

**COME, JOIN THE CONVERSATION**  
ON  
**PETER AND THE FIRST EPISTLE** THAT BEARS HIS NAME

This **CONVERSATION** Plan for Session #4, Thursday–November 6, 2014

*A Quick Overview of the book, followed by topic: “An Inheritance Incorruptible—  
Thanksgiving for our Salvation in Christ” – 1<sup>st</sup> PETER 1:1-12*

**BRIEF INTRODUCTIONS:** - *who are we who have gathered today?*

**AN OPENING PRAYER SPOKEN RESPONSIVELY:**

Leader: Lord Jesus, we thank you for the Apostle, Peter! He was a great man; he loved you so much; he left everything to follow you. In your name he healed the sick; he cast out demons; he preached the Kingdom. For three and one-half faithful years he stood beside you. When Roman soldiers came to take you away, he stood up for you; when others deserted you, he followed you all the way into the temple courtyard.

- ***JESUS, WE CONFESS THAT WE WOULD HAVE NEVER MADE IT THAT FAR.***

Leader: As we study the life and message of Peter, help us not to pass judgment on him, O Lord. Rather, may the many examples of his great and fervent love for you, pass judgment on us; help us to realize that we deny you in so many areas of our lives; in so many ways, and at so many different times.

- ***WHEN WE ARE TOO BUSY TO PRAY, WE DENY YOU ARE THE SOURCE OF OUR LIVES;***
- ***WHEN WE NEGLECT YOUR WORD, WE DENY THAT YOU ARE COMPETENT TO CORRECTLY GUIDE US;***
- ***WHEN WE WORRY, WE DENY THAT YOU ARE LORD OF OUR INDIVIDUAL CIRCUMSTANCES;***
- ***WHEN WE TURN OUR COLLECTIVE HEADS AWAY FROM THE HUNGRY AND THE HOMELESS, WE DENY THAT YOU ARE A GOD OF MERCY, WHO HAS PUT US HERE TO BE YOUR HANDS AND YOUR FEET IN TODAY’S WORLD.***

Leader: Forgive us, Lord Jesus, for all those quiet ways, known only to you, in which we have denied you. Send now your Holy Spirit into our midst that as we study and converse together, we may be duly inspired by the life that Peter lived and the ‘*Good News*’ that he taught and preached. May we, too, find opportunities to proclaim that message with our words, our hands, our lives!

- ***AMEN***

## THE MUTUAL SHARING OF PEACE BY GOD'S PEOPLE:

### A LOOK AT OBJECTIVES FOR THIS SESSION:

- To engage in a general overview of 1<sup>st</sup> Peter; looking at the epistle's authorship; the intended audience; time and place of composition; purpose and theme of the book;
- to examine the opening chapter of the epistle and fully appreciate its emphasis on Salvation as Hope, Joy, and a Privilege;
- to identify some basic Christian doctrinal statements that are being made in this early letter;
- to focus on the 'awesome' task and the 'sacred' privilege of proclaiming the Good News!

### An Overview of The 1<sup>st</sup> EPISTLE OF PETER

- A) **The Author** – Modern scholarship commonly believes the writer to be the Apostle Peter, especially in view of 1 Peter 5:1– ***“...I ask this as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ’s sufferings”***  
Testimony is given to Peter’s authorship by some of the earliest and most trusted sources in church history:
- i) Irenaeus, Bishop of Lugdunum in Gaul (140-203 CE)
  - ii) Tertullian, from Carthage in Africa (150-222 CE)
  - iii) Clement of Alexandria, Theologian; highly educated in Gk. Philosophy(150-215 CE)
  - iv) Origen, spent 1<sup>st</sup> half of his career in Alexandria, Egypt (185-253 CE)
  - v) Eusebius, Roman historian of Greek descent; Bishop of Caesarea (263-339 CE)
- B) **The Recipients** – ***“Pilgrims of the Dispersion”*** (see 1 Peter:1:1) ***“To God’s chosen strangers in the world of the diaspora, who live in...”***
- i) ***“Dispersion”*** this word also found in John 7:35 ***“The Jews said to one another, ‘Where does this man (Jesus) intend to go that we shall not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks?’”*** – a term used to describe Israelites who had been scattered after the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities (700-800 BCE). Some, therefore, believe that this epistle was written solely to Jewish Christians, as in case of James 1:1 ***“James, servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the dispersion....”***
  - ii) However, indications in this letter are that some were definitely Gentile converts who had come to believe in God through Jesus.
  - iii) Peter seems to apply the term “dispersion” to Christians in general, just as he applied other designations to the church that were previously applied to the nation of Israel: (i.e. 2:9-10) ***“..You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people who are God’s own possession. You have become this people so that you may speak of the wonderful acts of the one who called you out of darkness into his amazing light. Once you weren’t a people, but now you are God’s people. Once you hadn’t received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”***
  - iv) Christian “strangers” (see similarity between 1:1 & 2:11) who were living in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia & Bithynia (provinces &/or cities in what is now modern Turkey.)

