Hope that Transforms



7 Studies in 1 Peter

# Hope that Transforms – 1 Peter 1:1-16

*Read 1 Peter 1:1-16.*

What stands out to you?

*Focus on 1 Peter 1:1-2.*

How does Peter describe the people to whom he writes? (v1) How does this description apply to us?

How does Peter say they are chosen (elected)? (v2) For what purpose?

How does Peter describe the roles of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in choosing God’s people?

Sprinkling of blood was used to seal covenants in the old testament (see Exodus 24:5-8). However, similar things were done in treaties between parties in the nations around them where the weaker party would walk between animal bones saying that if they broke the treaty might it be done to them like these animals. There was a similar symbolic nature about the blood being sprinkled on the people with the people making the strongest of commitments to God. However, what was particularly unusual was that the other half was sprinkled on the altar, the place of God’s presence representing the God as the stronger party joining in the commitment looking forward to Jesus dying for us.

How does being sprinkled by Jesus’ blood represent the salvation he brings us?

What does Peter pray the church would receive? How might this be a useful model for us when we pray?

*Focus on 1 Peter 1:3-9.*

What does Peter praise God for doing for his people? (v3-4) How does he describe this hope? (v4-5)

In what way is salvation yet to come to God’s people? (v5)

How does this living hope change the way we handle trials and suffering? (v6)

Why do trials happen? (v7) Does this help us handle them?

How does Peter describe our faith? Do you think of faith in this way?

How do we relate to Jesus without seeing him? (v8-9)

Where does Christian joy come from? (v9)

What effect have trials and difficulties had on your faith in Jesus? How does hope in God help us endure such trials and sufferings?

When do you find joy in Jesus? Do you always find this in the middle of trials?

How does joy help you face trials?

*Focus on 1 Peter 1:10-12.*

What did the prophets talk about? (v10-11) Who was speaking through the prophets? (v11)

How does this help us read the Old Testament?

Who were the prophets serving? (v12) Who is the Old Testament for?

What do we have in common with the prophets? What is different for us?

Peter says that angels long to look into the things of the gospel. How does this make us think about the value of scripture?

*Focus on 1 Peter 1:13-16.*

What are Peter’s instructions? (v13-14)

What other hopes or ambitions distract you from the hope of Jesus? What old desires do you struggle to leave behind?

Why are God’s people told to be holy? (v15-16)

Holiness is being set apart for God. Here Peter says all Christians are called to be holy. It is not an optional extra that only applies to those in full-time Christian work but is for every Christian. While many of the aspects of holiness will be laid out in the following verses, a simple definition is reflecting God’s character and His mercy to each other and the world.

How does our hope in Jesus help us seek to be holy?

How does seeking holiness make us foreigners and exiles in this world? When do we feel at odds with the world around us?

Prayer Points:

* Thank God for the certain hope that he gives us and ask that God would grant us more and more faith in trusting Jesus and looking forward to his return
* Pray that we would seek to reflect God’s character and mercy to the world
* Pray for those in the group undergoing trials and suffering.

# How Precious is our Salvation? – 1 Peter 1:17 to 2:3

*Read 1 Peter 1:17 to 2:3.*

What stood out to you from this passage?

How does Peter describe God in verse 17?

How do you feel about God judging your works?

What should our response be to the Father’s judgment? In what sense should we fear God?

From what were we redeemed? (v18)

What empty ways of life have you noticed or been part of?

How were we redeemed? (v19) How costly was this redemption?

The blood of Christ contrasts with perishable things such as silver or gold. Why does Peter describe Christ’s blood as imperishable or eternal?

How is Jesus described? (v19-21)

In what ways does this passage suggest Jesus was always part of God’s plan?

How does God being in charge whatever our human weaknesses affect our faith?

How does Jesus’ arrival change the way we live? (v21)

How does living out of faith and hope in God differ from an empty way of life?

How have we purified ourselves? (v22) What is the result of being pure?

How has obeying God helped you love other Christians?

How is our second birth described? (v23-25)

Peter quotes Isaiah 40:6-8. What does the quote say about the difference between people and God? How does this relate to the change our second birth has brought about in us?

Why does this give us a reason to love one another from the heart?

 “Word” in verse 23 is a translation of the Greek word *logos* which is often used as a title for Jesus as the Word of God. In verse 25, a different word *hrema* is used that usually applies to a spoken word. This suggests that Peter is saying that we are reborn through Jesus and that God’s spoken word – the promise of life through Jesus – has been preached to us and will endure forever.

