

## Living Hope: First Peter for the Church on Mission (Part One)

(By David Fields)

### I. A New Kind of People for a New City [*polis*]

The little book of 1 Peter offers us a picture of what it means to actively be in the world for God's glory and the good of our neighbours – especially in the face of trouble and pressure.

The Christian faith is deeply “political”, but not in the way you think. “Christianity is mostly a matter of politics – politics as defined by the gospel. The call to be part of the gospel is a joyful call to be adopted by an alien people, to join a countercultural phenomenon, a new *polis* called church.”

- Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, *Resident Aliens: A Provocative Christian Assessment of Culture and Ministry for People Who Know that Something is Wrong*

Through the text of 1 Peter, God is shaping and forming in us:

- 1) A ***grace-gifted identity*** as God's ‘sojourning’, ‘exilic’, or ‘transient’ people.
- 2) A ***cross-shaped perspective*** and ***set of dispositions***.
- 3) A ***set of practical ways to live*** out this new identity and this new way of perceiving our lives in the real world.

When Jesus says, “Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand” (Matt 4:17), *that* “Kingdom of God” is *that* different ‘politic’ – the New City. And 1 Peter is all about how *that* is where our first and primary allegiance rests. “Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles...” (1 Peter 2:11a) Peter will say.

### II. Peter's Cross-Shaped Perspective

#### 1. Peter as an Apostle of Christ

Peter's place as “an apostle of Jesus Christ” authorizes him to speak as an agent of Jesus Christ and qualifies his message as originating with Jesus himself.

#### 2. Peter as the Inspired Author

“With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it. She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark. Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all who are in Christ.”

– 1 Peter 5:12-13

Papias was a second century pastor in Hierapolis, a city in Asia Minor, and he is quoted: “Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately everything that he remembered, without however recording in order what was either said or done by Christ.”

- Papias (c. AD 60-130) cited in Eusebius, III.39.

Peter heard the call of Jesus to follow him – and that this was the key to life:

“Anyone who wants to be my disciple must deny themselves, take up their cross and follow me. For whoever tries to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.” - Mark 8:34-35

<sup>21</sup> To this you were called because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

<sup>22</sup> “He committed no sin,  
and no deceit was found in his mouth.”

<sup>23</sup> When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.” - 1 Peter 2:21-23

The Gospel of Mark is Peter’s eyewitness account of Jesus marked by Peter’s belief that to follow Jesus is to gain life, and that means adopting the same pattern of life Jesus lived. The book of 1 Peter is specifically drawing on what *that* life looks like.

### **III. Rationale for Christ-Like Living**

“...who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit [or the work of the Spirit who is ‘making you into a whole new sort of person empowered to live a life that is holy and honouring to God’], to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood.” – 1 Peter 1:2a

#### **1. Chosen**

To be ‘elect’ and to be ‘chosen’ in the way Peter intends us to hear it, is about finding our life bound up in Jesus, the One who was ‘elect’ and ‘chosen’ as well.

#### **2. Given New Birth to a Living Hope**

<sup>3</sup> 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, <sup>4</sup> and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> 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.

#### **3. Suffering and Hope**

<sup>6</sup> In all this you *greatly rejoice*, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> 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, <sup>9</sup> for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

## **Life Group Discussion**

(Note: Many of the following questions are borrowed from Edmund Clowney's helpful study guide to his commentary on 1 Peter).

### **Open Up**

Have you ever received an inheritance? In what ways was that significant to you? What is the difference between receiving an inheritance and a treasure? Why might that be significant as we think about our life of faith since Peter says we are "brought into an inheritance" that can never perish, spoil or fade?

### **Read 1 Peter 1:1-2**

1. What significance is there to the way Peter describes himself in 1 Peter 1:1?
2. How does Peter address his readers? Why is that so astonishing?
3. Notice how all three 'persons' of the Trinity are involved in our salvation. How does this text inspire confidence for you in your salvation?
4. What does it mean to be a 'resident alien' – and 'exile' or 'transient' community? (See 1 Peter 1:2 and 1 Peter 2:11). How might this impact your relationship with the broader world?

### **Read 1 Peter 1:3-12**

5. Why are God's people full of 'praise' and 'rejoicing greatly' according to the text? How do you connect with that same sense?
6. In 1 Peter 1:6-9, Peter gives 4 reasons why we cannot only endure trials but rejoice in hope in the midst of them. What are these? How can you apply them in your life at the moment?

### **Prayer**

Take some time to respond to the most meaningful aspects of this text for you, by giving praise to God for it. Listen to the requests of your group members, and take time to entrust those requests to God, and ask that these also be source of joy, even in the midst of the suffering as well. Pray for your friends and neighbours that need to know this 'living hope' as well.