- v) Paul had also travelled there (one exception – Bithynia – see Acts 16:7 – Paul and Timothy “attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them;”) so the point is that the Gospel already had wide hearing/acceptance in the region!

C) **Time and Location of writing:**

i) **63-64 CE**

- ii) Peter is believed to have died **during the persecution** of Christians carried out during the reign of **Nero**, which started in late 64 CE; Roman history records Nero as having committed suicide in 68 CE; it is sure 1<sup>st</sup> Peter was written prior to that event.
- iii) Peter indicates he wrote from **“Babylon”** (5:13) which most biblical scholars identify as a ‘code’ or symbolic name for **Rome**.

D) **Purpose of writing:**

- i) Peter’s purpose is **to remind Christians that painful times are not an end** in themselves and that **there is hope in spite of suffering;**
- ii) Peter is thought to have composed this letter most likely because of the death of Paul;
- iii) He wrote to a people who were Paul’s **“second generation”** converts, to encourage them in light of the persecutions; Peter and others feared that these events would spread beyond Rome and involve Christians in other parts of the Empire;
- iv) Paul’s converts, by this time, might well have questioned the genuineness of their faith; their doubts probably had increased as a result of hearing about Paul’s death.
- v) If a letter from Peter – the very man whom Paul had rebuked at Antioch – arrived to confirm their faith and tell them not to defect from that faith, this would be a source of great encouragement!

E) **Themes in the Epistle:**

- i) **Suffering** – in all aspects (PHYSICAL, MENTAL, SPIRITUAL); it surfaces repeatedly! see below:

1 Peter 1:6 – ***“You should be exceedingly glad on this account, though now for a little while you may be distressed by trials and suffer temptations.”*** [AMP]

1 Peter 4:12-13 – ***“Beloved, do not be amazed and bewildered at the fiery ordeal which is taking place to test your quality, as though something strange (UNUSUAL AND ALIEN TO YOU AND YOUR POSITION) were befalling you. But insofar as you are sharing Christ’s sufferings, rejoice, so that when His glory [FULL OF RADIANCE AND SPLENDOR] is revealed, you may also rejoice with triumph [EXULTANTLY].”***

1 Peter 5:8-10 – ***“Be well balanced [TEMPERATE, SOBER OF MIND], be vigilant and cautious at all times; for that enemy of yours, the devil, roams around like a lion roaring [IN FIERCE HUNGER], seeking someone to seize upon and devour. Withstand him; be firm in faith [AGAINST HIS ONSET – ROOTED, ESTABLISHED, STRONG, IMMOVABLE, AND DETERMINED], knowing that the same [IDENTICAL] sufferings are appointed to your brotherhood [THE WHOLE BODY OF CHRISTIANS] throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace [WHO IMPARTS ALL BLESSING AND FAVOR], Who has called you to His [OWN] eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will Himself complete and make you what you ought to be, establish and ground you securely, and strengthen, and settle you.”***

- ii) **Practical admonitions concerning conduct**, especially as sojourners in hostile environment/lands.
- iii) **Instructions on how to behave in the midst of those who speak evil** of them; who abuse them; and, who do not believe their message, simply because they are Christians.

## SEVERAL DISCUSSION POINTS BEFORE WE PROCEED:

1. When was the last time you wrote a letter of hope to encourage someone who is/was suffering and desperately needs (needed) to hear words of encouragement? Can you think of someone who needs to receive a message of reassurance right now? Will you commit to writing that letter this week?
2. Have you ever received a letter from someone that brought you a special measure of encouragement? Are you willing to share the experience with others?

