



Bible study resources

1 Peter



Study notes 2018–19

1 Peter studies

1. For your preparation:

PRAY

LISTEN TO ANEIRIN GLYN'S INTRODUCTION TALK www.st-helens.org.uk/resources/talk/56084

READ your passage several times, and last week's passage, and ask yourself:

- *Do you agree with the suggested MAIN IDEA of this passage?*
- *Why do you think that Peter wrote these verses to his readers?*

Peter tells us why he's written the whole letter in 5:12: 'I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.'

So, for your passage, ask yourself:

- *What has been declared about the grace of God? (God's character, what he has done/is doing?)*
- *How has Peter exhorted his readers to stand firm, particularly in the face of suffering?*
- *Why do you think WE need these verses today? How do these same truths help us in our belief and living?*

The questions that have been prepared for your study basically follow the pattern of:

- **What** does the passage say?
- **Why** does the passage say this?
- How do these verses contribute to the whole book in terms of declaring the grace of God and exhorting Christians to stand firm, particularly in the face of suffering? (**Significance—linking to Peter's purpose**)
- How do those truths help us in our belief and living today? (The **So what?**)

2. In the Bible study:

Pray. Read the passage out loud. Ask your question and wait in silence for someone to answer. If no one answers, repeat the question, or ask 'have I made the question clear?' Be grateful and positive about all answers. Once you have an answer from someone in the group, you can encourage discussion by asking several of these following questions:

- 'Where did she get that answer from in the passage?'*
- 'Is that how you would have answered that question?'*
- 'There is a bit more to say from the passage—can anyone help us?'*
- 'Just go back and look at the exact words that Peter uses. Could someone please help us with why Peter chose these exact words?'*
- 'Before we move on, has anyone got anything else to add in answer to this question?'*
- 'How might verse "x" help us?'*

3. Apply and pray:

Make sure that everyone could answer:

- What do I understand and need to believe about God's grace?
- How does that grace help us to stand firm (especially when facing suffering)?
- What will that look like in the week ahead for me personally and as I seek to encourage others?

1 Peter: This is the true grace of God—stand firm in it (5:12)

(Study o) Overview/Introduction

Purpose: This is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it

Purpose unpacked: Peter writes to help the scattered church in exile know who they are and how to live as they look to their imperishable future. Exile is marked by suffering but has surprising evangelistic purpose.

Read 1 Peter out loud (things to listen out for: who are the readers, situation, big ideas, tone, any hints as to why Peter's writing?)

Write down/get some first thoughts from people on the read-through.

These questions should help focus some of your fact-finding and first thoughts:

- Look at 1:1–2. What can we tell about the readers from these verses?
 - What might their lives be like if they are both 'elect' and 'exiles'? What's the tension? In what sense is exile 'over'?
 - What's life likely to be like if they are dispersed?
- Look at 4:1–5, 4:12–13. What more does this tell us about the readers and their situation?
- Look at 5:12. How is Peter's letter going to help them? What's his tone?
- What big truths does Peter 'declare' to help them understand God's grace (character/what he's done or is doing)? (Scan 1:1–2:10: could look at 2:9–10 to whet appetite)
- What does standing firm look like? (Scan 2:11–5:14—could look at 2:11–12 and 3:15 to whet appetite)
 - How are the people still in 'exile'?
 - What is God doing through this time?
- How do you feel about studying 1 Peter?
- How do you think 1 Peter will help us?
 - What similar 'scattered' and 'suffering' situations are we in (together and individually)? (Be specific—these are situations you can come back to week by week).

Pray

Section 1: 1 Peter 1:1–2:10

The True Grace of God—Exile is over: Christian identify in relation to God and the world

Study 1: Read 1 Peter 1:1–12

(Main idea: We are now God's chosen people with a living and certain hope.)

Peter calls his readers 'elect exiles' in v1. Look at each of these sections in turn: vv3-5; vv6-9 and vv10-12 and ask:

- What does it mean to have this new identity?
 - What do they now have?
 - What words capture how the Christians are meant to feel about what Peter's saying?
- Why do you think Peter has started his letter like this?

