

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION – A LIVING HOPE – STUDY OF I PETER
Week 1 – Introduction and Topical Overview

I Pet 1.3-6; 5.12

I Pet 1.3 -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,¹

Class Synopsis

In I Peter 1.3, Peter tells us that God has given us new birth into a Living Hope through Christ's resurrection. We will come away with an understanding of true hope and how to find it when life seems hopeless. We will work through I Peter looking at how God defines hope, what hope means from a Christian perspective and the exhortations to Godly living as a function of receiving God's grace.

1 Peter 5:12 (NIV)

¹² *With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.*¹

1 Peter 1:3-6 (NIV)

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—kept in heaven for you,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 this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.*¹

Class Outline

- I. Introduction
 - Week 1 – Topical Introduction to I Peter
 - Week 2 – Review Peter's life in the Gospels and his sermons in Acts
- II. Exhortations to Holiness in and of life
 - Week 3 – The requirement of Holiness
 - Week 4 – Submission to authority
 - Week 5 – Duties of all Christians / Conduct of Elders / Conduct of young men
 - Week 6 – Christ's example
 - Week 7 – Christian conduct
- III. Key Doctrines
 - Week 8 – Doctrine of Suffering
 - Week 9 – Doctrine of Hope
- IV. Conclusion
 - Week 10 – Conclusion and Summary

1. Who

Who wrote it

- Peter – son of Jonah / brother of Andrew
- Prominent apostle
- Galilean fisherman
- Simeon / shortened to Simon
- Changed by Jesus to Peter
- Silas (Silvanus)
- “help of” literally through or by means of

1 Peter 5:12 (NIV)

¹² *With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.*ⁱ

Who is it written to

1 Peter 1:1-2 (NIV)

¹ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God’s elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout 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, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.ⁱ

- “God’s Elect” – <<**eklektos**>> - Picked out – chosen – chosen by God
- “strangers in the world – concept is of aliens – sojourners – not citizens of this world
- Churches in Asia Minor – mentioned at day of Pentecost
- Paul planted churches in southern Galatia regions in the late AD 40’s – Acts 13-14 – when he later tried to extend this work westward into Asia – HS prevented him (acts 16.6-7) because the Lord wanted to use Paul in Macedonia and Greece – acts 16.10 ---
- Peter had preached in these regions – from Gal 2.11 we know he worked with the church at Antioch – extra biblical evidence that he traveled in Asia Minor while Paul was preaching in Europe
- About 15 years later – I Peter witnesses to the existence of churches throughout this area – larger ones consisting of 30 – 40 members - house churches - sometimes several in one city (collectively forming the church in that city) and sometimes only one – loosely connected as Christians traveled through the area –
- Churches in this area largely Gentile in makeup – I Peter frequently refers to these Christians in terms that would be offensive to Jews – 1.14, 18; 2.9-10, 25; 3.6; 4.3-4 – also none of the Jew-gentile / circumcision – uncircumcision tension in this letter

2. When

- Probably ~early 60’s –
- Cannot be earlier than AD 60 because of familiarity of Paul’s prison letters – Colossians / Ephesians ---
--- cannot be later than 67/68 because Peter was martyred during Nero’s reign
- Delivered by Silas

3. Why

- To encourage believers in Northwest Asia Minor experiencing persecution to live in light of the future
 - Church had peaceful existence basically with the government
 - Judaism was a legitimate religion – Rome allowed religions as long as they were not subversive
 - Things started to change in the 60's -
 - Christianity recognized as a separate religion
 - Belief and firm adherence to a risen Christ excited the suspicion and contempt of the public –
 - Christians' talk of a coming judgment and overthrow of the existing world created misunderstanding and hatred – reaction against them in Rome under Nero was the product of this popular dislike, activated by Nero's spiteful accusations
 - By the close of the pastoral epistles shows that Paul's death marked a turn in the policy of the government from a casual tolerance to hostile criticism – church's became apprehensive of what might befall them –
 - Christians to whom Peter is writing were suffering "fiery trials" – they would not join pagan neighbors in idolatry and drinking and carousing – written at time that general dislike for Christians turning into government endorsed and active persecution
 - Result of these changes – social ostracism, insults, abuse, rejection, shame and likely economic persecution. – fellow citizens thought that these believers in Jesus no longer belonged their city, family
 - Peter takes a Threefold strategy
 - 1) Exhort them to stand firm in the light of the return of christ
 - 2) To advise them on how to minimize persecution through wise behavior
 - 3) To encourage them to consider where they do belong
- To instruct believers on how to relate to societal structures
 - Doctrinal insights
 - Practical instructions
 - Extensive NT development of theology of suffering – echoes Job – that God's glory is served when suffering is permitted
- To provide hope
 - Reappearing of Jesus in Glory
 - Blessed and living hope

4. What

- Peter's experiences
 - Themes and concepts reflect Peter's experiences and his associations in the period of Jesus' earthly ministry and in the apostolic age - Personal experience of Peter with Christ reflected in this letter - He had known the feeling of hopelessness – but he now understood "living hope"
 - Letter reflects the history and terminology of the Gospels and Acts – notable Peter's speeches
 - Wrote about Suffering and persecution, separation, glory, pilgrimage, courage, Grace of God

- Primary Themes
 - Jesus is the cornerstone of our faith
 - As we grow in our understanding of what salvation means and the privileges that come from that salvation we will better understand the doctrine of suffering and place our hope in sharing Christ's glory and that hope will lead to us living in Holiness and humility
 - shows Christians how to live out their redemption in a hostile world – salvation involves suffering but it also gives us the living hope as the recipient of God's grace – amplified in our day to day living
 - Believers have a secure home and inheritance w/ Christ
 - Believers should live holy lives following the model of Christ
- Characteristics
 - Ominous shadow of persecution was the occasion for this letter
 - Suffering is one of the keynotes of this letter – mentioned 16 times
 - Continuous chain of commands which runs through the book

➤ be sober – 1.13	➤ Don't be troubled – 3.14
➤ set your hope on grace – 1.13	➤ Sanctify in your hearts - 3.15
➤ be holy – 1.15	➤ Arm yourselves – 4.1
➤ do not pass the time in fear – 1.17	➤ Be of sound mind – 4.7
➤ love one another – 1.23	➤ Think it not strange – 4.12
➤ long for the spiritual milk – 2.2	➤ Rejoice – 4.13
➤ be subject to every ordinance of man – 2.13	➤ Let none of you suffer – 4.15
➤ Honor all men – 2.17	➤ Let him not be ashamed – 4.16
➤ Love the brotherhood – 2.17	➤ Let him glorify God – 4.16
➤ Fear God – 2.17	➤ Let them commit their souls – 4.19
➤ Honor the king – 2.17	➤ Tend the flock of God – 5.2
➤ Servants obey your masters – 2.18	➤ Be subject to elders 5.5
➤ Wives to husbands – 3.1	➤ Gird yourselves w/ humility – 5.6
➤ Husbands with wives – 3.7	➤ Be sober – 5.8
➤ Be ye all – 3.8	➤ Be watchful – 5.9
➤ Fear not – 3.14	➤ Withstand the devil – 5.9

Conclusion:

1. The Salvation of God
2. The Grace of God
3. The Hope of God

ⁱ *The Holy Bible : New International Version*. Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 1996, c1984