## AN INHERITANCE INCORRUPTIBLE – THANKSGIVING FOR OUR SALVATION IN CHRIST – 1<sup>st</sup> PETER 1:1-12

(THE PRINTED TEXT PRINTED BELOW IS FROM THE COMMON ENGLISH BIBLE) - [elsewhere identified as “CEB”]

*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to God’s chosen strangers in the world of the diaspora, who live in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. <sup>2</sup>God the Father chose you because of what he knew beforehand. He chose you through the Holy Spirit’s work of making you holy and because of the faithful obedience and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. May God’s grace and peace be multiplied to you.*

<sup>3</sup>*May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ be blessed! On account of his vast mercy, he has given us new birth. You have been born anew into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. <sup>4</sup>You have a pure and enduring inheritance that cannot perish – an inheritance that is presently kept safe in heaven for you. <sup>5</sup>Through his faithfulness, you are guarded by God’s power so that you can receive the salvation he is ready to reveal in the last time.*

<sup>6</sup>*You now rejoice in this hope, even if it’s necessary for you to be distressed for a short time by various trials. <sup>7</sup>This is necessary so that your faith may be found genuine. (Your faith is more valuable than gold, which will be destroyed even though it is itself tested by fire.) Your genuine faith will result in praise, glory, and honor for you when Jesus Christ is revealed. <sup>8</sup>Although you’ve never seen him, you love him. Even though you don’t see him now, you trust him and so rejoice with a glorious joy that is too much for words. <sup>9</sup>You are receiving the goal of your faith: your salvation.*

<sup>10</sup>*The prophets, who long ago foretold the grace that you’ve received, searched and explored, inquiring carefully about this salvation. <sup>11</sup>They wondered what the Spirit of Christ within them was saying when he bore witness beforehand about the suffering that would happen to Christ and the glory that would follow. They wondered what sort of person or what sort of time they were speaking about. <sup>12</sup>It was revealed to them that in their search they were not serving themselves but you. These things, which even angels long to examine, have now been proclaimed to you by those who brought you the good news. They did this in the power of the Holy Spirit, who was sent from heaven.*

### A CLOSER EXPLORATION OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

(NOTE: In the passages studied below, THE AMPLIFIED BIBLE TRANSLATION [AMP] is printed as a tool to enable a fuller understanding of the meaning of the original Greek text. As the text is studied, participants are encouraged to compare the ‘AMP’ version with the ‘CEB’ version above, &/or with other versions of their own.)

- 1) **PETER’S GREETING** (1:1-2) [AMP] **“Peter, an apostle** [A SPECIAL MESSENGER] **of Jesus Christ,** [WRITING] **to the elect exiles of the dispersion scattered** [SOWED] **abroad in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, Who were chosen and foreknown by God the Father and consecrated** [SANCTIFIED, MADE HOLY] **by the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ** [THE MESSIAH] **and to be sprinkled with** [HIS] **blood: May grace** [SPIRITUAL BLESSING]

**and peace be given you in increasing abundance** [THAT SPIRITUAL PEACE TO BE REALIZED IN AND THROUGH CHRIST, FREEDOM FROM FEARS, AGITATING PASSIONS, AND MORAL CONFLICTS].

**FACILITATOR'S COMMENTS ON THIS PORTION OF SCRIPTURE:**

- a) Note that to these believers, whose future –indeed- looked bleak, Peter does not attempt to ‘*pump*’ them up with statements of positive thinking; instead, he points them beyond their present circumstances to their spiritual calling.
- b) Peter attempts to put ‘pain’ in perspective by focusing on our position in Christ; we are chosen; therefore, we have a full measure of God’s grace and peace available to us.

**A THOUGHT TO PONDER:** Once you embrace the Christian faith, the storms surrounding your life may not suddenly disappear; in fact, they may intensify! What difference then does faith make? Does being a Christian simplify or complicate your life?

- ii) **SALVATION AS HOPE** (1:3-5) [AMP] ***“Praised*** [HONORED, BLESSED] ***be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*** [THE MESSIAH]! ***By His boundless mercy we have been born again to an ever-living hope through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*** [BORN ANEW] ***into an inheritance which is beyond the reach of change and decay*** [IMPERISHABLE], ***unsullied and unfading, reserved in heaven for you, who are being guarded*** [GARRISONED] ***by God’s power through*** [YOUR] ***faith*** [TILL YOU FULLY INHERIT THAT FINAL] ***salvation that is ready to be revealed*** [FOR YOU] ***in the last time.”***

**FACILITATOR'S COMMENTS ON THIS PORTION OF SCRIPTURE:**

- a) Peter points out that as difficult as life may be, nothing that occurs on earth is final; the final chapter is in heaven.
- b) The final meeting is not with an earthly antagonist, but with the Author of Life, Himself!
- c) That living **HOPE** is based on the accepted fact of the Resurrection of Christ; told by an eyewitness!
- d) We have that imperishable inheritance; nothing can destroy, diminish or displace it! The basis of that inheritance is Christ’s Resurrection, made real for the Christian through the experience of being ‘*born anew*’ in baptism.
- e) Our protection is based on a guaranteed ‘*security system*’ – the power of God!