To summarise and apply:

- What has been declared about the grace of God in this passage? (God's character, what he has done/is doing?)
- How has Peter exhorted his readers to stand firm, particularly in the face of suffering?
- How might these same truths help us today in our belief and living?
- What will this look like in the week ahead for each of us/me personally and as I seek to encourage others?

Pray

Study 2: Read 1 Peter 1:13–21

(Main idea: Set your hope fully on the future and be holy like your Father.)

- In v13, what does setting our hope fully on the grace mean? What does it involve? (The footnote might help.)

Look at vv14-16 and then vv17-21 in turn and ask:

- What instruction does Peter give to his readers?
- What motivation does he give them?
 - What more do we learn about Christian identity?
- How does that help us get our minds prepared?

To summarise and apply:

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Study 3: Read 1 Peter 1:22–2:3

(Main Point: Love one another and crave the imperishable word that's given us all new birth.)

- In v22, Peter's readers are told to love one another earnestly? Why? (Look at 1:22–2:1 and vv18-19 from the last passage may help too.)
 - Why do they need to be told 2:1? Why might love be particularly important given the readers' situation? (see 1:6)
- How does Peter want Christians to respond to the word ('spiritual' in v2 can be translated 'wordy')?
 - Why does he use the image of the new-born?
 - How might that help us keep loving?

To summarise and apply:

- What has been declared about the grace of God in this passage? (God's character, what he has done/is doing?)
- How has Peter exhorted his readers to stand firm, particularly in the face of suffering?
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Study 4: Read 1 Peter 2:4–10

(Main idea: God builds his new people as they respond rightly to the Living Stone, Jesus. They are to declare his praises.)

Look at v4–5 and then v9–10 in turn and ask:

- What pictures and language are used to describe God's new people?
 - What Old Testament pictures can you recognise here? (Don't worry if you don't get any or all!)
- What is their new role or task? Put this in your own words.
- Lots of the pictures are from Old Testament. Why is Peter using this language to describe his Gentile (non-Jewish) readers? How would they feel?

Through the whole passage, and particularly in vv6-7, response to Jesus is vital.

- Why do Peter's readers need to know about both accepting and rejecting Jesus?
 - What will the future be, for those who have come to Jesus?
 - How does it prepare them for their new task of proclaiming God's excellencies?
- Why does Peter use the Old Testament passages about response?

To summarise and apply:

- What has been declared about the grace of God in this passage? (God's character, what he has done/is doing?)
- How has Peter exhorted his readers to stand firm, particularly in the face of suffering?
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Section 2: 1 Peter 2:11–4:11

Standing firm in God's true grace in exile: Christian living in the world and in the Church

Study 5: Read 1 Peter 2:11–25

(Main idea: Keep your conduct in the world honourable. When under authority, suffer for doing good—if necessary—as this is God's gracious pattern.)

v11–12 are a headline for the whole of this next section.

- How are Peter's readers to live?
 - Why do you think Peter reminds them of who they are?
 - How might v12 work in practice?
- Why is this the right way for God's people to live? How might it help with 'proclaiming God's excellencies' in 2:9-10?

Look at v13–17 and v18–25 in turn and ask:

- Who are Christians to be subject to?
- Why is this pattern of living a good—or gracious—pattern?
 - How might it help 2:11–12 to happen?
 - What will help Peter's readers live like this?

To summarise and apply:

- What has been declared about the grace of God in this passage? (God's character, what he has done/is doing?)
- How has Peter exhorted his readers to stand firm, particularly in the face of suffering?
- How might these same truths help us today in our belief and living?
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Study 6: Read 1 Peter 3:1–7 (it might help to read from 2:11)

(Main idea: Likewise, live honourably within marriage—shaped by and showing God's grace.)

In v1, wives are called 'likewise' to be subject to their husbands.

- What reasons and motivations has Peter already given from 2:11–12 and from 2:13–25 to 'be subject'? How do these reasons help wives hear and obey this teaching?
- What further reason does Peter give in v1–4?
- Men still need to hear the imperishable word—why do you think Peter focuses on 'without a word' here?
- What does right adorning look like? How might this help a husband being won? How is it different from the world's view of adorning?
- [If you have time: in v5–7, Peter gives Sarah as an example. From the verses and what you know of her story, what did right adorning look like for her? How does that help/challenge us? (Genesis 12:11–20 will give a flavour if you have time).