What do we need to rid ourselves of because of God’s word? (2:1) Why are these things the opposite of the gospel?

Which of these things is the hardest for you to get rid of?

The word normally translated “spiritual” in “pure spiritual milk” in verse 2 is the Greek word *logikos* coming from *logos* and is difficult to translate in this context. It indicates that something is true to its real nature. It also suggests a connection to Jesus as the Word *logos* of God.

Why are we told to crave this milk?

How can we grow to desire this milk more and more?

How does Peter describe believing the gospel? (v3)

In what ways have you experienced God’s goodness? How does God’s goodness to us drive us to change our lives?

What habits or tendencies do you need to leave behind?

Prayer Points:

* Thank God that he chooses to pay such a costly price to save us
* Ask that we would seek to love one another more and more
* Pray that rather that we would rid ourselves of earthly attitudes more and more and grow up in our salvation

# God’s Special Possession – 1 Peter 2:4-10

*Read 1 Peter 2:4-10.*

What stands out to you?

How does Peter describe Jesus? (v4) What do you think of when you hear the phrase “living stone”?

What is the difference between how people and God treat Jesus? How does this help explain us being strangers in this world?

How does Peter describe us? (v5) How does Jesus make this possible?

How does Jesus build us into a spiritual house?

In the Old Testament, God’s people would burn animal sacrifices to him as part of trusting him and seeking his forgiveness. The sacrifices showed that there was a cost for sin to be forgiven. They prepared God’s people for Jesus’ death as the sacrifice that wipes away all sin.

What are spiritual sacrifices? What makes our sacrifices acceptable to God?

*Read out Isaiah 28:14-18.*

Why are God’s people so confident in this passage?

What does God do in response?

How does Jesus give us true confidence in the face of death?

*Turn back to 1 Peter 2:7-8.*

A cornerstone is a stone that the building is built upon, often being the first laid stone in a building. Here it is used in two senses reflected by different words in the Greek, one for the most important stone in the building and one for a cornerstone that people stumble over.

In 2:7 Peter quotes Psalm 118. How does this quote describe Jesus’ death and resurrection?

How does Jesus cause people to stumble?

Is God’s plan wrecked when people disobey the gospel? (v8) How do you feel about this?

How does this fit with us taking responsibility for our actions? Are we responsible for our choices?

*Read Exodus 19:3-8*

What does God offer Israel? (19:3-8)

Priests represent God and connect people to Him, like an ambassador or a representative.

*Read Exodus 20:18-19*

How does Israel react to God’s voice? How does not wanting to hear God speak reflect on their relationship with God?

Does Israel behave like a kingdom of priests?

*Look back to 1 Peter 2:9-10.*

How does Peter describe the church? (v9) What has God done with what he offered to Israel?

Which of these descriptions is the strangest to you? Why does Peter include it?

How do are we God’s special possession? How do you feel about being chosen by, precious and special to God?

What is the purpose of God’s chosen people? How do we represent God to the world?

How has Jesus changed things for us? (v10)

How has God’s mercy changed you?

Prayer Points:

* Thank God that he grants us mercy and makes us his chosen people
* Ask that we would seek to trust in all Jesus has done more and more
* Pray that we would represent him to the world

# Submit! – 1 Peter 2:11 to 3:7

*Read 1 Peter 2:11 tIo 3:7*

What stands out to you from this passage?

How does Peter describe the people to whom he is writing? (v11)

Why does he describe them this way? How does it reinforce the instructions he gives?

In what ways do you feel like a stranger in this world? How are God’s values different from the values of the world around you?

What does Peter want the church to avoid? Does avoiding sin feel like a battle to you?

Why does Peter want the church to live good lives? (v12)

How do you react to being unfairly accused?

How does the church interact with human authorities? Why? (v13-15)

In Greco-Roman culture there were three types of submission: voluntary, mercenary and forced. The word ὑποτάσσω that Peter here uses is also used for the submission the son of an emperor would give in an army to a more experienced general where the general was supposed to lead the troops to victory, letting the son learn, but also give the son the credit for the victory. It is a voluntary submission that communicates humility, but also comes out of free choice. This is a particularly good example here as ultimately we are sons and daughters of the King of the universe, a far greater authority than any human governor.

What is the purpose of human governors? (v14) Do we view them this way?

Why should Christian freedom lead to living as servants of God? (v16)

How does Peter summarise the way to respect others? (v17) How do we seek to respect those around us?

