

**Armagh Baptist Church Bible Studies**  
**Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2009 – 8:00pm**  
**1 Peter 1:1-2 – Hope in a Hopeless World**

**Introduction**

On Sunday mornings at the moment we are making our way through the Acts of the Apostles. Next Sunday we will reach ch.10 where Peter is called by God to take the Gospel across the major religious and cultural divide of his day - from the Jews to the Gentiles. The vision which Peter was given by God in Acts ch.10 of the sheet coming down from heaven filled with all kinds of animals – clean and unclean – with the command from God to 'Rise, Kill and Eat!' was God's way of changing Peter's mind about how he felt about the Gentiles, in order to change his attitude from one of distance and suspicion to one of love and compassion. In Acts ch.11 Peter will have to give an account of his actions to the other apostles and Jewish church leaders, but the whole matter of how God accepts Gentiles on the same basis as how he accepts Jews, was not really settled by the church until Acts ch.15. And even at that, it continued to rumble on and rear its head again and again throughout the rest of the New Testament.

It's towards the end of the New Testament that we find two of Peter's own writings – two letters known in our Bibles as First and Second Peter. Some think that Peter was behind the writing of Mark's Gospel as well, but apart from that, these two letters are the only writings of Peter that we have in the whole of our Bibles, and yet he was regarded as such an important Apostle!

**Why should we study 1 Peter?**

Because 1 Peter is all about Real Hope! I sense a lot of hopelessness around in our world today – particularly in Western European Society since the credit crunch hit over the last couple of years. So I'm calling this series:

**'Hope in a Hopeless World!'**

The Hope that we are going to talk about in this book is rock solid. I hope you will find it and you will experience it to be true as we make our way through this letter in the coming weeks and months.

**1. What do we know about the Writer? (v.1a)**

*'Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ...'*

(i) **'Peter'** = Rock – This was his new name, given to him by Jesus in Matthew 16:18. Jesus made him rock solid, steadfast, sure and certain. Simon was his old name – probably referring to his old nature: Fickle, unstable, up and down, someone with 'foot and mouth disease' – Every time he opened his mouth, he put his foot in it! Cephas, the Hebrew form of the name Peter, reminds us he was a Jew. He was the apostle primarily to the Jews. Whereas Paul was called primarily to be the apostle to the Gentiles.

(ii) **'...an apostle...'** = a sent one (a gift and an office: Ephesians 4:11)  
= apostolos (Gk) = misseo (Latin) = a missionary.  
= i.e. the foundation lay-ers of the early church.

(See Matthew 16:18 and compare to Ephesians 2:19-20)

N.B. Jesus Christ is the foundation stone of the Christian Church.  
The Church must be built upon Him (See 1 Corinthians 3:10-11).

But the Apostles, as a whole group of twelve, had the God-given task of laying the foundation of personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ – of sharing the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, so that as many people as possible, from as many backgrounds as possible, could become part of His Church! He gave these 12 men that special apostolic authority. Here in this letter Peter is teaching us with that God-given authority. So we must listen carefully and respond to what he says.

I hope each one of us is building our lives upon the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ? I hope we're not building our lives upon the foundation of our religion or our church-going? For there is all the difference in the world! There is a big difference. Churches have been crumbling all around us in recent years – you can't trust any church or denomination – but you can trust Jesus Christ - true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, will never crumble. He is the only solid foundation for our lives and for our faith.

Some people build their lives on themselves or on their own ideas about God, but that just allows them to live their life whatever way they like? But if they do, then they will have problems, and some of those problems we will address in these studies:

*'On Christ the solid rock I stand,  
ALL other ground is sinking sand!'*

(iii) **'...of Jesus Christ.'**

As an apostle, Peter doesn't just teach his own ideas, or speak on his own authority. Peter never forgot that he was under Christ's authority – he was sent **by** Jesus, he was sent **from** Jesus, and he had **to testify about** Jesus – the fact that Jesus was **the Christ!**

- Peter had discovered that in Matthew 16:18
- He had gone through a difficult time when he could have doubted if Jesus was the Christ (Luke 22:31-34)
- But Jesus graciously restored him and gave him new and important work to do:
- In Luke 22:31 he was called **'to strengthen his brothers...'**
- In John 21 he was called by Jesus to **'feed my sheep...'**

These were things that Peter did gladly and willingly in the early church, as a leader among the apostles in the early days of the Christian Church. Part of that work of strengthening his brothers and feeding the sheep we have here, written down, in 1 Peter – e.g. 1 Peter 5:1-4.

## **2. What do we know about the Recipients? (v.1b)**

They were...

### **(i) Special – ‘God’s Elect’**

In the Old Testament only Jews would have been referred to as God’s elect. But in 1 Peter, Gentiles are now included!

Read 1:18 and 4:3 - Those things just couldn’t be said by a Jew to Jews!

So converted pagans are now included among God’s chosen people!

In the New Testament God’s elect can come from any nation and any background. We are part of God’s New Covenant community – We are among God’s chosen people! (e.g. 2:9-10). We’re special! God’s elect!

### **(ii) Strangers – ‘strangers in the world’**

In other words we don’t belong here in this world. Our real home is in the world to come. As the old Negro Spiritual puts it:

***‘This world is not my home, I’m just a-passin’ through...’***

In other words we are strange or different to those around us in the world. We may be open to misunderstanding because of this, but we should at least be distinctive because of this too. In terms of our attitudes and behaviour we should be different! (See Romans 12:1-2).

