

X. I Peter in Biblical Perspective
The Elect in Exile
“A Reprise”
I Peter 1:3–12
Dr. Harry L. Reeder III
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We are resuming our study in I Peter. This is the Word of God. It's the truth. I Peter 1:1–2 says [1] *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, [2] according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

I want to confess my seminary professor Sinclair Ferguson and Martin Luther both affected me quite a bit in their assessment of, their recommendation of, and value of I Peter. Luther went so far as to say I Peter is that body of Divinity that ultimately sufficient for the foundational effectiveness of every Christian who would desire to serve Christ for it has all that is needed in the five chapters to equip us with its insights, challenges, encouragement and instruction. He might have exaggerated a little bit here but I became convinced that I Peter was crucial for us to understand who we are and how we can serve Him. Thus I began to pray and that's how we got started in this series. We took a short break and now we're back.

Wherever someone starts something they are giving you a clue as to where they want to end. This is how you start things in your life. You start from the end, where you want to end up and now you know where to take your first step. Why does Peter open with a doxology, with the words in this first chapter? It is because he has an end. The end is that he is writing to people who are under persecution. Some of them are actually being burned to death which is why he will say 'do not be surprised by the fiery ordeal.' They are under increasing persecution and the headwinds of the culture are beyond targeting their livelihood but their lives are being targeted. How can they now live for Christ confidently and effectively in the context of a hostile culture today? Peter lays it out in five chapters and it is important where he begins.

Because there has been some time since our last study in I Peter this study will be a reprise to get us where we need to be in this study. A reprise is a repetition of the key musical themes because they are necessary for where the concert is going to end. They are reiterating something. It is something they want in the back of your mind, to permeate your mind as the concert comes to a finish. These 12 verses in I Peter 1:1–12 have to be present through the rest of our study of the book of I Peter.

Given what we're facing in the headwinds of society and out of our love for Christ to be effective I would want you to understand how an elect exile lives for Christ. I don't know of a better one than I Peter to equip you for that specific purpose. As we go through these five chapters in the coming studies I want to equip you to have a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship whereby God is being praised in our worship and we are effective in one another's life, then together into the culture to win men and women to Christ in the headwinds of society.

When I was learning to drive a number of the cars had a gear shift, where we learned to drive shifting gears. Maybe one of the trickiest moments was when you started going uphill and you had to shift up. You are going uphill right now and you can't coast and you can't stay in

third gear. You are going to have to shift and Peter tells us how to shift. I want you to see this right now from where we have been and how it will carry on in the remaining studies of this book.

In these opening verses Peter identifies himself as the Holy Spirit inspired author. This encourages me because Peter, for me, is Mr. Everyman. Peter failed, made dumb decisions, stupid comments, absolute denials of Jesus and he was silent when he should have spoken and spoken when he should have stayed silent. In other words, I can identify with Peter because God was patient to keep making him into an effective instrument. This particular author, Peter, who we can all identify with in some way, then speaks to a particular audience.

In these opening verses he identifies his audience where they live and that is what we would call today Turkey, Asia Minor. He lists the various provinces that made it up in that day in the Romans Empire. He calls the elect exiles of the dispersion which he is pointing out two things to them. First is who they are in Christ and that is they are the elect and then he lays it out because of the doctrine of the Trinity. You are elect because of the God the Father that sent His Son who covers you as He sprinkles you clean with His blood whom you love and obey and He has set you apart through the Holy Spirit. The electing grace of God the Father authored your salvation and then the Father sent His Son to accomplish your salvation. Then the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit to sanctify, set you apart that you might come to Christ to belong to Him and then you would follow Christ in obedience because you love Him as He would cover you with His blood in order to save you.

In the Old Testament God worked through a covenant nation called to call His people to Himself. In the New Covenant God's people are not in one nation but they are being called from all the nations. When God brought judgment to Israel He sent them out to the nations in a dispersion under the Babylonian captivity. In the New Covenant God is saving His people from all the nations. We are not dispersed in judgment, we are dispersed in salvation as He is saving us from all the nations. Who are we? We are the elect in Christ but that's not all Peter wants you to know.

Peter also wants you to know who you are in the world for Christ. You are exiles for this world is not our home. We are just passing through for our citizenship is in heaven. I find myself dispersed in the Kingdom of God in one of the nations of the world. I will be a good citizen in that nation as I follow King Jesus but King Jesus is my Lord and Savior. I bring His Kingdom to bear upon the kingdom that I live in and with His people we send the Gospel of the Kingdom to all the nations of the world as He calls His people to Himself. So who am I in Christ? I am His elect. Who am I for Christ in the world? I'm an exile.