How are slaves told to interact with their masters? Why? (v18-21)

What does Peter think about suffering for doing the right thing? (v19-20)

How does Jesus set slaves an example of enduring suffering? (v21-22)

Isaiah 53 describes the way Jesus suffered in our place to taking God’s wrath for our sins on himself. Peter quotes Isaiah 53:9 in verse 22, and uses other phrases from the chapter in verses 23-25 to demonstrate that we gain from Jesus’ suffering – suffering that he did not deserve.

How did Jesus respond to unfair suffering? (v23)

What was the purpose of Jesus dying? (v24)

What difference does this make for us? How have we experienced the change in our lives? (v25)

How do we respond to unfair suffering? In what way does this passage challenge us?

3:1 says “in the same way.” Who is Peter telling wives to imitate?

It is important that when reading this section we view the command to submit as the same voluntary submission as that we give to authorities (see earlier note). In addition in Greco-Roman culture, braided hair and gold jewellery were very fancy and came to indicate a high-class prostitute. The distinction partially broke down in the century Peter wrote, as upper-class women pushed the boundaries of what was socially acceptable for them to wear.

How does Peter tell married women to live? Why? (v1-2)

What would you describe as a pure and reverent life?

What sources of beauty does Peter discourage? Where should Christian beauty come from? (v4)

Abraham was seen as the father of the Israelite nation – the initial man to whom God made the promise that he would build a great nation from his descendants. (see Gen. 12) This came about through Isaac, the son born to Sarah. Abraham in the new testament is seen as the father of all Christian’s faith. (Rom. 4) Just as Abraham is therefore considered an example for all believers, his wife, Sarah is considered the an example for all wives.

How does Peter describe the holy women of the past? (v5-6) What does Peter praise Sarah for?

How are married men told to treat their wives? (v7)

“Weaker” here is referring primarily to strength but also can be taken to refer to their position in Greco-Roman culture. What is actually revolutionary is how husbands are told to treat their wives. In their culture it was the men who inherited and were heirs, so here the men were being told to treat their wives with respect as equals in the kingdom of God.

What does it mean that wives are also heirs of the gospel?

How does mistreating others affect our prayers? Why?

How do you treat people when you have power over them?

How do you respond when serving God means submitting to imperfect people?

Prayer Points:

* Give thanks that we are heirs together of the good news that Jesus brings
* Ask God for more grace in relationships especially ones where we find it difficult to represent him
* Pray for anyone in the group that is experiencing unfair suffering

# Salvation – 1 Peter 3:8 to 4:6

*Read 1 Peter 3:8-22*

What stands out to you from this passage?

The passage begins “finally.” This implies that just like Peter’s earlier commands for wives and husbands (3:1-7), his commands for the whole church are based on imitating Jesus (2:21-24).

How are we told to live? (3:8-9) Why?

Which of these actions do you find the most difficult? Do you have any idea why?

How do you react to when someone does or says something that hurts you?

Have you ever seen someone react with love to being insulted or hurt? What did they do?

In verses 10 to 12, Peter quotes Psalm 34. What does the quote say about how goodness is expressed? (v10-12)

Why is the way we talk so important for living in harmony?

How does God relate to those who seek peace and those who do evil? (v12)

Have you ever suffered for doing good? What happened?

What does Peter say about suffering for doing good? (v13-17) How should we respond to this kind of suffering? (v15-16)

How are we told to explain this hope? Why?

Have you ever had to explain your faith? How would you go about doing so?

When Jesus suffered for doing good, what was the result? (v18) What else did Jesus do through the Spirit? (v19-22)

Jesus “preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago” (1 Peter 3:19) has many different suggested interpretations. The options include:

1. Jesus preached through Noah to all the people of his time, while Noah was building the ark
2. Peter is referring to the Old Testament saints that Jesus liberated between his death and resurrection
3. The imprisoned spirits refer to the people who perished in the flood
4. The imprisoned spirits refer to the evil angels who had sexual relationships with women.

While the first and last are preferable and the last has support from the majority of scholars currently, it is a much disputed question with no easy answer.

What does the water of the Flood and baptism symbolise? (v21) How does this spiritual baptism save us? (v21)

What was the result of Jesus’ suffering? (v21-22)

How does his example help us endure suffering for doing good?

*Read 1 Peter 4:1-6.*

What do you notice in the passage?

Why should we take the same attitude as Christ? (v1-2)

What should we leave behind? Why? (v3-5)

How will other people react to the new holiness in our lives? (v4)

How do you respond when people are surprised by the things you don’t do?

