

## 1 Peter 1

**Read 1 Peter 1:1-5:** Peter is reaching out to all of the saints who are living away from their homeland. They are called strangers or pilgrims. Many Jews had to leave Jerusalem during the persecution of the church. Many of these scattered families lost their assets and loved ones in the religious persecutions. *The Dispersion* is a phrase specifically referring to Jews scattered around the world by persecution. He addresses the Jews who are living all over the Roman Empire. Even the Gentiles living abroad (in a sense) are *pilgrims from heaven*. We are told that our true citizenship is in heaven.

Do you ever feel that you do not quite fit in on earth? We are truly people of another place. The bigger picture is that all of the stuff that we used to be in love with is a faint memory. It is like reflecting on our High School days. There are pleasant memories; but we do not want to go back. We have a new life of adventure and new discoveries. We are like business travelers on assignment abroad; living as necessary to complete our assignment.

*Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, (Philippians 3:20)*

We are from a heavenly city; stationed here on earth to make the best of it. So, we do belong somewhere...but we are in a strange land.

*Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, (Ephesians 2:19)*

Abram is our prime example of faith. He was characterized as *a sojourner*; or a traveler. He left his native homeland and family. He did not let old commitments and life plans stop him from *faith opportunities* that were presented to him. He was under the impression that there was a city somewhere where God lived. He was looking for this mysterious city. The point is that he kept on traveling towards God and with God. He was on a quest to meet God. We should also be a quest to meet God.

Abraham was all about being with God. That meant that he did not build houses or farms or buy property. He was always ready to roll up his tent and move on. Being a herdsman was a well-suited occupation for a traveling man.

*By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. (Hebrews 11:8-10)*

The Abraham lifestyle is a recognition that we are not too connected to this fallen world and its ways. Our home should just be a *way station* where we set up camp.

Worshipping God from points abroad is where *The tabernacle Concept* comes from. A tabernacle is a mobile altar, and place of worship. It is where you can camp out to meet God anywhere on the map. For that reason, our bodies are referred to as a type of tabernacle. We are comparable to the unattractive, portable tents that house an altar of God in our hearts.

*For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (2 Corinthians 5:1)*

Peter also stresses that not only are we heavenly citizens; but we also have heavenly possessions, which cannot be lost. These people had had to flee, just like the children of Israel in Exodus. The idea of having lost everything leaves us with a sense of vulnerability and being displaced. It should be comforting that our heavenly assets do not get lost, stolen or depreciate. In other words, Peter is telling people who have lost what they loved, that in reality, they have gained something better.

*For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. (Matthew 16:25)*

**Read 1 Peter 1:6-9:** Peter is now talking about the purpose of their troubles. Many of them had to flee from Jerusalem for religious persecution. Authentic Jewish religious leaders abroad may also have been a problem to them as well. The result was to end up with much better faith. Our faith begins as a mixture of hopes and doubts. The system was against them. The government was against them. The church leadership was compromised; and treacherous too.

To be honest, we really do not know what we believe until we are crushed; like a grape. We can be filled with bitterness or sweet hope. We are also like tea bags; that really do not identify themselves properly until we get into hot water. I know that the name Jesus starts flowing out of my mouth when I am in trouble.

*Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24)*

It is not our nature to embrace conflict and seek added difficulty. We do not want to make waves or enemies. It can seem safer to keep our mouth shut regarding Jesus. It seems like you can talk about a lot of things without any reaction. Once you say *Jesus*; everybody's ears open up.

God wants us to *press in* a little more than we would choose to on our own. It is a point of demarcation between my will and his will. Jesus told us that we would have hard things that would happen to us. He told us to expect it. *Managing my expectations* can be more important than what actually happens during the day. I slip back into the *bus driver's seat*, and I get upset that my *planned route* is *off schedule* again. I literally have to remind myself that I am not the driver. A lot of trepidation comes from planning my route and dreading obstacles.

*"These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers*

*God service. And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me. But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them. “And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you. (John 16:1-4)*

I now have come to believe that Jesus was not just warning us that there are roadblocks ahead. He was promising us. The world is pre-loaded with disappointments. If we were to love this life too much, we would fall in love with our plans and dreams...and there would be no faith or need for a daily savior.

Not knowing where we will arrive is part of the faith journey. It has to be about the journey. The prophet Ezekiel was given added determination by God to get rejected all day long. That was his God-given role. Jeremiah probably felt like his prophesying was a waste...because nobody listened or was interested. We lose track of our faith walk; and we fall back into our own natural role. God makes that plan impossible for good reasons.

*Behold, I have made your face strong against their faces, and your forehead strong against their foreheads. Like adamant stone, harder than flint, I have made your forehead; do not be afraid of them, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they are a rebellious house.” (Ezekiel 3:8-9)*

Trials force us to re-prioritize; because we discover that we cannot have it all. We have to jettison the things that are weakening us. We have to pray, because nothing else is working.

This process is compared to the refining of gold. Natural gold has other elements mixed in; that diminish the shine and reflective qualities. We too have earthly elements mixed into our faith that need to be removed; to more accurately reflect God. Gold is a *noble metal*, meaning that it resists corrosion, etc. The purer our faith, the less this world eats away at us. We are not a war metal; we are too soft. We are like a piece of art... or a precious letter for God.