We are an outside not an insider but that's tough for you and me because in God's providence we have lived in a nation that unlike almost all Christians for 2,000 years and most Christians today, we have been in a bubble. We don't feel like an outsider. In fact, we feel like an insider but we're not and God tells us to live inside for Him. Don't see yourself as an insider because you are an outsider. Christians, for 2,000 years have not gotten parades from the nations of this world. They get persecution. We have had an unusual blessing in God's providence. We are elect exiles who are dispersed through all the nations.

Then Peter's address says he wants grace and peace from Jesus to be multiplied to you as elect exiles. Then he fashions a doxology. Doxologies in the Bible are so interesting and profound. Peter and Paul both wrote letters to the same group of churches in Asia Minor at different times from Rome. Paul's letter is called the book of Ephesians and Peter's letter is I

Peter. Both of them start with a doxology and the comparisons and the parallels even go beyond that.

Paul's doxology in Ephesians 1:3–14 is one sentence of 228 words. Peter's doxology is in I Peter 1:3–12 is one sentence of 186 words. These are not haphazard stringing together of words and phrases. On the contrary, in both of them there are three distinct stanzas giving praise to God. In the first stanza, Paul gives praise to God the Father and ends it with to the praise of His glory and grace. In the second stanza, he gives praise to God the Son to the praise of His glorious grace and the third stanza is praise to the Holy Spirit to the praise of His glorious grace. In this study I want to simply walk you through Peter's three stanzas with the three blessings which give praise to His glorious grace.

In stanza one Peter praises God for the blessing of our salvation inheritance. In stanza two he praises God for the blessing of our salvation trials and in stanza three he praises God for the blessing of our salvation truth. Let's walk through these three stanzas very briefly. The first stanza is in I Peter 1:3–5 which says *[3] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, [4] to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, [5] who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

In this first stanza to the elect exiles of the dispersion Peter declares that the security of the heirs of God's salvation does not depend upon the strength and power of our faith, but upon the strength and power of God revealed through our faith. So we have an inheritance. In my lifetime I have received a couple of inheritances from my parents and my wife's parents. An inheritance is something someone else did and secured and then sent to you. Whenever you get an inheritance or notified that you're an heir there are two concerns that you have. One is the security of the inheritance and the other is the security of the inheritor, the heir.

God has said that all of His people who are saved by faith have an inheritance and it's their salvation. He will reveal it in its fullness on the last day at the end of time. It belongs to you through faith. So I have two questions. Will the inheritance last and is it secure? It's a valid question. It doesn't matter what inheritance you get – house, business, profits from a job, land – I can promise whatever inheritance you get on this earth, it will fade, can be stolen, can be destroyed and corrupted. All the inheritances of this world are temporary but is there an eternal inheritance for you in Christ and will you receive it eternally?

This is why Peter praises God. It is not us, the church or our faith that keeps the inheritance but He keeps it undefiled, unfading and undiminished. He keeps not only our inheritance but He keeps us for the inheritance that Christ has secured. The inheritance and the heirs are secure in Christ and the Savior who keeps you for your inheritance is your Inheritance. John 14:3 says *[3] And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.* Praise His Name!

The second stanza is in I Peter 1:6–9 which says *[6] In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, [7] so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. [8] Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, [9] obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

Now Peter is praising God for the salvation trials. Here the life of a Christian in this age is continually marked by the seemingly incompatible, yet beneficially concurrent dynamics of grievous trials informed by escalating joy. I know this doesn't fit on a bumper sticker but the Christian life doesn't fit on a bumper sticker. This is something that is gloriously true for the Christian life is one of trials. Trials are not interruptions in the Christian life, they are the Christian life and they are necessary. Why? It is because they are refining our faith. They are testing us. It is just the way the fire tests the gold to get rid of the impurities. The tests in a hostile culture that come at us from Satan and the world, a sovereign God is using them and we know according to Romans 8:28 that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose. He doesn't say the trials are joyful but He says you will have escalating joy as He uses the trials to 'genuine-ize' your faith, to refine it and develop it.

The best illustration I have for this has to do with the algebra tests you received in school. The teacher does not give you the test because she dislikes you. A test is given to show you three things. One it shows you what you know, two what you don't know and three what you need to know. Satan and the world bring you adversity to destroy you. God's sovereignly uses it to develop you. That is why when you are informed of a sovereign God, Satan is God's Satan, the trials are God's trials who is sovereignly using them, yes it's difficult but He is bringing roses out of ashes.

