Session 1

1 Peter – A letter

* Traditionally held as a letter from the Apostle Peter (see 5:1)
* Dictated to Silas/Silvanus (5:12)
* Possibly from Rome but codenamed ‘Babylon’ (5:13)
* To churches in parts of the Roman Empire/ of today’s Turkey
* Possibly a mixture of Jewish and Gentile believers but largely Gentiles
* To those feeling the pressure from the neighbours and, possibly, the Empire
* Written in the mid-60s – some form of localised persecution comes in mid to late 60s (when Nero dies in 68 A.D.)
* A *letter* from an apostle applying the gospel to a set of pastoral problems

1 Peter – A bird’s eye view

* Christians are God’s elect, wherever they exist geographically, but this will feel like exile (1:1-2) – an exile that will sometimes feel hard and painful. But there is present security based on a solid past and future certain. (1:3-12)
* So, the call to Christians is to live holy and alert lives here and now, confident in the Lord’s sure Word and purpose (1:13 – 2:3)
* Knowing that coming to Christ, who was himself once rejected (2:4), is to come to the ‘true’ identity of God’s people (2:5-10): chosen, royal, priestly, holy and a people to be light in this world
* Even a world in which, as foreigners and exiles, Christians will experience tension/pressure living before human state authorities, human masters, and others in human societies. (2:11 -20) Christians follow Christ’s example when going through conflict (2:21-25).
* The Christian household – wives and husbands – may also be challenging contexts but following Christ here also matters (3:1-7)
* In fact, everywhere in society and in life there may well be conflict – but make sure it isn’t because of Christians breaking the law or engaging in criminal/immoral behaviour. (3:8-22)
* The whole point is: here and now, live for Christ (4:1) even if this means you run counter to your past life-style(s) (4:2-6). What matters is living as God’s people, stewarding God’s grace (4:7-11)
* Whatever difficulties and trials you experience, other believers likewise are experiencing such (4:12-16) and remember judgment is real and is coming, but you don’t need to panic (4:17-19). Keep you eye on the future to come, whether you are church leaders (5:1-4) or church members (5:5-7). Pay spiritual attention (5:8). Depend upon the grace of God (5:10-11).

1 Peter – A purpose (1 Peter 5: 12)

* Encouraging
* Testifying
  + This is the true grace of God
  + Stand fast in it

1 Peter – A few looks

* 1: 1 - 25
  + Repeated words?
  + Key words?
  + Signposts: grammar bits?
  + Time markers: past, present, or future?

1 Peter 1: 1 -12 – An Introduction

**The ‘Normal’ Christian Experience**

1. You are established by the Trinity’s grace and peace (vv.1-2)
   1. Chosen by foreknowledge of God the Father
   2. Through the sanctifying work of the Spirit
   3. Obedient to Jesus Christ, sprinkled by his blood
   4. Abundant grace and peace
2. You have a certain future shaping your present (vv.3-5)
   1. Praise!
   2. Great mercy
   3. New birth into a living hope
   4. Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead
   5. A secure inheritance
   6. Kept by God
   7. For the future certainty in the last time
3. So, your present difficulties are not the ‘last word’(vv.6-9)
   1. Scattered through a part of the Empire (v.1)
   2. Suffering grief in various trials (v.6)
   3. Refined by fire (v.7)
   4. But the present is not all there is
      1. Of greater worth
      2. Future praise, glory, and honour
      3. Future revelation
      4. A joy here and now
      5. You are receiving
4. And all of this is so because of the gospel preached to you (vv. 10 -12)
   1. Rooted in the prophets
   2. About grace
   3. In Christ’s pattern
      1. First sufferings
      2. Then glory
   4. Preached by those sent to you by the Holy Spirit

So, this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.

But what does to stand fast in the true grace of God look like specifically?

Session 2

1 Peter 4: 12- 19 – An example

**‘Suffering Now: Why and How?’**

The suffering Church can easily become disoriented. The suffering Church needs to know itself always united to Christ, including difficult times. The suffering Church needs to be assured God has not forgotten and will see his people through to the end.

1. Don’t be surprised in times of suffering, do remember believers are united with Christ (vv.12 -14)
   1. The fiery ordeal as a test
   2. But this is not ‘strange’
   3. Rejoice instead
      1. Because you may well be sharing in Christ’s sufferings
      2. There is glory which will be revealed
   4. The key is ‘because of the name of Christ’ – union with Christ
      1. In union with Christ, there this blessing
      2. In union with Christ, there is the Holy Spirit’s ministry
2. Don’t live wrong lives, do live gospel lives (vv.15-16)
   1. Of course, there are other contexts in which suffering appears; and these are not suitable for a follower of Christ
   2. But in the gospel or because of the gospel
      1. No need for shame
      2. Every opportunity for praise
      3. You bear the name
3. Don’t forget the future, do continue in the gospel now (vv.17 – 19)
   1. There is a ‘now’ and ‘not yet’ of God’s judgment: for the church and for the church’s opponents
   2. But the key is ‘obedience to the gospel’
   3. Suffering is not ‘outside’ the will of God and the Creator’s will
   4. Accordingly, do ‘good’ now because the now is associated with the future glory

**The Challenges and Bumps in this**:

1. How to avoid ‘trivialising’ Peter’s category of ‘suffering’
2. At the same time, how to ‘include’ my hearers/group
3. The ‘problem of suffering’ as it relates to divine sovereignty is HUGE so how do I raise this – from within the text – without creating a firestorm of questions and concerns?
4. Why is this section ‘here’?
5. Are there some things here Peter has said earlier? If so, am I repeating or expanding?
6. Are there some things here which are new? Why? How? So, what?