

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

1 PETER 1-2

An “apronym” is a personal name that’s peculiarly suited to its owner... I have a few examples. How about the pro basketball player named, “Tim Duncan.”

Or the BBC meteorologist, “Sara Blizzard.”

Or the Australian tennis player, “Margaret Court.”

Or the baseball player named, “Prince Fielder.”

Or the Starbucks executive, “Rosalind Brewer.”

Or the Jamaican sprinter, “Usain Bolt.”

Or White House press secretary, “Larry Speakes.”

Or famous sanitary engineer, “Thomas Crapper.”

Or British poet, “William Wordsworth.”

Or how about baseball pitcher, “John Outman.”

Or my favorite, “Sue Yoo,” attorney-at-law.

I could go on and on... *I’m sure you get the idea!*

Some names fit their subject perfectly, but “Peter” is not one of them! “Petros” means “rock,” yet the disciple of Jesus named, “Peter,” was more like *shifting sand*. Peter was impulsive, inconsistent, and insensitive. Rather than rock-like, Peter was a picture of instability.

Yet Jesus named Peter, not after what he was at the time he received the name, but after what he would become once transformed by the Savior and the Spirit.

Two events turned *Shifty Simon* into *Powerhouse Pete*. First, **on the day of Pentecost** a fearful Peter was infused with power from on High. Filled with the Holy Spirit, he preached God’s Word with boldness.

Peter received **power at Pentecost**, and **perspective at Calvary’s Cross**. Before the cross Peter believed in a Messiah who would reign and rule, not suffer and die. He was never more confused than the night His King knelt to wash his feet. It wasn’t until after the resurrection, that Peter realized the path to God’s glory runs through the humility of the cross. We’ll reign with Jesus, but first we die to our pride, and learn to serve.

By the time Peter pens this epistle **that perspective** had taken firm hold of his life. This letter is a message of hope even in the midst of suffering and persecution.

We’re not told when 1 Peter was written, but I believe it was penned while Peter was in prison in Rome, awaiting his execution before Caesar Nero. In Chapter 5:13 Peter

sends greetings from those in Babylon. It could be Peter was in literal Babel. It's far more likely he was speaking of the spiritual Babylon, or Rome - at the time the capitol of paganism and idolatry.

We know Peter and Paul were prison mates between the years 63-64 AD. This might explain why 1 Peter is so similar to Paul's letter to the Ephesians - the two apostles may even have swapped thoughts and notes.

We also know both Peter and Paul were executed shortly after this imprisonment. When Peter wrote this letter he knew death was on the horizon - yet his eyes were fixed beyond the horizon - to heaven's glories. It's safe to say, **If Paul was the apostle of faith, and John was the apostle of love; then Peter was the apostle of hope!** Peter became solid as a rock when he looked beyond this life, and anchored his hope in eternity.

Verse 1, **"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia..."** In Acts 2, on the day of Pentecost, the Jerusalem visitors who witnessed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit were from **Pontus, Cappadocia, Asia** - as well as, **Phrygia and Pamphylia**, cities of Galatia - **the pilgrims mentioned here**. After their conversion at Pentecost many of these new believers probably stayed in Jerusalem to grow in their faith, *but they eventually dispersed back home*.

Apparently, Peter never lost touch with these saints. Here, he writes them this letter to encourage their faith.

And the first thing he does is list the blessings these and every believer has in Christ, **"elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: grace to you and peace be multiplied."**

The Father has **chosen** us. The Spirit lays **claim** to us as His own. And the blood of Jesus **cleanses** us. Notice all three members of the Trinity take part in our salvation. **We're chosen, claimed, and cleansed!**

Then **"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again..."** Or literally, we've been born again! There's a saying, **"Born once die twice. But born twice die once."** In Christ we have received eternal life.

Since God is a Trinity, and we're made in His image, it's not surprising that we humans are also three in one: we're **body, soul, and spirit**. Every human being is like a three stroke engine. We have three cylinders.

But here's the problem, most humans run on only two of their three cylinders. Our body is alive - our soul, *the mind and emotions*, is alive - but our spirit is dead. Thus, we sputter and misfire, and limp along in life.

Yet when Jesus enters us He quickens our dead spirit and infuses us with His life. We're born spiritually.

