



**The Salvation Army
Worship Workout
2 May 2021**

**1 Peter:
Bridging the gap**

As we move out of Easter and look towards Pentecost, we are going to be looking at the book of 1 Peter. In this letter Peter writes to the churches to encourage them in their faith, particularly at a time when they were experiencing much suffering. We will explore what this letter has to say to us today as we live in hope of emerging from restrictions, gathering again and building back again within our communities.

Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

(1 Peter 1:8-9)

Ian B

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Theme for the week

This week our theme is *Bridging the gap*. Peter has reminded his readers by what means they have been saved and how precious they are each to God. He has also reminded them of the 'new life' they have in Jesus and encouraged them to holy living. As a persecuted church he now wants to move them on to what all that means for the future of the church. As we to consider the future of our churches post-COVID it is a timely reminder of the truths of our faith and practice.

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:18 ESV)

Call to worship

LEADER: We are God's household, crafted by the Architect of creation:

ALL: Our hearts a shelter for the outcast; our hands open to the stranger.

LEADER: We are God's people, created in the divine image:

ALL: To tell others of God's love, to offer mercy as freely as we have received it.

LEADER: We are God's children, called to give of ourselves:

ALL: Chosen to serve the lost and lonely, gifted to minister to a hurting world.

Father help us, Amen.

Opening song: All hail the power of Jesus name (73)

All hail the power of Jesus' name! Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem; And crown Him Lord of all!

Let every kindred, every tribe, All nations great and small,
To Him all majesty ascribe; And crown Him Lord of all!

Ye sinners lost of Adam's race, Partakers of the Fall,
Come and be saved by Jesus' grace; And crown Him Lord of all!

Crown Him, ye martyrs of our God, Who from His altar call;
Extol the power of Jesus' blood; And crown Him Lord of all!

O that with yonder sacred throng, We at His feet may fall,
Join in the everlasting song; And crown Him Lord of all!

(Edward Perronet)

Prayer focus: (Father), in this quiet moment (595)

In this quiet moment, still, before Your throne,
Conscious of Your presence, knowing I am known.
In this quiet moment set my spirit free;
In this quiet moment, make a better me!

(John Gowans)

Jesus taught us how to pray; we know this as The Lord's Prayer. This morning we are going to pray through the prayer, noticing the movement and desires of our hearts as we do.

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.*

Pray to our Holy God that we will come to know him more...

Give us this day our daily bread.

Pray that we are able to put our trust in God alone...

*And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.*

Prayers for forgiveness that will influence our behaviour as we live out our faith...

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

By ourselves we are too weak. We pray for the Lord to protect through the strength of the Holy Spirit.

*For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever.*

We rejoice that the Lord reigns. As we glorify his name, we offer prayers of thanks.

Amen.

Let it be so. Through Jesus we pray our prayers knowing it will be heard. I invite you to pray for what is on your heart this morning...

Bridges

We are considering the scripture reading this morning as a bridge – between the first chapter of Peter's letter and the rest of his epistle. This got me thinking about bridges generally and so I thought we would have a quiz this morning – about bridges.

There are four bridges below, can you name them? Answers are in next section.



