

First Peter Chapter 1

THE AUTHOR

Peter was an INTERESTING character, whose journey took a reassuring number of TWISTS and TURNS ... But, once the FIRES of PENTECOST had fallen, he CAME ALIVE.
→ *When you hear the name Peter, what comes to mind? How would you describe his personality? How did he change post-Pentecost?*

THE BACKGROUND

Peter wrote probably from ROME to a group of SCATTERED believers in around AD 67 when NERO was Emperor.
→ *Into what context is Peter's first letter written? What would it have been like to have been one of those scattered believers? What would it have been like to have been Peter?*

THE PIVOTAL VERSE

²... *May God give you MORE and MORE GRACE and PEACE.*
→ *What do the words 'grace' and 'peace' mean to you? Would you say your life is filled with grace and peace? Could you do with a little more? How would that help?*

THE CHAPTER OUTLINE

- A. Standard opening GREETING (v1-2)
- B. Statement of GOSPEL (v3-5)
- C. Straight into the context of SUFFERING & SALVATION (v6-9)
- D. Call to LOVE & HOLINESS (v13-22)
- E. Bookended with another STATEMENT of GOSPEL certainty (v23-25)

GOSPEL GRAMMAR

"The INDICATIVE of GRACE always precedes the IMPERATIVE of human RESPONSE."

- * We can't DO what we're CALLED to DO until we fully appreciate that He has DONE what the Bible says He's DONE.
- * We don't SERVE Him to EARN His LOVE; we SERVE Him out of the PROVISION of that GRACE.

→ *In your life, do you have your Gospel Grammar the right way around? Do you ever find yourself struggling to live up to seemingly impossible Christian demands and exhausting yourself? Do words like earn or deserve ever sneak into your thinking?*

→ *"Without the grace, it becomes works. Without the relationship, it just becomes religion. Without the gospel, it just becomes a list of unattainable, legalistic demands."*
Discuss!

→ *Why is the last statement such an important distinction? What is your motivation for serving? From where do you find / source that motivation?*

THE CALL TO LOVE & HOLINESS

If we get our Gospel Grammar WRONG, this sounds TOUGH, DEMANDING, even IMPOSSIBLE.

- * You can experience the beauty of PURITY & HOLINESS, because He is HOLY and you're filled with the HOLY SPIRIT, the HOLY ONE who is with you, in you and working through you.

- * "Be HOLY because I am HOLY" is not a THREAT, so much as an INVITATION.
- * Holiness is not an OUTWORKING of SWEAT & TOIL, but an OUTPOURING of GRACE.
- * With my own LIMITED, NATURAL love, I find it hard to LOVE the seemingly UNLOVABLE.
- * But, here's the Gospel Grammar: I don't have to WORK UP that love, but YIELD to it (Romans 5:5).

→ *How different do the calls to love and holiness look if we get our gospel grammar the wrong way around? How do the challenges Peter is writing about in this chapter look different if gospel grammar is the right way around? What roles do grace and peace play in that?*

→ *Is holiness about grace or works? Relationship or religion?*

→ *How does the Holy Spirit help us 'love each other deeply?' Why is it so different if we think of Him as the source & ourselves merely as vessels? Is that simplistic or liberating?*

HOW DO WE TAP INTO GOD'S GRACE & PEACE?

GRACE is an IMPARTED POWER & ABILITY to do in God's STRENGTH what we would struggle ordinarily to do in our OWN.

PEACE is a deep inner STABILITY & SECURITY based on God's POWER, PROTECTION & PROMISES.

THE INVITATION: Hebrews 4:16, Philippians 4:6-7, Matthew 11:28-30 (MSG)

- * Forget for a second your WEAKNESS and remember His STRENGTH.
- * Forget for a second that you think you CAN'T and remember that He CAN.
- * Forget for a second that you don't have the ANSWER and remember that He says He DOES.
- * BREATH that in ... RECEIVE it and STEP OUT in it, taking one GRACE-FILLED STEP after another.

→ *How do you personally tap into God's readily-available, freely-promised grace and peace? What would you need to change about your habits and reactions to do so more? Read Hebrews 4:16, Philippians 4:6-7 and Matthew 11:28-30 and dig a little deeper for 'tapping in tips.'*

WRAP-UP

How much better off would we be if we chose to respond from deep infusion of GRACE, rather than hasty, impetuous, frustrated REACTION?

How much better off would we be if we SETTLED our hearts first, breathed in His GRACE, invited the PEACE that passes understanding and then took that into our DECISIONS & CONVERSATIONS?

→ *Any current circumstances or past disasters that might look different in the light of that?*

CHALLENGE

1. Is your gospel grammar the right way around? *For you at the moment, is it your striving or His grace? Are you trying to drive it yourself without yielding to the provision of His grace and peace? Maybe today you need to pause and re-calibrate?*
2. How different does Monday morning look given a large dose of divine grace & peace? *How could that refresh your heart? How different might your circumstances look? How might it redirect your relationships, work situation, even your Christian walk?*