

An In-Depth Study of the First Letter of Apostle Peter

[Part 1]

The beautiful spirit of pastoral care shines throughout this letter.

This letter is written out of the love of a pastor for his people who were at that time enduring trials and persecution.

It is a letter written to encourage the Christians scattered throughout Asia Minor who had been driven out of Jerusalem and many other parts of Israel.

Throughout the Roman Empire Christians were being tortured and murdered for their faith under the harsh rule of Emperor Nero.

As we study this letter we will find that the main focus that Peter has, to encourage Christians, is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

As we see in this generation the increase of hostility towards Christians and Christianity, we too should find encouragement in this letter.

1 Peter 1:1-2 [NIV] *“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God’s elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, 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.”*

Peter very simply illustrates what makes Christians different to the rest of humanity in any generation.

“Strangers” – Greek word “*parēpidēmōs*” meaning an alien, one who is living alongside residents of the country or world.

This in Peter’s generation was applied to the exiled Jews who are called the “*diaspora*”, but the real “*diaspora*” is **not** limited to the Jews today but to the Christian church scattered throughout the world.

Christians are the people whose ruler is God and whose home is eternity, and who are strangers, sojourners, and exiles in the world.

Peter was reflecting on the prayer that Jesus Christ made to the Father just before His death.

John 17:13-19 [NIV] *“I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.”*

The truth that Jesus Christ had thought His disciples had “*sanctified*” [Greek “*hagiazō*”] them, set them apart from other humans for a special purpose.

That special purpose was to continue to preach the truth about God’s purpose for all humanity.

The commission given to every Christian in every generation.

“God’s elect” – one of the most wonderful things about our Creator God and our Heavenly Father is that He chooses to work through human beings, His potential created children, to accomplish His purpose for humanity as a whole.

Such a choice shows the wonderful sharing love that God has for all humanity.

John 15:16 [NIV] *“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.”*

We do **not** choose to become Christians, each Christian has been selected for a certain task.

With this selection by God to be part of the *“first fruits”* of His created family come challenges and great responsibilities.

God always chooses people to become servants.

Luke 22:24-27 [NIV] *“Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.”*

With the teaching that Jesus Christ brought about the Kingdom of God it was a natural human response in His disciples as to know what position of rulership they would be given.

The disciples had accepted Jesus as the very Son of God, *“the One who is at the table”* but found it difficult to accept Him as one who served.

Luke 22:28-30 [NIV] *“You are those who have stood by me in my trials. And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”*

The disciples were called to serve as judges, who were also servants of other human beings.

Matthew 23:23 [NIV] *“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices, mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law, justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practised the latter, without neglecting the former.”*

The teachers and Pharisees were the religious judges of the community, and Jesus Christ condemned them as hypocrites because their judgement lacked real justice by failing to include mercy.

James 2:12-13 [NIV] *“Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!”*

Judgement must include mercy, it is only by the merciful attitude of our Creator God that we can avoid the penalty of our sins.

Philippians 2:5-11 [NIV] *“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

Thankfully Jesus Christ who is to be our judge, also has the mind of One who serves by showing mercy and faithfulness.

How then do we prepare to fulfil the responsibilities of “*God’s elect*” in our generation?

“*Sanctifying work of the Spirit*” – it is the work of the Holy Spirit in us that will produce the very character of the Creator God in us.

Galatians 5:22 [NIV] *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,”*

With these characteristics abounding in us we will become prepared to become as “*firstfruits*”, teachers and judges in the created family or kingdom of God.

Such a preparation for the future starts with “*obedience to Jesus Christ and the sprinkling of His blood.*”

Accepting Jesus Christ as our Master and Lord and our only Saviour.

It is within the purpose of our Creator God that we who are true Christians have been called to become the “*firstfruits*” of His kingdom or created family.

It is by the work of the Holy Spirit that we are called to repentance. [**John 16:5-11**]

It is by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ that we are cleansed from our past sins and dedicated to future obedience to God.

As a result of this, “*grace and peace*” will be ours in abundance. [**John 14:27**]

1 Peter 1:3 [NIV] *“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,”*

Within these verses are the living hopes of every Christian, for which we should be thanking and praising God the Father and Jesus Christ every day.

“*New birth*” – **John 1:1, 11-13** [NIV] *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” ... “He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.”*

When we accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour, the Messiah that the Jews rejected, we receive the right to become created children of the Creator God.

The important word in this passage of scripture is “*become*”, our salvation is **not** automatic on repentance.

Philippians 2:12-13 [NIV] *“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence, continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”*

Our salvation is something we have to “*work out*” by allowing God, in the person of the Holy Spirit, to **work in** us but also through us.

Acts 5:32 [NIV] *“We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”*

The Holy Spirit is given to those who obey Jesus Christ, and part of that obedience is to fulfil our part in the commission Jesus Christ gave to all His disciples, that is all Christians. [Matthew 28:16-20]

John 7:37-39 [NIV] *“On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. **Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.**” By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.”*

The Holy Spirit in us cannot be stagnant, He has to flow through us in acts of love towards other human beings by applying the other fruits of our contact with the Holy Spirit. [See Galatians 5:22-23]

This will be the “*working out*” of our salvation, as we take on the very “*nature*” or “*likeness*” of God.