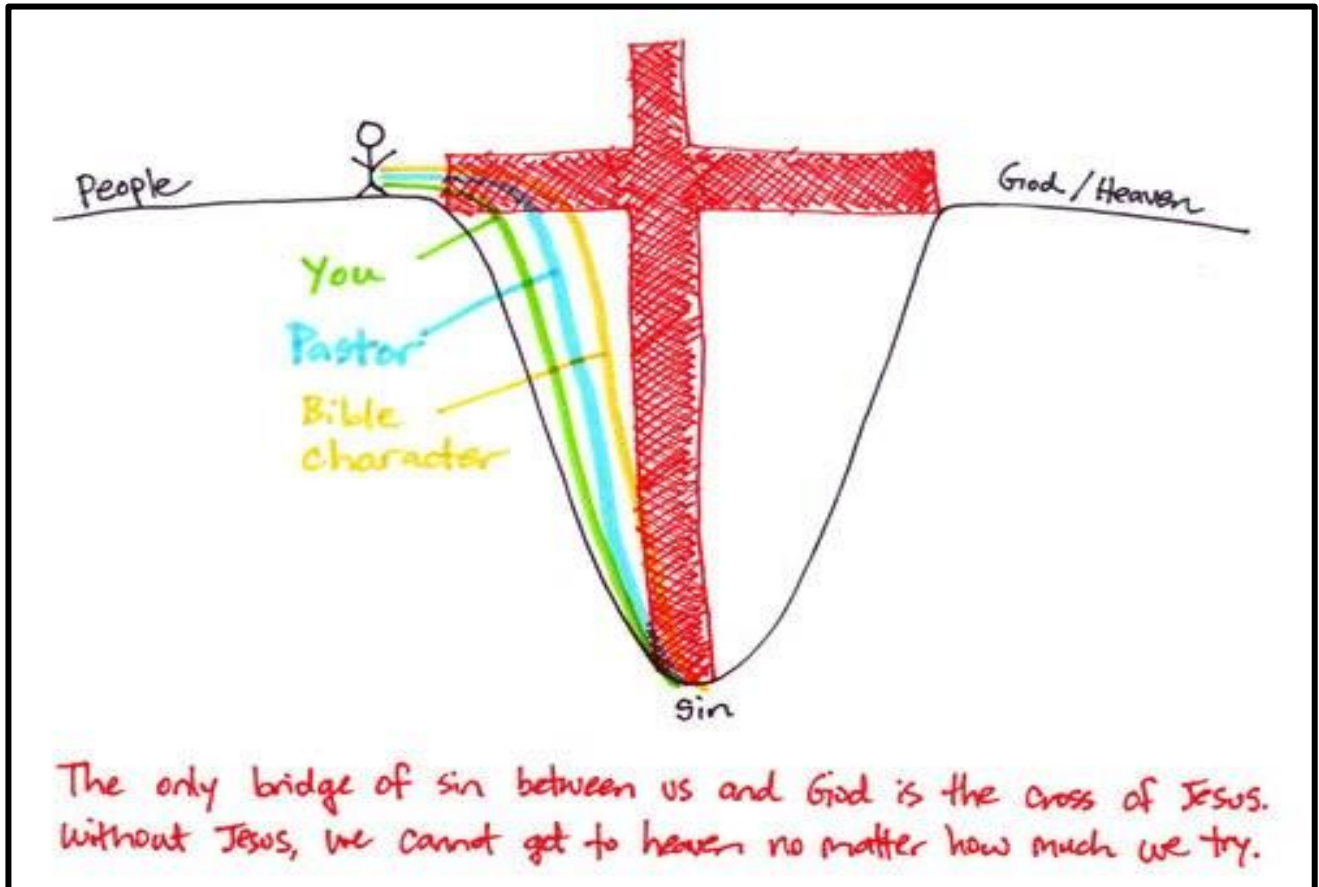
Bridges (cont)

There is one other bridge that I want you to look at this morning – it was costly, but it will not ever fail those who set foot on the way.

It is the bridge which Jesus created from just two planks of wood; it is the bridge between us and God. Jesus, through the bridge of the cross brings us forgiveness of sins; and Jesus, through the bridge of the Cross also brings us eternal life. And finally, Jesus, through the bridge of Cross, enables us to stand before God, holy and blameless.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us.

(Ephesians 1:7-8a)



Answers to bridges: A) Tower Bridge, London; B) Sydney Harbour Bridge; C) Brooklyn Bridge, NY; D) Bridge of Sighs, Venice

Scripture reading: 1 Peter 2: 1-3

Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Psalms 34: 4-14

I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears.
Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.
This poor man called, and the Lord heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles.
The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.
Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.
Fear the Lord, you his holy people, for those who fear him lack nothing.
The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.
Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.
Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days,
keep your tongue from evil and your lips from telling lies.
Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

Song 3: For the joy of the Lord

I'm trading my sorrows; I'm trading my shame; I'm laying them down for the joy of the Lord.

I'm trading my sickness; I'm trading my pain; I'm laying them down for the joy of the Lord.

*We say: Yes, Lord, Yes, Lord, Yes, yes, Lord!
Yes, Lord, Yes, Lord, Yes, yes, Lord!
Yes, Lord, Yes, Lord, Yes, yes, Lord. Amen.*

I am pressed but not crushed; Persecuted, not abandoned; Struck down but not destroyed; I am blessed beyond the curse.

For His promise will endure; His joy's gonna be my strength; Though the sorrow may last for the night; His joy comes in the morning.

(Darrell Evans)

Workout Wondering

We only cover three verses today – quite a short reading I guess – but in just these three verses there is so much for us to consider. And I wouldn't want us to miss out on what I like to call 'Peter's 3-point plan!'

Peter has given us all the teaching on persecution and holiness in chapter 1, and all of a sudden he comes up with a big 'but'. Or rather a 'let's just hang on a minute' - what Peter is doing in these three verses is bridging a gap.

So, we know we need to strive to be holy and that through Christ we will have enough grace to endure persecution. But actually, at the start of chapter 2, we need to take stock and revisit some of the basics. I use the words basics tongue in cheek because they are far from easy to live out.

So, verse 1 (aka point 1): 'Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.'

Here Peter gives exhaustive list of the ills to which our human hearts are prone to welcoming into our lives. Verse 1 in itself lays down the steppingstone that what is to come in chapter 2, and is truly relevant to the contemporary church. This is God inspired Scripture that is for you and for me. What is to come now, and what will follow through the rest of our preaching through 1 Peter isn't pie in the sky teaching on the Gospel that was once relevant – it is totally relevant to here and now, and to each and every one of us.

In 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 Paul writes this: 'Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not

delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.'

Have I ever been deceitful, hypocritical, envious, slanderous? Seriously, where would I even start? Because all of these are very real. Outside our doors, on the television. More so on the internet and other tech avenues via stuff like podcasts. In fact, I reckon there are more avenues to which bad stuff can get to us that ever before. But begin to oust these from our lives and love grows. And if love grows, the sphere of God's Kingdom grows around us. And the more we are immersed in the beauty of God's Kingdom, the more God can use us, and the more He will use us.