Nevertheless we are still *‘in this world’* – that means certain things: we are not **of** it, we are not **out of** it, but we should be **alongside** it.

By that I mean, the Bible does not call us to be total separatists, nor does it call us to be integrationists, but we are called to be evangelists.

And to evangelise we need to be in contact with people! Coming alongside people to minister to them, even though we don’t fit in with them, even though we are distinct and different from them, we still need to draw alongside them, in order to minister to them in Christ’s name.

### **(iii) Scattered –**

*‘scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia...’*

If you look up a Bible Map, you will discover that all of these places are in Northern Turkey – up towards the Black Sea. They are sometimes referred to collectively as ‘North Galatia.’ N.B. these were areas that Paul was not permitted to go to by the Holy Spirit in Acts ch.16.

So either these people got saved on the Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem (see Acts 2:9) or else Peter must have gone there to evangelise himself.

It was a rural area. So the individual believers were probably well scattered.

When I was pastor in Cavan Baptist Church, ‘my parish’ for want of a better word covered an area from Virginia in East Cavan to Carrick-on-Shannon in Co Leitrim – that was 70 miles across from East to West. It also covered an area from Lisnaskea in the North to Longford in the South – that was about 40 miles. It was a big area, and we were at one time probably the only really active evangelical church right at the heart of that whole area. But God had a few faithful believers scattered in pockets right across that area. And it was the responsibility of those believers scattered where they were to do the work of evangelism in their particular communities right across that area. I couldn’t possibly as one man be in touch with all of the people across that vast area, but *they* could as they rubbed shoulders with people where they lived and where they worked each week.

A few weeks ago, on a Sunday morning, I talked about how God had up-ended the salt-shaker of the Church in Jerusalem whenever Saul unleashed his persecution on the church.

Up until that time they had all been content to gather in church in Jerusalem every Sunday and have a good time. But there was a whole world out there that still needed to be reached with the Gospel.

Salt is no good as long as it stays in the salt-shaker. It had to be up-ended out of the salt-shaker and scattered, if it was to have its desired effect.

That was the case as far as these people that Peter was writing to were concerned. They were scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. Just as we, who belong to Armagh Baptist Church, are scattered across Armagh City, but also into places like Loughgall, Richhill, Hamiltonsbawn, Markethill, Keady, Killylea, Caledon – we’re even scattered as far as Monaghan on one side and Craigavon on the other side. We are a scattered church, that’s true!

Sometimes we can see that as a weakness in that we all have to drive in to church each Sunday, but we could turn it around and see it as positive, if we could only see that we **gather for worship** on a Sunday, but we **scatter for witness** during the week. So we’re Special, we’re Strangers in the world and we’re Scattered to be witnesses for Jesus in the communities in which he has placed us.

## **3. What do these verses tell us about God? (v.2)**

### **(i) God the Father – Has chosen us – we are God’s elect**

*‘Who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.’*

Obviously these are believers Peter is talking to. This is the second time in as many verses he has referred to the fact that believers are chosen by God to be saved, they are God’s elect.

So if you are a believer in Christ (i.e. saved) then you can say that God has chosen you!

Yes, you had a decision to make as far as your personal response to the Gospel was concerned. But long before that, God had chosen to save you for Himself. That was away back in eternity past – ‘before the creation of the world’ (Ephesians 1:4).

But it talks here about God’s foreknowledge. What does that mean?

Well the word for foreknowledge is ‘pro gnosis’ from which we get prognosis. When a doctor makes a prognosis he predicts what is *likely* to happen to his patient. When God made his prognosis he *knew* what was definitely going to happen – His choosing of us is certain – our salvation will happen in time, because our election happened before time!

**(ii) God the Spirit** – Has sanctified us – we are set apart to be holy  
*‘through the sanctifying work of the Spirit.’*

God chose us by his foreknowledge in eternity past in heaven. But in time the Holy Spirit touched our lives, gave us an understanding of the Gospel, and then set us apart, ‘sanctified us’ for God. He applied God’s salvation to us and we were born again!

**(iii) God the Son** – Has sprinkled us by His blood – we are cleansed  
*‘for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood’*

**What has Jesus done for us?** – He has sprinkled us with his blood. Just like the sacrifices in the Old Testament, the blood of the sacrificial animal had to then be sprinkled over the worshipper, to symbolically cleanse him from sin. Likewise, not only has the blood of Jesus Christ been shed as our sacrificial lamb, but his blood has to be personally applied to each one of us, or sprinkled on each one of us to actually cleanse us from our sin too. See 1 John 1:7-9. ‘the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses us from all sin.’ In fact it goes on cleansing us from all sin, if we will only confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse us. The blood of Jesus also protects us from judgement, because He has taken the judgement for us in our place. It is also a seal of God’s New Covenant with us ‘in my blood’ reminding us that He is our God, and we are His people.

**Why has he done all this for us?** – *‘For Obedience to Jesus Christ’*

God has a purpose in saving us. It’s quite simply this: to make us obedient to Christ. It’s the Holy Spirit coming into our hearts who gives us the ability to live lives of obedience and submission to the Lord Jesus Christ. But that is what he has called us to do – to be obedient to Christ - nothing less.

**Therefore**, in the light of all of this, Peter can finish his opening remarks by saying: ***‘Grace and Peace be yours in Abundance!’*** May we each know more of God’s grace, and his peace as we study 1 Peter together...