Think of Joseph here. It was not enjoyable to be thrown into that pit by his brothers or to be in a kangaroo court in Potiphar's house or to have to serve in Pharaoh's house under the judgment of all that was taking place there at that time but when Joseph went through this he would minister wherever God put him for he was not looking at life through the tests and adversaries. Joseph was looking at life through the sovereign hand of God and that's why he was able to say to his brothers in Genesis 50:19–21, *[19] But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? [20] As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. [21] So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones."* Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

This is why we have escalating joy in seemingly difficult times. It is because God is doing His work of refining, developing and setting up a platform for the world to see that our God is greater than the adversity in this world. That is why this is a multiplied joy because we are informed from God's Word what He is doing in the midst of the adversity of this world as elect exiles.

The third stanza is in I Peter 1:10–12 and it says, *[10] Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, [11] inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. [12] It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.*

Here is where Peter praises God for our salvation truth and our salvation inheritance exceeds what the Old Testament Prophets knew, embraces what the New Testament Apostles proclaimed and dwarfs what the elect angels can never understand. The Prophets who wrote the prophecies and the narratives longed to know what you know. They are writing about how God is going to send a Messiah to save His people from their sins and you can almost hear them saying as they write 'God, who is this?!' and they are bewildered but you know it is Jesus of

Nazareth, the Son of God who has come in the flesh. He was crucified on a cross for your sins and raised from the dead. He ascended to glory and the same Jesus is coming again.

The angels long to understand this. They have no idea why God is sending His Son to the cross and why Jesus is going to that cross. They have the same bewilderment that the Prophets had. Hopefully that is why you are reading this today to sing praise to Him for His amazing grace that the angels and Prophets longed to know about. Why did He give His Son? It was because He chose to love you. Why did His Son choose to go to the cross? It was because He chose to save you. Why did the Spirit of God bring you to Christ? It was because He chose to bring you from death unto life and to change your life so that you would choose to come to Christ for the glory of God. These angels can't know it but you know it. The Prophets longed to understand it but you understand it, praising God for His salvation truth that is true in Jesus Christ. All the Scripture points to Him and you know Him. He knows you, you are His and He is ours.

Amazing grace how sweet the sound, for my chains fell off. Angels may be able to repeat the lyrics to amazing grace but they can't sing them. You can sing them! I want to leave you with a couple of takeaways as we move forward in our study of I Peter and here is my first takeaway.

The first takeaway is that you have to see an unmistakable perspective as a Christian and as you serve Christ in this world and that is that you are the elect (exiles) in God. I belong to Christ and He belongs to me. I am in Christ and Christ is in me and now Christ has me in the world. You are not an inside so don't expect parades. I know it's hard for us because we have enjoyed the blessings of God's providence with two amazing revival awakenings in this nation with one beginning in 1735 and one in 1880. We have also had other small revivals ever since then and I praise God for it and I long for it to come today but when the headwinds of the culture come against you don't be startled. This is our calling. We are outsiders and not allowed to retreat for safety for we're called to get inside for Jesus Christ.

How do you do that? We have five more chapters to go through in I Peter that will answer this for us but that is where God has called us. He has called us not to retreat but to go into the world for Him and don't expect a parade to welcome you but you go and love them with the truth of the Gospel. That is what God has set you aside and called you to do. Do not be surprised at the fiery ordeals. Jesus said in John 16:33, *[33] I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart (courage); I have overcome the world.* He keeps our inheritance and He keeps us.

Please don't waste your time with the huskers who tell you if your faith is strong enough then you won't have adversities and you will just be healthy, wealthy and wise. That is in direct opposition to what God tells you in His Word. Philippians 1:29 says *[29] For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake.* That suffering is not a judgment but a refining tool from the Lord in your life. He is giving you a platform for others to see Jesus in you. So as God does this work in you don't be surprised at it.

The second takeaway is an unmistakable pattern is suffering and then glory. How did Jesus save you? He suffered and then brought you to glory. Christ suffered for our sins. Jesus said on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24:27, *[27] And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.* He explained how the Son of Man had to suffer and die and be raised to glory. This is the pattern that secures the Gospel where Jesus suffers and brings us to glory and this is the pattern of the Christian life.

