1 Peter 1:1-12

Key Verse 1:3

*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*

Introduction to 1 Peter:

Key Verse 1:6-7: *“In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”*

The book of 1 Peter was written by Simon Peter, to both Jew and Gentile Christians living in Asia Minor during Nero’s persecution of the church. The major theme of the book relates to God’s purpose in sufferings, including how believers are called to respond and the good result of sufferings in the life of a believer.

Introduction to 1 Peter 1:1-12:

In this passage, Peter encouraged believers that God had given them a living hope in the midst of sufferings and trials. Their living hope was in the Risen Jesus Christ and included an eternal inheritance in heaven. Although they were going through sufferings and trials, God’s purpose was to refine their faith in the power and love of God so that they would be prepared for Jesus’ second coming.

1. Read verses 1-2. How did Peter identify himself? (1) How did he address his audience? How were they chosen by God? (2) Why were they chosen by God? What blessing did Peter give to them?

*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God’s elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, 2 who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood:*

*Grace and peace be yours in abundance.*

1. Peter identified himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ.
   1. First, Peter. Peter’s birth name was Simon, but Jesus also gave him the name Peter. Peter means small rock or stone. In the bible, and in Hebrew culture a name represents an individual's identity or place in history. Sometimes they were reminders of a person’s origin--where they came from. For example, the name Adam means man, but sounds like the Hebrew for *ground (adamah)*, in order to remind Adam that he was created from the dust of the ground. Other times, names were reminders of a person’s destination--where they were going. For example the name Noah means rest, because when Noah had obeyed God, he would give God’s people rest after the flood. In either case, names were given to orient and guide with the development of one’s character and purpose. In the case of Simon, his name Peter (small rock or small stone) was given to him as a reminder of his place in God’s history. Peter was like a small stone used In building up the church, of which Jesus was the cornerstone. Through remembering this, Peter could have purpose and vision to develop the solid character of a leader. Later Peter said, “you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1Pet 2:5).
   2. Second, an apostle. An apostle is one sent by God on a mission, or as a messenger of God. To be an apostle is a special calling from God. Before Jesus was taken up to heaven, he said to his disciples, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The disciples were sent out to certain regions or nations or peoples and became known as apostles. In Peter’s case, he was known as an apostle to the Jews, as stated in Galatians, “For God, who was at work in Peter as an apostle to the circumcised, was also at work in me as an apostle to the Gentiles” (Gal 2:8).
   3. Third, an apostle of ‘Jesus Christ’. Peter identified himself as an apostle of ‘Jesus Christ’. Rather than identifying himself based on where he was sent, Peter identified himself based on the one who sent him. It was Jesus who called Peter, and it was Jesus who sent him out to preach and serve the work of God. Peter may have identified himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ to remind himself and his audience that he was sent by Jesus, and did not come in his own name. As an apostle of Jesus Christ, Peter saw himself not as his own man, but as a representative of Jesus Christ.
2. Peter addressed his audience as God’s elect and a chosen people, but also as exiles and a scattered people.
   1. First, Peter addressed them as God’s elect and a chosen people. Here, Peter’s initial audience seems to be Jewish believers, but Gentile believers are also referenced throughout the book. So, his audience was probably something of a mix of Jewish and Gentile believers during a time of increased persecution. The Jewish believers already had an identity as God’s chosen people. God spoke to their ancestors, saying, “The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession” and, “... you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation’ (Deu 7:6, Exo 19:6a). Now God was fulfilling that calling, but also calling Gentiles according to the same promise. Peter told them, “... you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” and “Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election” (1Pet 2:9, 2Pet 1:10). Both Jew and Gentile believers were untied as God’s elect and chosen people.
   2. Second, Peter addressed them as exiles and a scattered people. The Jewish believers were part of the Jewish diaspora. They were living outside of Israel, in places like those mentioned; Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. They were a part of the scattered tribes of Israel, as a result of the Babylonian Exile of 586 BC and Assyrian Exile of 722 BC. These Jewish believers were already an exiled and shattered people. Now as believers, they were also an exiled and scattered people from the position of the world. Both Jewish and Gentile believers were an exiled and scattered people in this world, because their true citizenship and allegiance belonged to the kingdom of God. Later, Peter addressed these exiled and scattered believers saying, “Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul” (1Pet 2:11). They should not take root in this world, because they did not belong to this world. They should live as God’s remnant.
3. They were chosen by God *“according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit”*
   1. First, they were chosen according to the foreknowledge of God. This just means that God knew them even before God called them. This was important for them to understand, because through understanding that they were chosen by God’s foreknowledge, they could recognize God’s sovereignty and his leading upon their lives even before they believed. God knew them in advance and used all the conditions and circumstances of their lives to bring them to salvation in Jesus Christ. Understanding this could provide great comfort, and help them to trust in God's plan for their lives moving forward.
   2. Second, they were chosen through the sanctifying work of the Spirit. There choosing was not just an outward selection, but was through the work of the Holy Spirit. In this way, when God chose them, he also sanctified them and made them holy, so that they became God’s children who could be used by God. Of course, this work of sanctification was also ongoing, but as they continued to confirm God’s calling in their lives and submit to God’s will, God would continue to change them more and more into the image of Christ.
4. They were chosen by God to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood.
   1. First, they were chosen to be obedient to Jesus Christ. To obey Jesus was the first purpose of their calling. As God’s chosen people, they were called to obey the words of God and the will and guidance of the Holy Spirit. This life of obedience was in direct opposition to the way they used to live in disobedience to God and obedience to the world and their sinful desires. Especially, Peter emphasised suffering in obedience to Christ. He said, “Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin. **2** As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.” (1Pet 4:1-2)
   2. Second, they were chosen to be sprinkled by his blood. Here to be sprinkled by his blood means to be forgiven through Jesus’ death on the cross. The believers were chosen by God so that God might forgive all their sins through the blood of Jesus.
5. Peter blessed them with the words, “Grace and peace be yours in abundance” Here grace and peace is what they needed the most. They needed the grace of sin-forgiveness, and they needed the peace of a right relationship with God. Through grace and peace they could grow into the image of Christ.
6. Read verses 3-4. Why did Peter praise God? How have believers received a new birth into a living hope? (3) In what respect is this living hope ‘living’? What else does this living hope entail? (4)