In v7, husbands are also to live honourably.

- How are husbands to honour their wives? How should this be striking to the world around us?
- What difference does it make for a (husband or a) wife to know this is God's pattern?

To summarise and apply:

- What has been declared about the grace of God in this passage? (God's character, what he has done/is doing?)
 - How has Peter exhorted his readers to stand firm, particularly in the face of suffering?
 - How might these same truths help us today in our belief and living?
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Study 7: Read 1 Peter 3:8–22

(Main idea: Do good, including explaining our hope, so that we will be blessed. Don't fear, or retaliate, even if you suffer—salvation and vindication will come. Christ is both our example, and hope.)

After giving examples of honourable conduct in specific relationships, Peter issues more commands, applicable to all.

In v13, Peter speaks of 'being zealous for good', even in the context of suffering. Look in turn at v9–12, v13–17 and ask:

- What does 'doing good' look like, even if we suffer?
- Why do you think this is the 'good' God wants?
 - How might this be a blessing for the Gentiles around us?
 - How are we blessed?

In v14, Peter tells his readers not to fear but to honour/fear Christ instead. Look at v18 and v21–22 where Peter returns to teach more about Christ:

- What does Peter highlight about Christ's attitudes and his work?
 - How do these verses help us as we do good?
 - How do they help us to tackle our fear, if we are suffering?
 - Optional: How might the verses about Noah either help us do good or dispel fear?

(Two possible routes on Noah: i) **doing good**: N could be an example of someone speaking, with Christ speaking through him (calling people to repentance, N possibly 'giving a reason for the hope that he had' in his situation)—lots of rejection but a few saved; ii) **dispelling fear**: Christ, after his death but pre-resurrection, proclaimed his victory over all those who have rejected God's his warnings of judgement, including the people of Noah's day—Christ victorious even in the face of huge rebellion/rejection.)

- How might we explain the reason for the hope that we have in v18?

To summarise and apply:

- What has been declared about the grace of God in this passage? (God's character, what he has done/is doing?)
- How has Peter exhorted his readers to stand firm, particularly in the face of suffering?
- How might these same truths help us today in our belief and living?
- What will this look like in the week ahead for each of us/me personally and as I seek to encourage others?

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Study 8: Read 1 Peter 4:1–11

(Main idea: Live godly lives (because Christ has suffered in the flesh and defeated sin) as you suffer. Look to the last day and show God's grace to each other.)

Look at v1–3. Peter exhorts the Christians in exile to live 'for the will of God'

- What does this look like?
 - How are we to see our flesh?
 - How does Christ's example and work help us to do this? (2:24, 3:13 and 3:22 may help remind us)
- Look at v4–6. What will happen as Christians live like this?
 - What examples have we experienced of this ourselves?
 - How does Peter motivate Christians to stand firm as this maligning happens? How is judgement used differently in v5 and v6? How do both perspectives help us?
- How does Peter appeal to the last day in v7–11?
 - How do we see God's grace at work here? For Christians? For pagans? (cf 2:12)
 - How do you see this at work/would you like to see it at work in our study group?

To summarise and apply:

- What has been declared about the grace of God in this passage? (God's character, what he has done/is doing?)
- How has Peter exhorted his readers to stand firm, particularly in the face of suffering?
- How might these same truths help us today in our belief and living?
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Section 3: 4:12–5:14

Standing firm in God's true grace in exile—Christian living in the fiery trial

Study 9: Read 1 Peter 4:12–1

(Main idea: Don't be surprised by suffering: instead rejoice, and entrust yourself to our faithful Creator, whilst doing good. Glory is coming!)

Look at v12–15.

- What perspective on suffering does Peter want his readers to have?
 - Why does suffering feel strange to us? From 1 Peter, why should suffering not be a surprise? (Lots of answers, but 1:6–7 may help particularly)
- Instead of being perplexed, how does Peter help us to respond rightly to suffering?
 - Why are we to rejoice in suffering (this sounds hard!)?
 - How are we blessed if we suffer?

Look at v16–19.