Before we get to eternity it is suffering to glory. We are in a broken world. Everything that happens to an unbeliever in this world – death, sickness, loss of jobs, failures, financial issues, etc.—can and will happen to you except for God’s condemning judgment. Romans 8:35–37 says [35] *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?* [36] *As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”* [37] *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*

Why would God say these things in Romans 8 if they didn’t happen in our lives? The difference is that we don’t meet them in the strength of our own abilities but we meet them in Christ and Christ in us because He says that when you meet them He is with you always, even to the end of the age (Matthew 28). He will go with you through the valley of the shadow of death and none of those things that come against you will be able to separate you from Him. He is in you and you are in Him. More than that, He is using that in your life to refine you and present for you a platform to show forth His glory.

The third takeaway is that you have an unmistakable principle where delight comes from doxology. It is no accident when Paul and Peter want to undergird God’s people to face the fiery trials of life that they start with worship and doxology. What I’m about to say I’m also saying to myself. I meet Christian after Christian who thinks that somehow they are going to go through life without adversity but please hear me – it is not going to happen. God is not only going to allow trials in your life but He will send trials in your life because He loves you. He will take you through them and make you more than a conqueror.

Secondly, His number one instrument is worship and that’s why He put gathered worship on the first day of the week in the New Covenant. That is why when we wake up in the morning we ought to worship. Most of us are easily deceived into thinking that ‘if God really loves me there won’t be adversity.’ That is a lie from the pit of hell. God loves you and will take you through the adversity and make you more than a conqueror. Many of us try and meet the adversity where we make worship on the a la carte menu of life.

There is a reason they start with worship and doxology. Worship is the thermostat that sets the temperature of your life. That is why it is so important that the elders of this church make an undiminished commitment to preserve and promote God-centered worship in the assembling of God’s people. It is also important why every believer makes a commitment to prioritize gathered worship, personal worship and family worship. I plead with you to believe me that this is foundational to the Christian life. That is why God made you, sustains you and you can’t walk in triumph without Christ. The way He has ordained for you to meet Him most effectively is in the worship of His Name. He will inhabit the praises of His people.

Pray for the priority of God-centered worship to be returned to the evangelical church! I pray that you will prioritize it in your life as well. It is no accident that God said to Moses to tell Pharaoh to let My people go from Egypt to worship Me. God delivers His people to worship Him and then God uses worship to prepare His people for the wilderness until He brings them to the Promised Land. God delivers you, not through Moses, but through Jesus to worship Him. We give Doxological praise for our salvation inheritance, our salvation trials and our salvation truth to Christ alone. Then God will take you through the wilderness and the journey of grace until He brings you to the Promised Land. Then we will enjoy His praise forevermore. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Lord, how we long for that day for we whom we love we see and we whom we serve we will be in front of, no longer with the eyes of faith but with the eyes of sight but until that day do come and meet with us this day. If you are reading this then God allowed this for a reason. If you have never come to Christ then it was for the opportunity, not to put your trust in a church or in anything other than Jesus alone. Angels long to understand what you can now embrace and if you would like to give your life to Christ, God's Son died for you on the cross in amazing love. As the hymn says 'Amazing love how can it be that thou my God should die for me.' Would you come to Christ? If you would like to pray with someone please call us here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 for we would love to do this with you. If you are a believer and would like to talk with someone please call us as well. We would be happy to pray with you. O Lord hear this prayer. Speak, Spirit of God, to us. Bring the full knowledge that we belong to Jesus, the electing love of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and then send us into this world for Jesus, not looking for the world's applause but looking to bring to them the Good News. God, we thank You for the applause from heaven, 'well done good and faithful servants' for I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

AN OVERVIEW OF THE DOXOLOGY OF SALVATION INHERITANCE

STANZA ONE (vv. 3–5)

Praising God for the Blessing of our Salvation Inheritance

The security of the Heirs of God's salvation does not depend upon the strength and power of our faith, but upon the strength and power of God revealed through our faith.

STANZA TWO (vv. 6–9)

Praising God for the Blessing of Our Salvation Trials

The Life of a Christian in this age is continually marked by the seemingly incompatible, yet beneficially concurrent dynamics of grievous trials informed by escalating joy.

STANZA THREE (vv. 10–12)

Praising God for the Blessing of Our Salvation Truth

Our salvation inheritance exceeds what the O.T. Prophets knew, embraces what the N.T. Apostles proclaimed, and dwarfs what the Elect Angels can ever understand.

LIFE TAKEAWAY

An Unmistakable Perspective

Elect–Exiles

An Unmistakable Pattern

Suffering–Glory

An Unmistakable Principle

Delight–Doxology