***“3*** *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,* ***4*** *and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you.”*

1. Peter praised God for his great mercy to give believers a living hope.
   1. First, Peter praised to *God’s the Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was God the Father who sent Jesus to suffer and die for the sins of the world. It was God the Father who raised Jesus from the dead and established Jesus as Lord. It was God the Father who gave believers this new birth and a living hope.
   2. Second, Peter praised God the Father for his *great mercy*. Mercy is compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone whom it is within one's power to punish or harm. God the Father could have enforced a sentence of capital punishment for sinners, since the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23). He could have destroyed the world and started over, and would have been justified in so doing. But, God had mercy on sinners, and did not punish us as our deeds deserved. Instead, he sent Jesus to die in our place and for our sins. This is only God’s great mercy!
   3. Third, Peter praised God for giving believers a new birth into a living hope. Instead of punishing sinners, God gave sinners a new birth--a new start, and a living hope--not just any hope, but a living hope. This shows the extent of God’s mercy to sinners.
2. Believers have been given a new birth into a living hope *through the resurrection of Jesus Christ* from the dead.
   1. First, believers have been given *a new birth* through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. This new birth was foretold by Jesus, saying “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again” and “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit” (Jn 3:3,5). According to Jesus, this new birth (to be born again) is through water and Spirit--referring to personal repentance and regeneration by the Holy Spirit. However, Peter gives further insight into this new birth--that this new birth it is through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. If Jesus just remained in the grave, there would be no new birth for believers. But, Jesus didn’t remain in the grave, but was raised to life. Then, after he was raised, he ascended into heaven, sat down at the right hand of God, sent the Holy Spirit beginning on Pentecost, and the church was born. As a result, when sinners repent and turn to God--believing in Jesus Christ, they receive the promised gift of the Holy Spirit and are *given new birth* as children of God.
   2. Second, believers have been given *a living hope* through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. When a person is born again, they are born into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus. They begin to hope in the resurrection and eternal life. Hope is so important for a person’s life. People need hope in order to live a meaningful life and to have reason to go on living. However, the hope that believers have is a hope that goes beyond this lifetime. Such a hope is not diminished through sufferings, but grows through sufferings. As the apostle Paul said, “Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; **4** perseverance, character; and character, hope” Romans 5:3-4).
3. This hope is a ‘living’ hope, because Jesus is living. It is hope that is in Jesus the living God and risen Lord. If Jesus had just remained in the grave, what kind of hope would believers have? Their hope would be only for this life, which is no real hope at all. As Apostle Paul once said in speaking of Jesus’ resurrection, “If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.” Hope for this life only is a dead hope. It is dead because we all must die, and when we die our hope dies with us, never to rise again. Not only that, but as Paul also said, our faith is futile (1Cor 15:17). Why have faith--why believe in Jesus if there is not hope beyond this life? However, God has not given us a living hope through Jesus’ resurrection. Since Jesus has risen from the dead, we too have the hope to rise from the dead. This is the *living* hope we have in the risen Jesus. When we have a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, we can face whatever sufferings or trials come our way, because we know that even if we die, we will rise again.
4. This hope also entails an inheritance that will never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for believers. Along with the hope of resurrection, believers also have the hope of an inheritance in the eternal Kingdom of God. They will to live together with God in the new heaven and earth prepared by God.
5. Read verses 5-9. How are believers shielded from the world? (5) What purpose do sufferings and trials serve in the life of a believer? (6-7) How can believers enjoy a love relationship with Jesus? (8) What fills believers with an inexpressible and glorious joy? (9)

