holy life," but you can decide to let Jesus make you holy.

Viz v²³ For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

So in this time of continuing uncertainty, continuing lock-down, continuing to live in a society where we that believe in Jesus are a small minority that is often misunderstood and misrepresented, let's use our eyes of faith – let's look at things from God's perspective, for faith leads to real hope and hope enables us to be holy – to dare to be different as we follow in the footsteps of Jesus.