**A THOUGHT TO PONDER:** In *The Lutheran Service for Burial of the Dead*, we often include these words of Psalm 90:10-11 – ***“The years of our life are threescore and ten, or even by reason of strength fourscore; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.”***

- 1) Do these words adequately express the Christian’s Hope that Peter is pointing to in the opening vss. of his epistle?
- 2) In your own words, can you explain to others the sum and substance of your personal HOPE in the light of Jesus’ Resurrection?

III) **SALVATION AS JOY** (1:6-9) [AMP] [YOU SHOULD] *be exceedingly glad on this account, though now for a little while you may be distressed by trials and suffer temptations, so that [THE GENUINENESS] of your faith may be tested, [YOUR FAITH] which is infinitely more precious than the perishable gold which is tested and purified by fire. [THIS PROVING OF YOUR FAITH IS INTENDED] to redound to [YOUR] praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ [THE MESSIAH, THE ANOINTED ONE] is revealed. Without having seen Him, you love Him; though you do not [EVEN] now see Him, you believe in Him and exult and thrill with inexpressible and glorious [TRIUMPHANT, HEAVENLY] joy. [AT THE SAME TIME] you receive the result [OUTCOME, CONSUMMATION] of your faith, the salvation of your souls."*

**FACILITATOR'S COMMENTS ON THIS PORTION OF SCRIPTURE:**

- a) This is the first of several references in Peter's epistle to 'Joy;' a 'Joy' that is unconditional (i.e.- not depending on the circumstances surrounding us); a 'Joy' that comes in spite of our suffering, not because of it.
- b) These verses also tell us some significant things about trials:
  - i. trials are often necessary, proving that our faith is genuine and teaching us humility;
  - ii. trials are distressing, teaching us never to make 'light' of another's burden(s);
  - iii. trials come in various forms – like different temperature settings on a furnace.
- c) Purpose of these trials is that we may emerge from [THE FURNACE] them as purified gold – in the likeness of Christ, who stands with us through our trials even though we cannot see him.
- d) Was Peter here drawing an analogy to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego when they were thrown into the fiery furnace by King Nebuchadnezzar? (see Daniel 3:19-27)
- e) The final passage of our faith is the deliverance of our souls, which includes being freed not only from trials in the present, but a glorification of our physical bodies.

**SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER:**

- 1) Is joy and love in your own experience(s) based on faith or sight?
- 2) Toward what ultimate goals does your faith lead and what effect does this goal have on you now?

IV) **SALVATION AS PRIVILEGE: WITNESSED BY PROPHETS & ANGELS** (1:10-12) [AMP] *"The prophets, who prophesied of the grace [DIVINE BLESSING] which was intended for you, searched and inquired earnestly about the salvation. They sought [TO FIND OUT] to whom or when this was to come which the Spirit of Christ working within them was indicating when He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow [THEM]. It was then disclosed to them that the services they were rendering were not meant for themselves and their period of time, but for you. [IT IS THESE VERY] things which have now already been made known plainly to you by those who preached the good news [THE GOSPEL] to you by the [SAME] Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Into these things [the very] angels long to look!"*

**FACILITATOR'S COMMENTS ON THIS PORTION OF SCRIPTURE:**

*(Special Note – In this passage, and again later on in this epistle, Peter addresses some questions about Jewish forebears that apparently – even then – had been under discussion by early Christians: What about earlier times in the days of the prophets? Did they grasp the full significance of this salvation? If not, how much did they comprehend?)*

- a) Two things are here related about the prophets:
  - i) They searched and inquired about the salvation which was to come (e.g. Psalm 22; Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12) We need not think that the prophets foresaw the actual physical man Jesus;
  - ii) What they did see was the one who would someday come in which their visions would be fulfilled (e.g. Psalm 2; Psalm 16:8-11; Psalm 110) They proclaimed a message of glorious deliverance which they themselves never saw, never experienced; in this regard, we are reminded of Moses @ Pisgah (see - Deuteronomy 34:1-4)
  
- b) Inspiration, depends on an element which is human and an element which is divine:
  - i) the searching mind of man;
  - ii) and, the revelation of the Spirit of God.
  
- c) Preaching is the announcement of salvation; the bringing of the Gospel; the Good News
  - i) preaching is through the Holy Spirit – a preacher's message is not her/his own; it is given by the Spirit
  - ii) preaching is about things which angels long to get a glimpse; there is no excuse for triviality in conveying such a tremendous message!

**DISMISSAL:**

**GO IN PEACE TO LOVE AND SERVE THE LORD:**

***THANKS, BE TO GOD!***

**PREPARATION FOR NEXT WEEK'S SESSION – NOVEMBER 13, 2014 – Read – 1st Peter 1:13-2:12**