

THE FIRST LETTER OF PETER

INTRODUCTION

A. Introductory outline of 1 Peter

1. Greeting (1:1-2)
2. The greatness of salvation (1:3-2:10)
3. The importance of submission (2:11-3:12)
4. The certainty of suffering (3:13-4:19)
5. Specific commands due to suffering (5:1-11)
6. Conclusion (5:12-14)

B. Comments on 1 Peter

1. Thomas Constable, *Peter began this epistle in the manner that was customary in this day. He introduced himself and his original readers, and he wished God's blessing on them to prepare them for what he had to say.*
2. Roger Raymer, *First Peter was written to Christians who were experiencing various forms of persecution, men and women whose stand for Jesus Christ made them aliens and strangers in the midst of a pagan society . . . The warmth of his expressions combined with his practical instructions make this epistle a unique source of encouragement for all believers who live in conflict with their culture.*
3. Joel Green, *The issue is not that or what they are suffering, but rather how to make sense of it. Hence, 1 Peter concerns itself from the very beginning with issues of Christian identity and formation, constitution and behavior. This is profound theological work.*
4. Scot McKnight, *Peter's salutation contains both a penetrating description of the audience and a theological explanation of how they became Christians.*

1 PETER 1:1-2, GREETING

A. The writer (1a), *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,*

1. The writer identified himself as Peter.
2. His given name was Simon but changed by Jesus to Peter which means *rock*.
 - a. John 1:42, *He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter).*
 - b. Matthew 16:18, *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.*
 - c. H. D. M. Spence, *It was his Christian name; he must have prized that name as the gift of Christ, reminding him always of his confession and of the Saviour's promise, urging him to maintain throughout life that rock-like steadfastness which was indeed characteristic of him, but in which he had more than once very sadly failed.*
3. Peter identified himself as one of the twelve apostles of Jesus.
 - a. Matthew 10:1-4, *And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.*
 - b. Roger Raymer, *This bold statement of apostolic authority is supported both by internal evidence in the text and by its early and universal acceptance as a part of the canon of Scripture.*
 - c. H. D. M. Spence, *All Christians who knew the gospel history knew that St. Peter was one of the first-called apostles, one of the three who were nearest to the Lord, one who had received the apostolic commission in a marked and special manner direct from Christ.*
 - d. Wayne Grudem, *The supreme importance of the apostles is suggested by the fact that the phrase 'of Jesus Christ' is attached to no other New Testament office: we do not read of 'teachers of Jesus Christ' or 'prophets of Jesus Christ' or 'evangelists of Jesus Christ', only of 'apostles of Jesus Christ'. Those who held this office had authority at least equal to the Old Testament prophets, for the apostles could speak and write God's very words (Acts 5:3-4; Rom. 2:16; 1 Cor. 2:13; 14:37; 2 Cor. 13:3; Gal. 1:8-9; 1 Thess. 2:13; 4:8, 15; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14; 2 Pet. 3:2) and thus could write the words which became New Testament Scripture (1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Pet. 3:16, cf. Rev. 22:18-19; 1 Thess. 5:27; 2 Thess. 3:14).*

- e. Scot McKnight, *Peter, like the other apostles, was a personal representative of Jesus, and how people responded to Peter reflected how they responded to Jesus (cf. Matt. 10:40–42).*
 - f. David Walls, *The author identifies himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ. He distinguishes himself from the many false apostles who visited the churches in that day.*
 - g. Charles Swindoll, *Now imagine yourself as a Christian living in the midst of tremendous pressure from every direction . . . somebody hands you a letter rolled up and bound. You break the seal, slowly unroll the scroll, and read immediately—“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ.” Like a cool breeze cutting through sultry summer heat, those opening words blow through your weariness and ignite fresh hope. The chief apostle has written a letter . . . to you . . . Hope has just arrived!*
- B. The recipients (1b-2a), ***To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood:***
1. *elect*
 - a. It means *chosen* and in the New Testament, *chosen by God*.
 - b. Douglas Mangum, . . . *it primarily refers to believers in Jesus . . .*
 - c. Thomas Constable, *God chose them because He determined beforehand that they would believe the gospel . . .*
 2. *exiles of the Dispersion*
 - a. Ceslas Spicq, . . . *he means that the recipients of his letter are not natives and citizens of an earthly country, where they are making only a provisional, relatively brief sojourn; their abode is elsewhere: in heaven (cf. Phil 3:20).*
 - b. Roger Raymer, *The diaspora referred to Jews who were separated from their homeland. Peter adapted this word which previously described Israel to emphasize the condition of the early church.*
 - c. William Barclay, *Once, the people who had been different from others were the Jews; now the people who are different are the Christians. They are the people whose King is God, whose home is eternity, and who are exiles in the world.*
 3. Locations of the recipients (see map below)
 - a. Thomas Constable, *The particular group of Christians to whom this epistle went first lived in the northern Roman provinces of Asia Minor (modern western Turkey) north of the Taurus Mountains . . . The sequence of provinces corresponds to the route that the bearer of the original epistle would have normally followed.*
 - b. Roger Raymer, *The letter was evidently meant to circulate among the churches in this area.*
 - c. Ramsey Michaels, *Although Paul made inroads in Asia Minor, particularly in the province of Asia, the churches to which Peter writes are, like the Roman church itself, largely non-Pauline in origin and independent of him in their traditions.*