- What perspective on suffering does Peter want his readers to have here?
- Why should we be glad to have the name of 'Christian' and suffer for this?
 - In what sense is the household of God 'judged'? What can and can't this mean?
 - How does this reality spur us on? What does v18 imply for the unbeliever?
- Peter assumes we will keep doing good, even as we suffer. What is so good about being able to entrust our souls to God, who is both a) faithful and b) our Creator?

To summarise and apply:

- What has been declared about the grace of God in this passage? (God's character, what he has done/is doing?)
- How has Peter exhorted his readers to stand firm, particularly in the face of suffering?
- How might these same truths help us today in our belief and living?
- What will this look like in the week ahead for each of us/me personally and as I seek to encourage others?

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Study 10: Read 1 Peter 5:1–5

(Main idea: Elders are to shepherd the flock through times of suffering: they are to lead by example and we are to submit. All are to be humble.)

Peter turns to address the elders of the church in v1–4.

- What should be the mark of good eldership? What are elders to be examples of?
 - Why do you think Peter highlights the things he does?
 - Why do these things matter in times of suffering?
- Why do you think Peter addresses the elders at this point? How might 4:17–19 have prompted these verses?

Look at v5.

- The rest of the church is called to submit to elders. Why do you think Peter says this?
 - Why might it matter particularly in times of trial?
 - How will the call to humility (for all) help v1–5a to happen?
- How can we clothe ourselves with humility? What helps us from these verses? (And from 1 Peter more widely?)

To summarise and apply:

- What has been declared about the grace of God in this passage? (God's character, what he has done/is doing?)
- How has Peter exhorted his readers to stand firm, particularly in the face of suffering?
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Study 11: Read 1 Peter 5:5b–11 (ie from ‘Clothe...’)

(Main idea: Humble trust in the God of all grace is vital. We’re in a spiritual battle to stay firm in our faith as we suffer—but God will deliver us.)

We thought last time about ‘Clothe yourselves with humility’ towards one another. Paul develops further the theme of humility in these verses.

- Why do you think ‘God hates the proud and gives grace to the humble’? Why is humility a good attitude to have as an exile?

Look at v6–11.

- What does humility look like in these verses? Why is this good for us?
 - How is casting all our cares a mark of humility? What would a proud response be?
 - How does humility lead to sober-mindedness and watchfulness? What would pride lead to instead?
 - How does humility help us to resist the devil? How does being humble help us to think rightly about our suffering brothers and sisters? How does that help us resist?
- How are v10–11 a great encouragement? (nb after a little while is deliberately vague—it could be in this world but will certainly be in the next.)
 - What does the promise to ‘restore, confirm, strengthen and establish’ sound like to someone tempted to give up in suffering and go back to the pagan life?
 - How is God described? How does that underline the promise?

To summarise and apply:

- What has been declared about the grace of God in this passage? (God’s character, what he has done/is doing?)
- How has Peter exhorted his readers to stand firm, particularly in the face of suffering?
- How might these same truths help us today in our belief and living?
- What will this look like in the week ahead for each of us/me personally and as I seek to encourage others?

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Study 12 and review: Read 1 Peter 5:12–14

(Main idea and purpose: Suffering exiles, this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.)

- From v12–14, can you put Peter’s closing verses in your own words?
 - Why do you think he uses the language of Babylon to refer to—probably—Rome?

Read the whole of 1 Peter if you have time

From the whole letter:

- What has struck you about the true grace of God in this letter?
- What has God’s grace already achieved for us? (What big things have changed about our identity and hope?). What have you been glad to understand or be reminded of? Why?
- How has 1 Peter changed your perspective on trials and suffering? How have you been helped to stand firm?
- How is his grace at work in us now as we suffer? (How are the fiery trials good for us? What have we learnt about our hope, identity, the example and work of Christ to help us? How does Peter want us to treat each other?)
- How is God using that grace to benefit the pagan world? (Why are we left in exile amongst the pagans?)
- What ‘good living’ has challenged or attracted you? What will help you do this, from 1 Peter?
- What is the reason for the hope that we have, from 1 Peter? How would you explain it simply to someone who asks?
- How would you like 1 Peter to shape our group (conversations, life and prayers) even once we’ve finished studying the letter this time around?

Pray