And we are born again **"to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead..."** It was the Italian poet, Dante, in his *Divine Comedy*, who hung a foreboding inscription over death's door. The warning read, **"Abandon all hope, you who enter here!"**

Death is the great spoiler. It separates lovers, and creates orphans. It slams the door on opportunity, and causes vast potential to vanish instantly. It cuts short the promise of a blissful future. *Most of all death chokes out hope!* But we as believers in Jesus can stare death in the face and still maintain a living hope!

Our Lord has overcome death, hell, and the grave. When Jesus rolled away the stone from the mouth of the grave He exited never to die again. He resurrected hope for all people. Through His triumph, His followers now have the hope of sharing in His supernatural life!

We've been born again, verse 4, **"to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you..."** Earthly riches lose their luster. Their value depreciates. Their glory fades.

Whereas, God's blessings are permanent and priceless. In fact, there's an incorruptible inheritance, with your name on it, reserved for you in heaven!

For you yourself, **"are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."** My children would always ask, **"Daddy, will you hold this for me?"** Whether it was their money, or baseball glove, or jacket, or Bible - if it was an item they didn't want to lose, they would trust it to their dad.

And you are an item God doesn't want to lose! So much so, He promises to keep you. You can rest assured that your heavenly Father will hold on to you!

Verse 6, **"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ..."**

Again, from the beginning Peter believed Jesus to be the Messiah, but his concept of the Messiah's mission was transformed at Calvary's cross. Yes, one day Messiah

will reign in glory, but there's a *grieving* that comes before the *glory*. The *cross* precedes the *crown*. All faith has to be first tried, before it's rewarded.

Peter sees our faith like gold. The refiner turns up the heat, and melts the medal, so he can pick out the dross. And this is also how God works in us. He turns up the heat of hardship - and melts our pride and self-sufficiency - so He can then eliminate our impurities.

And how does the goldsmith know when the gold has been properly refined? I've been told, it's **when he can see his reflection on the surface of the medal!** Likewise, Jesus knows that we've been adequately refined when a Christ-likeness surfaces in our lives...

"He sat by a furnace of sevenfold heat, as He watched by the precious ore; and closer He bent, with a searching gaze, as He heated it more and more. He knew He had ore that could stand the test; and He wanted the finest of gold - to mold as a crown for the King to wear; set with gems of a price untold.

So He laid out gold in the burning fire, though we wanted His hand to stay; and He watched the dross that we had not seen, as it melted and passed away. And the gold grew brighter, and yet more bright; but our eyes were so dim with tears, we saw the fire - not the Master's hand - and questioned with anxious fears. Yet our gold shone out with a richer glow, as it mirrored a form above - that bend over the fire - though unseen by us - with looks of ineffable love.

Can we think it pleases His loving heart to cause us a moment of pain? Ah! No, but we saw through the present loss the bliss of eternal gain. So He waited there with a watchful eye, with a love that is so strong and sure; and His gold did not suffer a bit more heat, than was needed to make it pure." And I'm most moved by this final line, **"His gold did not suffer a bit more heat, than was needed to make it pure."**

Perhaps today you're in the crucible of tribulation, and the genuineness of your faith is being tested. *Sure, you'll serve God when it benefits you. Who wouldn't?* But what happens in the heat of adversity? How genuine is your faith? Let's trust the Refiner. He knows just how much heat is needed to purify our faith...

Peter continues, verse 8, **"whom having not seen you love."** He's speaking of Jesus - we can't see Him, or touch Him, or hear Him - but that doesn't mean He's not there. It's through faith that we can sense His presence and know His love in our hearts. *It's by faith!*

Helen Keller once said, **"The best and most beautiful things in life cannot be seen or even touched... they must be felt with the heart."** And this is true spiritually.

“Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory...” A heart that’s primed with faith overflows with joy! Though not seen the powerful presence of Jesus is still capable of fueling a heart with joy and filling it up with God’s glory.

Verse 9 tells us, “receiving the end of your faith - the salvation of your souls.” Understand, the NT speaks of our salvation in different phases. Embrace Christ as Lord and you’re saved from the **penalty of sin**. As you grow in Christ you’re saved from the **power of sin**. Then one day, you’ll enter the gates of heaven and be saved from this wicked world and the **presence of sin**.