4. The working of the Trinity in the lives of those who are elect
 - a. *according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*
 - 1) God's foreknowledge involved His choice, Romans 8:29, *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*
 - 2) Scot McKnight, *God's foreknowledge is more than prescience (knowing ahead of time), for it is effective, active, and determinative.*
 - 3) Roger Raymer, *God's choice is part of His predetermined plan, and is not based on any merit in those who are elected, but solely on His grace and love for them before their creation.*
 - 4) Joel Green, . . . *chosen by God but held in contempt in society, is neither a surprise to God nor a contradiction of his plan.*
 - 5) David Walls, *God knew our circumstances of pain before the world began and cares for us in accordance with his fatherly care.*
 - 6) Edmund Clowney, *Their inclusion in the people of God is no accident, no afterthought, but God's purpose from the beginning. Those who are foreknown by God are foreknown in and with Christ.*
 - b. *in the sanctification of the Spirit*
 - 1) Wayne Grudem, *The sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, the work whereby he gradually works in Christians to free them more and more from remaining sin and to make them increasingly like Christ in holiness, faith, and love . . . The unseen, unheard activity of God's Holy Spirit surrounds them almost like a spiritual atmosphere 'in' which they live and breathe, turning every circumstance, every sorrow, every hardship into a tool for his patient sanctifying work (cf. John 15:2; Rom. 8:28; 2 Cor. 4:16–18; Heb. 12:10–11; Jas 1:2–4; 1 Pet. 4:14).*
 - 2) David Walls, *Even in the midst of pain, the Holy Spirit is molding, shaping, and growing believers. The Holy Spirit is turning every circumstance, every sorrow, every hardship into a tool of spiritual maturing.*
 - c. *for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood*
 - 1) Charles Swindoll, . . . *consecrated by the blood of Christ, whom they are to serve through obedience . . .*
 - 2) Joel Green, . . . *because of the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. . . it is precisely because of Jesus' obedience that he could serve as the sacrifice, since, in the sacrificial system, an unblemished animal served as an analogy for the election of Israel set apart for life in relationship to and service of God . . .*
 - 3) Wayne Grudem, *Peter's readers of course realized that their obedience in this life was always incomplete, that even the most mature Christians were painfully aware of remaining sin, and that God's purpose, 'obedience to Jesus Christ', would never be completely fulfilled in this life . . . For obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood thus means that God's plan for them is not obedience marred by unforgiven sin but obedience whose failings are cleansed by the blood of Christ; it means 'for continual daily obedience and forgiveness.'*

C. A prayer for blessing on the recipients (2b), ***May grace and peace be multiplied to you.***

1. Zane Hodges, *God's grace was dear to Peter, for he referred to it 10 times in this epistle . . .*
2. Ramsey Michaels, *It was God's grace displayed in Jesus that made peace a reality.*
3. Thomas Constable, *Peter prayed for God's fullest outpouring of His favor and help on his readers. They needed this in view of their sufferings, which Peter proceeded to discuss. His readers also needed God's gift of peace since they were suffering.*
4. David Walls, *Peter gave the typical Christian greeting. Peace reflects the Hebrew greeting shalom, wishing wholeness and meaningful life. Grace is the explicitly Christian greeting, placing believers under the blood of Christ to receive God's free, undeserved grace and hope for living each day.*
5. Charles Swindoll, *This reminder of God's grace toward them is to bring them peace "in the fullest measure," regardless of the chaos they are enduring in daily life.*

CONCLUSION

- Roger Raymer, *In these words (1 Peter 1:2) Peter laid the theological foundations for this letter of encouragement. "God" the Father in His grace had chosen them and God the "Spirit" had sanctified them through the atoning blood of God the Son, Jesus Christ.*
- Wayne Grudem, *Peter specifies distinct actions by the different persons in the Trinity yet sees them uniting to bring about a common goal, the eternal, full salvation of these 'chosen sojourners.'*