

Strangers on the earth

Getting to grips with the message of 1 Peter

This first letter of Peter speaks right into the challenges Christians face in the western world in the 21st century.

Its aim is to encourage you as a believer, and to instruct you in how to live in such a way that you *“declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.”*

You can find the background to this short series [here](#).

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2. 1 Peter 1.3-12 [w/b Sunday 10th February 2019]

“.., new birth into a living hope ..”

The concern of this letter is to help believers to live attractively for Jesus when the culture around them is dismissive of his claims. In the previous study we saw that being clear about our identity in Christ is the important basis on which such a life is lived.

Peter’s message in these verses is that understanding both who we are and what the Lord has done for us in Christ will issue in a life characterized by praise: our lives will radiate a deep-seated joy in the Lord which no circumstance can remove.

[Despite your best intentions, there may not be time for all the questions to be addressed in your Community Group! It may be helpful to try and ensure that in this study you cover questions 2, 5, and 6. As always try to leave good time for shared prayer!]

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1. Read 1 Peter 1.3-12. This passage is all one (long!) sentence in the original, and thus benefits from being read in its entirety to get the flow of the apostle’s thought.

‘Praise’, ‘rejoicing’ and ‘inexpressible joy’ are the notes which sound throughout the passage: what helps prompt praise and joy in your heart?

How would you summarise the main point which Peter is making in these verses?

2. Read 1 Peter 1.3. Peter takes his readers right back to basics in this opening verse of the passage in explaining why we have every reason to praise the Lord.

At the heart of the gospel is the reality of 'new birth' (see v.23 also): according to what Peter says here, what lies behind that new birth?

What difference has this 'new birth' made in your own experience?

3. Read 1 Peter 1.4. As a child anticipates adulthood, so we now look forward to the future: our perspective has changed, so that anticipation rather than nostalgia is the hallmark of our lives

What are the six ways in which this 'inheritance' is described by Peter in this verse?

How do each of these truths about our inheritance make a difference to our experience and perspective?

4. Read 1 Peter 1.5. It's the future dimension of God's salvation in Christ to which Peter is pointing his readers, exposed as they increasingly were in the present to growing persecution.

How have you been conscious of the Lord 'shielding' you as you have exercised your faith in Him?

Why as believers do we need to be 'shielded'?

5. Read 1 Peter 1.6-7. As it was "*for the joy that was set before Him*" that Jesus endured the cross (Heb.12.2) so for believers we 'rejoice' in the midst of present trials on the basis of the future.

What sort of 'trials' have been your experience?

How does Peter suggest we understand these 'trials' which have come our way?

In what ways have you found this perspective helpful in your own life?

6. **Read 1 Peter 1.8-9.** Peter explains how the 'joy' that we experience is rooted in a secure relationship of love and focused on a coming consummation.

What does Peter mean when he speaks of 'the salvation of your souls' being 'the end result of your faith'?

How can we nurture a *love* for Jesus in our hearts, rather than merely believing in Him?

7. **Read 1 Peter 1.10-12.** Having pointed his readers forward to the 'end result' of their faith, Peter now reminds them of the 'back story' to God's salvation in Jesus.

In what way can the prophets of old be said to have been '*not serving themselves but you*'?

How does what Peter say in these verses help buttress the faith of believers in the midst of their trials?