Revelation 19:7-9 [NIV] *“Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! **For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.**” (Fine linen stands for the **righteous acts of the saints.**) Then the angel said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!’” And he added, “These are the true words of God.”*

The fine white linen that will be our “*marriage garment*” [see Matthew 22:1-14] that those “*firstfruits*” will wear at their marriage to Jesus Christ.

The Greek word translated “*righteous acts*” is “*dikaioma*” which means “*worked out righteousness*,” not “*dikaisos*” which is the “*imputed righteousness*” that we receive from Jesus Christ.

This “*new birth*” or re-birth is also expounded by Jesus Christ to the Pharisee Nicodemus in **John 3:1-14**.

This re-birth is the product of the Word of Truth.

James 1:18 [NIV] *“He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of **firstfruits** of all he created.”*

It is the creative Word of God, Jesus Christ, [John 1:1-3, 14] and the written word of God, the Christian Bible, that was inspired by the Holy Spirit. [2 Peter 1:21]

This re-birth brings with it a living hope in a world that is without hope. [Ephesians 2:12]

This hope comes from two things –

(1) **1 Peter 1:23** [NIV] *“For you have been born again, **not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.**”*

The birth is given to us by the incorruptible, eternal seed, that is the Holy Spirit.

John 14:15-18 [NIV] *“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”*

The Holy Spirit will at first be alongside us to guide us, then enter into us to give birth to eternal life.

1 John 5:11-14 [NIV] *“And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. **He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.** I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have*

eternal life. *This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.*”

(2) The result of our dying and being resurrected with Jesus Christ to a new life. [**Romans 6:3-13**]

1 John 2:28-29 [NIV] *“And now, dear children, **continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.** If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him.”*

We are cleansed from our former sinful nature.

1 John 3:9-10 [NIV] *“**No-one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed [the Holy Spirit] remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God.** This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.”*

Prompted and empowered by the indwelling Holy Spirit, we are then able to resist and overcome the temptation to sin.

1 John 5:18 [NIV] *“**We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him.**”*

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit will prevent Satan from entering and directing our lives.

We are emancipated from sin and empowered to walk in a life of righteousness.

This is **not** saying that we who have this re-birth will never sin, but we will be given the power, desire and the grace to rise up and continue in a life of righteousness.

This re-birth is to a life of love.

1 John 4:7-12 [NIV] *“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. **Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.** Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. **No-one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.**”*

We are freed from the unforgiving, self-centred life, for we now have within us the merciful and sacrificial love that was expressed in the life of Jesus Christ as a human being at His first coming.

Romans 12:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, **to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship.** Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

Paul encourages us to live the life of a living sacrifice, by offering our time and substance to others in physical or spiritual poverty.

To no longer live the selfish life of the vast majority of humans, who do **not** know of the love and mercy of their Creator God.

This re-birth of a Christian is a re-birth to a victorious life.

1 John 5:4-5 [NIV] *“**for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.** Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”*

1 Corinthians 15:50-54 [NIV] *“I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: **“Death has been swallowed up in victory.”**”*

We have victory over our personal selfishness, over sin and Satan and even death.

All this victorious life is totally due to God in the person of the Holy Spirit is living in us.

1 Peter 1:4-5 [NIV] *“and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade, **kept in heaven for you, 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.**”*

The re-born Christian enters into an inheritance that is eternal.

The Greek word translated “inheritance” is “*klērōnōmia*” meaning to receive as one’s own, as a gift, rather than anything we could earn, or receive as a reward.

The word used clearly signifies entrance into an eternal life without any previous title.

Note this inheritance is “*kept in heaven for us*” until the “*last time*”, that refers to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 16:27 [NIV] *“For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then **he will reward each person according to what he has done.**”*

This is when we receive the reward of an eternal inheritance.

Ephesians 1:11-14 [NIV] *“In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that **we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.** And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. **Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession, to the praise of his glory.**”*

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is our guarantee that we will receive our eternal inheritance at the return of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 9:11-18 [NIV] *“When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! For this reason **Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant. In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living. This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood.**”*

Our inheritance is totally linked to what God has done through Jesus Christ and is now doing through Him as our High Priest.

The death of Jesus Christ opened up to all humanity the promises that were made to Abraham, which included an eternal inheritance of this earth.

We all need to use such knowledge to empower us to face, with joy, any trials we have in life.

This is the reason Peter reminded us of these wonderful promises that are offered to all Christians.

1 Peter 1:6-7 [NIV] *“In this you greatly rejoice, **though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith, of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire, may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.**”*

Our suffering is but for a very short time compared with our eternal inheritance.

God allows such trials so that our faith in Him and the promises He has made, may be proved to be genuine **not** just empty words.

We can withstand anything when we focus on a future freed from the trial and its pain.

We can withstand anything when we remember every trial God allows us to experience is in fact a test of our faith in Him.

The trials God allows us to face are **not** meant to take the strength of our faith out of us but to increase the strength of our faith in Him.

We can withstand anything when we know that at the end of it we will receive praise from God by hearing those wonderful words spoken directly to us personally by our Saviour Jesus Christ, *“well done, good and faithful servant.”* [**Matthew 25:21, 23**]

1 Peter 1:8-9 [NIV] *“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, **for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.**”*

Although we have not seen Jesus Christ our Saviour as long as we maintain our faith in His promises we will receive the goal of our faith, eternal salvation.