*“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the LORD your God, (Isaiah 43:2-3)*

**Read 1 Peter 1:10-12:** The church age is a mystery to the Old Testament saints. They saw the second coming and millennial paradise and dominance. They knew about the God of the children of Israel. They did not know about Gentile salvation. They did not see the period in between. Abraham prayed about a house of worship to all nations.

*Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices Will be accepted on My altar; For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.” (Isaiah 56:7)*

*My praise shall be of You in the great assembly; I will pay My vows before those who fear Him. The poor shall eat and be satisfied; Those who seek Him will praise the LORD. Let your*

*heart live forever! All the ends of the world Shall remember and turn to the LORD, And all the families of the nations Shall worship before You. For the kingdom is the LORD's, And He rules over the nations. Psalm 22:25-28)*

I had never noticed that *The Spirit of Christ* was in the Old Testament saints. Verse 10 tells us that Jesus was in them; though they had never heard his name. How does that work? Jesus is the totality of God's promises to men. To be saved, Old Testament saints had to accept God's word, and entrust themselves to it. God's Word is an alternate name for Jesus. They placed their hope in the coming one. The suffering messiah was also alluded to; even though the coming King was more often quoted (Isaiah 53, Psalm 22, Daniel 9, etc...). The Old Testament prophets did not know the details; and neither did the angels.

**Read 1 Peter 1:13-21:** Peter is telling us to *wake up* and act according to the revelation that has been given to us. He is suggesting that we are not thinking clearly or soberly assessing our position. We all have some level of disconnect between our theology (beliefs) and our actions. We tell ourselves that Jesus is *the most important thing in our life*; and yet we look forward to other things a little more. We are playing *mental gymnastics* if we are hearing the truth, and not taking action accordingly. Noah is a faith example because he dropped everything and started *boat building* when God shared the future with him. Are we being obedient to what we believe?

We are born with natural drives and desires. As Christians, we learn that we now have obtained another nature which is superior. It is not the result of a self-improvement effort. It is a free download from heaven. Only God can implant heavenly desires and values in us. Our two natures are at war within us our whole life.

*For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched (torn in two) man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. (Romans 7:22-25)*

As Christians we need to familiarize ourselves with the term: **cognitive dissonance**. The deep feeling that we need to repent is built into us. Our conscience helps to keep us alive. Cognitive dissonance happens when someone's behavior doesn't match reality or facts. Cognitive dissonance is the uncomfortable feeling that results from finding out new information that contradicts what is already known about a situation. Recognizing the disparity between thoughts or actions is what causes dissonance — and makes you feel the need to return to harmony. "In any instance where our beliefs are inconsistent, we essentially have a really profound psychic discomfort, and we must act in a way that resolves that conflict," . If we accept that our beliefs or values can influence our actions *and* that our actions can influence our beliefs or values, that helps explain a lot of very common human tendencies: like our tendency

to rationalize or justify behavior, or the way our beliefs and values change as we navigate different situations in life, and that common human pitfall, hypocrisy. Shifting either your belief or your behavior will help you find balance and reduce the tension. “Something has to give — either the belief system or the action,” Our beliefs and values should determine our actions, not the other way around — right? So, a core value or a long-held truth being challenged (such as, for example, a spiritual belief or moral) will be more troubling than something that doesn’t mean as much to you (such as, for example, breaking a recent commitment to a New Year’s resolution you weren’t that invested in to begin with). There are a variety of ways people are thought to resolve the sense of dissonance when cognitions don’t seem to fit together. They may include denying or compartmentalizing unwelcome thoughts, seeking to explain away a thought that doesn’t comport with others, or changing what one believes or one’s behavior.

My anxiety about tomorrow reveals some *doubts that I have in my bus driver*. I have come to recognize that these feelings accompany my tendency to go back to driving the bus myself. We have two navigation systems. One is our conscience and spirit. The other is our deep-seated fears and insecurities and aspirations. One navigation system is beeping “leave”, and the other is beeping “go back and help them”.

We are to act like Kingdom Representatives. We are supposed to be *walking greeting cards*. Peter says that our old ways were somewhat aimless; and more *felt* than based on truth. A once-in-an-eternity opportunity has been given to us. We would be crazy to ignore it.

God has not only opened the door, but he has *commissioned* us unto good works. Don’t be a *heater that doesn’t heat its space*. Don’t be an electrical feed that does not transmit what pulses into it. Let God do his mysterious work through you. Yes, you will feel the urge to abandon your post. Yes, you will feel a little like a nut job at times. Yes, you feel like you are overdoing it. That is just that your former navigation system still transmitting signals to you. Get out of the way; and put yourself in a standby mode for the next opportunity.

**Read 1 Peter 1:22-25:** The bible tells us to obey, perhaps even before we fully believe. We are compared to children who are given rules for their safety. We obey, because we do not want disciplinary actions that come from disobedience. Our desires can conflict with our instructions from God. Our plans can conflict with the spiritual beacon inside of us. Hopefully we grow up in our faith, and eventually we will *smell the coffee* and take on the beliefs of our elders. Obedience requires that we defy our natural mind and fleshly desires...as well as the influences of this world. Going against our culture goes against our nature. This is true faith...to do the thing that we do not want to because God has told us to. Spiritual maturity is seeing that those ‘sacrifices’ which we have made are only mirages. There is nothing of lasting value in our old pathways. What we are trying to hang onto is unsavable. Lot’s wife is that reminder.