But at every stage of salvation we’re saved **by grace through faith!** This is why it’s so essential to continue in your faith. Faith is not a one time possession. It’s a mindset we seek to cultivate, and grow, and develop.

Verse 10, “Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven...” In other words, what the Hebrew prophets said about Messiah, is exactly what the ministers of the Gospel have now preach about Jesus. There was no contradiction in their message. The Gospel of Jesus was not a *man-made* invention - it was *Holy Spirit-sent!*

Then Peter adds, the Gospel reveals “things which angels desire to look into.” *The Gospel intrigues even the angels*. It stunned the heavenly host when their Eternal King humbled Himself and became a man... it horrified them when He let Himself be nailed to a Roman cross... For thousands of years now, the angels have tried to comprehend the depth of love God has for the human creatures He made from the dust.

I imagine the angels like the old Star Trek’s Dr. Spock - they’re logical, non-emotive Vulcans. The angels have a hard enough time grasping the divine emotive called “love.” But “grace,” *love that’s undeserved*, is totally beyond their understanding. *Why would God love the creatures that are so unlovable?*

And if angels spend all their time pondering grace, wouldn’t it be worth our while to do the same? Verse 13, “Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus

Christ.” “*Gird up the loins of your mind,*” is another way of saying, “*let’s focus... let’s get serious about God’s grace.*”

“As obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.”” Recall the word “*holy*” means “to reserve or treat as special.”

Usually, when people think of holy objects they imagine relics that are said to possess some sort of supernatural quality. Like *the Ark of the Covenant, or the Shroud of Turin, or even the Holy Grail...* But any item can be made *holy* simply by dedicating it to God.

Say I have a coffee mug I refill each morning. I drink from it while I spend time with God. *I use it exclusively for my moments with God.* To me it’s now a **holy mug**.

Likewise with people - you and I aren’t holy because we possess a kind of super spiritual quality. We’re holy because our lives are reserved for God’s purposes.

Look into my face and what do you see? *You see a holy mug.* Yes, it’s just a plain ole mug, but *it belongs to God - it’s His mug* - that’s what makes anything holy!

Verse 17, “*And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*” In Christ we’re redeemed!

To us today, “*redeemed*” is a religious word, a church word, we rarely associate with every-day life, but in the Roman world it was a word that sparked instant hope! The empire’s sixty million slaves went to bed each night dreaming of “*redemption*” - that somehow they or someone they knew - would purchase their freedom.

Just a few coins freed a Roman slave, **but freedom from sin is much more costly.** It requires the *blood* of a *perfect lamb*. Our redemption hasn’t been paid with *precious medals*, but with the *precious blood* of Jesus. And in light of what Jesus paid to redeem us we should conduct our stay here “*in fear*” of displeasing Him.

Verse 20, “*He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.*” The cross of Christ was in the heart of God prior to the earth’s foundations. Now His love has been revealed, **and we believe.**

And “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart...” God has shown us such great love, now those who receive that love need to love others in return.

Verse 23, “having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible...” From the moment you and I are born we start to die. A flower blooms, then slowly fades. There’s a Yiddish proverb, “A grandmother becomes feeble. Her grown daughter gives her a wooden bowl that trembling hands cannot break. The old woman dies, and the bowl is discarded. But the granddaughter retrieves it. The bowl, she knows, will be needed again.” We’re all going to eventually die!

Scientists still don’t understand the mystery of aging. Normal human cells can grow in tissue cultures and reproduce for many generations; then one day, for no apparent reason they start to degenerate and die. It’s as if the human cell has been preprogrammed to die! It’s as if ‘*death*’ were written by the genetic language into the fertilized egg... as if the human seed or cell possesses a built-in “time-clock” which causes it to shut down at a predetermined point in a person’s life.

Well, *the observation of the scientist* only confirms *the declaration of Scripture*. Human seed is corruptible. It does deteriorate. Physically, we’re all born to die.

But spiritually, we’re born again to live forever! The new birth results not from corruptible seed, but from incorruptible... “through the word of God which lives and abides forever...” Spiritual life occurs in a human when the Word of God takes root in their repentant heart. And since the seed of God’s Word abides forever the life it produces in us is an eternal life!