5 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. 6 In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 8 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, 9 for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

1. Believers are shielded by God’s power through faith. They have a living hope but until that hope is fulfilled, they will continue to live in a world that is under the power of sin and Satan. A living hope in itself is not enough to shield them from this world. Only God’s power is enough to shield them from the power of this world. But, how can they access God’s power while they are in the world? They can access God’s power only through faith. In order to be shielded by God’s power, they needed to come to God and ask for his help and strength through God’s words and the Holy Spirit, and they needed to rely on God’s power and not on themselves or anything else. Moreover, they need to keep this faith up until the time Jesus comes again to establish God’s eternal kingdom on earth, or as Peter put it here “until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.” Only God’s power available through faith in God can shield them until that time.
2. Sufferings and trials serve as the way for a believer to prove the genuineness of their faith. So far, Peter gave the believers so many things to rejoice about. However, they were in danger of losing their joy, because of the suffering and trials they were enduring. For this reason, Peter helped to find God’s good purpose in these trials. People typically see suffering and trials only in a negative light, but for believers they are necessary for genuine faith. Specifically, they give the believer an opportunity to prove their faith genuine before God. Genuine faith has such great value, and will result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Some might think that suffering and trials mean that a person sinned or made a mistake. There is a side where this is true, however, this does not represent the main flow or purpose of what God is doing through sufferings and trials. We need to humbly see sufferings and trials as an opportunity for us to prove ourselves--to prove our faith before God. It is only when we do this, that we can grow in faith through trials and develop genuine faith.
3. Believers can enjoy a love relationship with Jesus by faith and not by sight. We have not seen Jesus and do not see him know, but we can still love Jesus. We can love him by believing in him. Practically, when we believe Jesus’ words in the and obey them, we show that we love Him. When we have faith in Jesus, we have fellowship with him through his word, so that he speaks to us and we can obey his word. Then through obeying we can enjoy a love relationship with Jesus Christ.
4. The love relationship with Jesus is what fills a believer with an inexpressible and glorious joy! It is an amazing and glorious work of God that we can love someone so much that we have never even seen! It makes us so happy, that we even feel that we can face any sufferings or trials joyfully. However, this joy is inexpressible, so we need to experience this love relationship for ourselves instead of trying to describe it. Again, this love relationship with Jesus is by faith. The end result of this faith is the salvation of the soul of those who believe. Faith is Jesus' love and power saves the soul from the power of sin and death.

1. Read verses 10-12. What were the Old Testament prophets searching for, or trying to find? (10-11) What does the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories to follow refer to? (11-12) What detail was revealed to the prophets about these things? Why is the prophets' searching and revelation important for believers to consider?

10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, 11 trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

1. The Old Testament prophets were searching for and trying to find the time and circumstances of the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. These prophets received the Spirit of Christ in advance of His coming. Through the Spirit, they were able to see the salvation by grace that would come through the Promised Messiah, and they searched intently and with the greatest care to find the time and circumstances involved.
2. The sufferings of Messiah and the glories that would follow refer to Jesus’ death and resurrection, and His second coming to establish the eternal kingdom of God on the earth. In a nutshell, the sufferings of the Messiah and glories that would follow refer to the complete gospel message.
3. It was revealed to the prophets that they were not serving themselves but us. When they spoke about these things and wrote them down, they were able to understand that these were things that were coming in the future. They prophesied to serve those that would believe their message and its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.
4. When believers consider the searching of the prophets they can be appreciative of what they have received through their service. The Old Testament prophets suffered a lot and never received what was promised. They suffered to serve us, not themselves. Jesus said about them, “I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor” (John 4:38). Paul said about them, “They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth” (Heb 11:13). Also, when we consider how they searched intently and with the greatest of care, we can also study the bible with a similar hard work and effort. If they valued the message so much, though they never received what was promised, then what about us?

Conclusion:

Again, Peter encouraged the believers that God had given them a living hope in the midst of sufferings and trials. Their living hope was in the Risen Jesus Christ and included an inheritance in heaven. Although they were going through sufferings and trials, God’s purpose was to refine their faith in the power and love of God so that they would be ready for Jesus’ second coming.

One word: A living hope!