In verse 11 of 1 Corinthians 13 Paul then says this: 'When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.'

This is Paul bridging the gap from hate to love. From a life of vices to a life where he can see the very real promise of eternity with Jesus.

Next, Verse 2 (aka point 2): 'Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation.'

Interestingly and understandably, many read this verse and assume that because it mentions new-born infants and milk, it is aimed at the spiritually immature – yet it isn't. This verse is more about imagery than words.

The focus is on motivation for continuous growth. To 'long for', or *epipotheō*, means to experience immense hunger. It is a Greek verb that stresses a real craving for something. This imagery of a hunger for milk is used throughout the New Testament, mostly by Paul – which gives an indication of how important it is to 'long for' it.

1 Corinthians 3:2: 'I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready.'

1 Thessalonians 2:7: 'Though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children.'

This is imagery that is intended to inspire us to crave the pure Word of God. The very thing that contradicts and protects us from the ills and vices of verse 1. Because without it – we can't move beyond them. The Gospel isn't just words on pages. The Gospel is the very foundation of everything. The words live and breathe, they come alive. Both the Old and New Testament interweave in everything. The more we crave it, the more we realise how alive it is.

And now verse 3 (aka point 3): 'if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.'

Without knowing God's word – we can't even begin to taste the pure milk. Peter often contrasts or reminds. Here Peter draws is doing just that with Old Testament Scripture, Psalm 34:8, to support verses 1 and 2.

One thing that would come from Peter's growth in spiritual maturity is to balance the new covenant with Old Testament law, and to do it well. He could see the newness that had come from Christ, he experienced it first-hand, but he also knew the importance of balancing the scales equally. And to do that he would often reign his audience in. Almost as a reminder of why we are where we are. The whole narrative of 1 Peter parallels Psalm 34 – trials and difficulties, deliverance from fear, followed by salvation and revelation. Peter lives and breathes the words of the Old Testament – they are all he has – and he uses them because without them he has no pure milk, and he has nothing to back up his teaching.

The simple fact is that without Scripture as our food, that 'if indeed' you are in a position to embrace the pure nature of God's word, we can't bridge the gap. And well, Psalm 34 ends with the sense of nearness to God. We are nowhere near the end of 1 Peter yet, but my hope is that as we look at 1 Peter together – we sense the nearness of God that is clearly evident in what the Psalmist writes in Psalm 34.

That we come to be part of the intimacy that faith in Christ, and being together as a small cluster of believers, brings. It can be hard, but it can also be so amazingly beautiful.

This week I think we should challenge ourselves and consider how many times we crave pure spiritual milk, whilst also recognising how many times we fail and fall into the traps illustrated in verse 1.

This is going to be a tough challenge. I'll no doubt be surprised at how many times I fail. But I also know that God constantly transforms me.

I want us to be encouraged of this – that for each time we fall short, we have that pure spiritual milk that means we are redeemed in the name of Jesus, and we are forgiven through the blood of Christ. And the more we turn to Christ – the less we will fail. And in all of this let us pray for God to be near. Let us pray that we see God's word very much living and breathing in everything we do – interweaving in everything.

It is my prayer this week that God will bless you immensely– whether you take up this challenge or not – because you know what? You can be the person Peter is telling you that you are able to be.

May God bless you all.

Amen.

Response Song: I need thee every hour (707)

I need Thee every hour, Most gracious Lord,
No tender voice like Thine, Can peace afford.

*I need Thee, O I need Thee, Every hour I need Thee;
O bless me now, my Saviour, I come to Thee.*

I need Thee every hour, Stay Thou near by;
Temptations lose their power, When Thou art nigh.

I need Thee every hour, In joy or pain;
Come quickly and abide, Or life is vain.

I need Thee every hour, Teach me Thy will,
And Thy rich promises, In me fulfill.

(Annie Sherwood Hawks and Robert Lowry)

Closing song: I'm going to make my life into a melody (857)

I'm going to make my life into a melody, I'm going to praise my Savior all day long, I'm
going to make my life into a symphony, A glorious symphony of song.

*For God will fill me with His power, My pathway trace;
He's going to make my life into a miracle, A mighty miracle of grace.*

I'm going to set my face, To climb the highest heights, I'm going to conquer all the
foes ahead, I'm going to tread the noble, Way the saints have trod, Those warrior
saints whom God has led.

I'm going to turn my life into an active quest, I'm going to plumb the depths of God's
design, I'm going to taste the riches of His wondrous love, His gracious gifts of love
divine.

(Flora Larsson)

Benediction

My divinely loved friends, since you are resident aliens and foreigners in this world, I appeal to you to divorce yourselves from the evil desires that wage war within you. Live honourable lives as you mix with unbelievers, even though they accuse you of being evildoers. For they will see your beautiful works and have a reason to glorify God in the day he visits us.

(1 Peter 2: 11-12)