“Because all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, But the word of the LORD endures forever.” Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.” One of the most powerful visuals I’ve ever seen, was at a local funeral I once attended.

After preaching a forceful sermon the officiating pastor walked off the platform and went to escort the body up the aisle. But as he walked past the casket he reached over and plucked off one of the blossoms from the flowers that were adorning the top of the casket.

In dramatic fashion he wadded up the pedals in his fist and threw them on the floor. Then he quoted this verse, “*the glory of man, as the flower, falls away; but the Word of the LORD endures forever.*” I’d suggest we all build our life on God’s Word, not on earthly glory.

Chapter 2, “Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” *Ever watch a baby root?* Its little mouth starts groping and sucking - searching for his mother’s nourishment. Rooting is its one pursuit!

And this is how we should seek the Lord. When it’s spiritual feeding time, rather than look to worldly pleasure, let’s root for the Lord and the things of God.

“Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious...” There was a legend associated with Solomon’s Temple, that during its construction the cornerstone was quarried first, but when it arrived on site the builders didn’t recognize its importance, and tossed it aside.

It wasn’t until the structure was nearly complete and they needed the cornerstone that they realized their mistake, and raced to find the stone they had rejected.

Indeed, this is how the builders of Judaism treated Jesus. They didn’t realize that He was God’s chief cornerstone, so they rejected Him... But one day, and I believe soon, the Jews will realize their mistake, repent of their sin, and receive Jesus as the chosen of God.

Verse 5, “you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house...” The Jewish Temple was made of massive **limestone** blocks that adorned the top of Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, but the NT Temple is a spiritual house made up of **live stones** - the Church.

Hey, thanks to Jesus’ sobering effect, many of us have gone from *being stoned*, to *becoming stones*.

Each of us plays a role in the Church. God’s Spirit is fitting us together. **Don’t be off the wall, find your place in the wall!** Be part of the house Jesus is building!

We are also “a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” The OT sacrifices were the physical offerings of bulls and goats... But in the NT our sacrifices are spiritual...

Romans 12:1 tells us to present our **bodies** a living sacrifice. The author of Hebrews (13:15-16) lists three other sacrifices: **praise, good deeds,** and **financial support;** then he says, “**with such sacrifices God is well pleased.**” We honor God with our praise and giving.

Verse 6, “Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture...” He quotes Isaiah 28:16... “Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him

will by no means be put to shame.” Jesus is this precious cornerstone. He’s chosen and solid. Rest on Jesus and you’ll never regret doing so.

“Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient...” And here he quotes Psalm 118:22, “The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone,” and... Isaiah 8:14 reads, “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.” Peter concludes, “They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.” In two verses Peter sums up the Jews rejection of Jesus, and he does so in the words of their own prophets.

God intended for Jesus to be the chief cornerstone of His spiritual Temple. The rock on which the rest of the house can rest. *And Jesus is a big rock!* He can’t be ignored. Refuse to make Him the cornerstone of your life, and you’ll trip over Him. You’ll be offended by Him. Bow your knee, or you’ll stumble over Jesus.

Verse 9, “But you (those who trust in Jesus) are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood...” In the OT there was no such thing! Priests came from the tribe of Levi, and kings descended from the lineage of Judah. But as Christians we are both *royalty* and *priestly*.

One day, we’ll rule with Jesus. **Today**, like priests we’re building bridges, and reconciling people to God.

We’re also “a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.”

Biblically speaking, prior to Christianity, there were two types of people in the world - two racial groups. There were **Jews** - and everyone else, or **Gentiles**.

But in Christ God has established a new race, a third breed. He’s created a people, who were not a people, made up of both Jews and Gentiles who have been called out of darkness and into God’s marvelous light.

And rather than *blend in*, our job is to *stick out*. We need to display God’s values of love and truth. We should live out the priorities of heaven here on earth.

For He tells us, verse 11, “Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.” As Christians we are pilgrims on this earth. We’re just passing through. This world is not our home.

I'm reminded of the mother on a ship in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. A storm was raging and the boat she was on was in danger of sinking, yet she exuded great calm. When the ordeal was over the captain asked the lady her secret. She stated, "I've got two daughters. One lives in New York, and the other lives in heaven. I knew I'd see one of my girls in a few hours and it didn't really matter which one." Hey, we're all just sojourners on a journey. We're merely passing through.