Have you encountered this kind of reaction? What was it like?

How does God judge the dead? (v6) What does this mean for us?

Where do we struggle with pagan (unchristian) desires? What old patterns or habits are you trying to escape?

How do you fight against temptation?

Prayer Points:

* Thank God for Jesus suffered unjustly so that we might live eternally
* Pray for opportunities to share your faith
* Pray for those trying to escape old patterns or habits

# Dealing with Suffering – 1 Peter 4:7-19

*Read 1 Peter 4:7-11*

What stands out to you?

Peter points towards the expected and known hope of Jesus returning. However, he does not do so in a vague maybe this will happen but in a confident certain statement that this will happen. Peter expects the hearers to respond out of hearing God’s word, by seeking God and expecting him to intervene in their lives. However, for this to happen, the elders and the general church community have to have a relationship centred around Christ and the humility he demonstrates.

What is near? (v7) How does this change our view of the world around us?

How does Peter want the church to respond to the end of all things? Why should the nearness of the end of God’s plan lead to clear minds and self-control?

How should this drive our prayers?

What motivates your prayers?

In what ways can you clear your mind or grow in self-control?

What is Peter’s most important instruction? (v8) How does loving someone change the way you react when they do something wrong?

When someone wrongs you, how can you respond with love?

What examples does Peter give of loving each other? (v9-11)

How should we use the gifts we have? (v10-11)

What is the purpose of Christian service? Why is the attitude of our service so important?

*Read 1 Peter 4:12-19*

What do you notice from this passage?

How should the church respond to suffering? (v12-13) Why?

What are inappropriate reasons for a Christian to suffer? (v15)

Where does judgment begin? (v17-18) Why?

How will judgment apply to the wicked?

How does the certainty of God’s judgment help the church endure suffering? (v19)

Who should we trust when we suffer? What should we do when we suffer?

How is our response to suffering supposed to be similar to our attitude as we use our gifts? (see v10-11)

What kinds of suffering are the recipients of this letter going through? (v14, 16)

Do you ever suffer for being a Christian? How do you react?

What activities or places help you rejoice in God?

How can we rejoice even though life is difficult?

Prayer Points:

* Thank God for the certain hope that he gives us in Jesus
* Ask that we would discover and use our gifts for building up each other in Christ
* Pray that we would rejoice in the hope that we have in Christ more and more

# Standing in the Grace of God – 1 Peter 5

What was Peter talking about at the end of the previous chapter?

*Read 1 Peter 5:1-7.*

What stands out to you from this passage?

How are elders told to behave? Why? (v1-3)

How does Christ’s suffering provide an example for elders? What do elders look forward to? (v2-4)

What does Peter say to the younger part of the church? (v5)

Submission is again a voluntary submission that is because everyone has a common goal. Elders are those who are put by the church in authority over you to encourage you to come into God’s kingdom. It is not primarily a matter of age.

Peter says “in the same way” in verse five. What do his instructions for elders and younger Christians have in common?

What does Peter emphasise for all Christians? Why is this important? (v5)

What does submitting to elders look like in practice?

How do you feel about submitting to others within the church?

How should the church react to difficulties? (v6-7)

How is casting your anxiety on God part of humbling yourself?

What does humility have to do with grace?

How does grace help us endure difficult situations?

Where do we need to depend on ourselves less and depend more upon God?

*Read 1 Peter 5:8-11*

What are Peter’s final instructions? Why? (v8-9)

How do you feel about the Devil’s existence?

What difference should the Devil’s opposition make in your life? Does it?

How do we resist the Devil? (v9)

Why is it encouraging that we are not the only Christians suffering?

How does Jesus’ suffering encourage us to keep going?

How does Peter describe God? (v10) Why is this important?

What will God do after we have suffered?

How does this look forward to the new creation?

How have you experienced God restoring your strength in this life?

How does Peter end his prayer? Why is this a good prayer when we are suffering? (v11)

*Read 1 Peter 5:12-14 together.*

Did Peter write his letter alone? (v12) What does this show you about the apostles?

Why has Peter written to the church?

What important relationships does Peter mention at the end of his letter?

How can you encourage friendships within your church?

How has reading 1 Peter helped you stand firm in the true grace of God?

Prayer Points:

* Thank God that he has called us to his eternal glory in Jesus
* Ask that God that he would clothe you with humility
* Pray that God would enable you to stand firm in his grace

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