So don't get bogged down in selfish *"lusts which war against the soul."* Imagine getting your kids clean and dressed for the family portrait. You work overtime to get the job done. But on the way to the car, Junior jumps in a mud puddle. Sissy spills a drink on her dress. *Can't you kids stay clean long enough to get into the car?* This is what Peter is asking God's kids, you're headed to heaven can't you stay clean until you get there?

Verse 13, *"Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good."* Certainly, we're not of this world, but while passing through we need to obey its laws. And here Peter spells out the divine right of government. God established human government for two purposes: **to punish evil** and **to encourage good**.

I read where the police in South Windsor, CN have started pulling over cars, and handing out tickets that read, *"Your driving was great! - and we appreciate it."*

They're passing out \$2 rewards for obeying the speed limit, wearing seat-belts, and using turn signals. *Any Snellville Cops listening to this, please take heed.* We think of government as a tool to punish evil, *and it is*, but God also intended for it to encourage good.

"For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men - as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king." In other words, *Uncle Sam* could use some *Christian brothers*. We need to live a practical holiness that shuts up the cynic, and looks out for the common good of society.

And understand Peter's words to *"honor the king"* not only apply to honorable kings, but to dishonorable kings also. *Remember, who was king in Peter's day?* The Emperor Nero. If a Christian can honor *Nero*, he can honor the people over us. Even when you don't respect *the person*, you can honor *the position*.

Verse 18, *"Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh."* A servant, or we could say *"a Christian*

employee,” should be as good an employee as he or she can, regardless of the character of their boss.

“For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully.” Living in a fallen world, children of God who stay faithful to a biblically-informed conscience will at times be at odds with this world’s values! Suffering for what’s right is commendable. Expect some persecution.

“For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.” I know a few self-righteous, unloving Christians who get laughed at for their hypocrisy, yet they stick out their chest and claim they’re being persecuted for Jesus’ sake. *No, you’re just being a jerk.* Rejoice if you’re hassled for your good conduct and sincere faith. Repent if you’re just acting snobbish!

Verse 21, “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: “Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth”; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously...” Jesus is the ultimate example on how to handle suffering. *He let the rage end with Him!*

This world is great at swapping insult for insult. You get slapped around at work, so you come home and slap the kids; then they go out and slap the neighbor’s kids, *and the whole world is just plain slap-happy.*

Hatred passes from person to person, until it gets to a Christian. There it should stop! For we’ve been called to imitate Jesus. When He was reviled He didn’t revile in return. *When He was slapped, He didn’t slap back.*

He returned love for hate, and as His disciples so should we! It’s the weak that have to retaliate. This is how Jackie Robinson broke Major League baseball’s color barrier. His GM, Branch Richey, him told Jackie he had to be strong enough **not to fight back**. When others went low, he went high... and he won! It takes strength to absorb a blow and transform its impact into the opposite response. *Learn to retaliate in love!*

And Jesus, verse 24, “Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness - by whose stripes you were healed.” Understand, God’s plan for dealing with our sin is **the cross!** *The penalty for sin, the power of sin, the presence of sin* were addressed on the cross.

Jesus bore our sin, and paid its **penalty**... In Him a part of us, the old man, dies to sin. Its **power** is broken in our lives... And His stripes insure our healing - as long as

we live in a world where sin and its effects are **present** - God has a means of making us whole.

“For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”

They say sheep are so dumb they'll follow each other over a cliff if you don't stop them. *We're like dumb sheep! We were constantly losing our way, and going astray until Jesus, the Good Shepherd, rescued us from destruction, and brought us back into the fold.*

Let me close with a question, “**Can you name the only man-made thing in heaven?**” The only man-made item in heaven are the scars Jesus bore in His body.

We nailed Jesus to a cross. It was *history's ultimate tragedy*, yet God used it to engineer *the ultimate blessing* - His pardon, healing, redemption, new life...

From one dumb sheep to another, Christianity is not a *baaaaad* deal. A new power and a new perspective changed Peter, and it'll change you! Trust in Jesus' work on the cross, and trust in His Spirit to work in you.