

Introduction to 1 Peter

I have focused my ministry and teachings on the Apostle Paul. He wrote thirteen of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament, and possibly the book of Hebrews. He is the dominant writer, preacher and teacher of the New Testament. However, today, we are starting the book of 1 Peter. Peter is the dominant apostle in the gospels. In fact, in the New Testament, Peter is mentioned more than any other apostle, including Paul. Peter wrote only two books, 1 Peter and 2 Peter. Irenaeus and other church fathers wrote that the Gospel of Mark was based upon Peter's eyewitness accounts. I have never preached through the whole book of 1 Peter, but I have preached many messages out of the book.

Here is a quick glimpse of some of Peter's highlights.

- Peter was named first in every list of the Twelve (Mt 10:2; Mk 3:16; Lk 6:14; Ac 1:13).
- Matthew actually called him "first" among the apostles (Mt 10:2).
- When Jesus took the inner three, Peter was consistently named first: Peter, James, and John.
- Peter was frequently the spokesman for the Twelve, asking questions or answering them.
- Peter was the apostle who confessed Jesus as Messiah. (Mt 16:16)
- Peter was the apostle who walked on water. (Mt 14:28-29)
- Peter was the apostle who denied Jesus and then was restored by Jesus. (Jn 21:15-17)
- Peter was the first leader of the church in Jerusalem, and preached the sermon at Pentecost where 3,000 souls were added. (Ac 2)
- Peter also preached the sermon after the lame man was healed, where 5,000 men were added.

So, it is with great joy and expectation that I begin this journey through 1 Peter. God has a lot to say to all of us through Peter, and in these last days that we are in, his writings and teaching to us are going to become increasingly important to us. In the Introduction today, we will be looking at the author of this book, the Apostle Peter. Second, we will be looking at the recipients of the book, those who reside as aliens in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. Third, we will be looking at Peter's greeting to them. Fourth, we will look at an overview of 1 Peter and the purpose of the letter.

Introduction to 1 Peter

1. Author: Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ
2. Recipients: believers who were residing as aliens throughout Europe and Asia
3. Greeting: (grace and peace in fullest measure)
4. Overview and purpose

(1 Pe 1:1-2) "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen {2} according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure."

1. Author

Peter begins the letter by stating that he is the one that is writing the letter. He not only gives his name, but he states that he is an apostle of Jesus Christ. This is the Apostle Peter who is writing this letter. His authorship is one of the least contested of any of the books in the New Testament.

(1 Pe 1:1) “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ...”

In chapter five, Peter wrote that through Silvanus, our faithful brother, I have written to you. Silvanus is also referred to as Silas. Silas was the prophet that went to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas to verify the decision made by the elders and apostles in Jerusalem about the requirements for Gentiles, specifically, that they did not need to be circumcised in order to be saved. Silas is Peter’s amanuensis, a person who takes dictation from someone and writes it for them.

(1 Pe 5:12) “Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard *him*), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!”

(Ac 15:27) “Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will also report the same things by word *of mouth*.”

In Acts 15, after vouching for the decision reached by the apostles in Jerusalem, Silas, who was a prophet, encouraged and strengthened the brethren in Antioch with a lengthy message. When Judas returned to Jerusalem, Silas remained on in Antioch. It seems that he and Paul became very good friends. When Paul and Barnabas split up into two teams, Paul chose Silas and was a valuable member of Paul’s apostolic team. Peter recognizes and appreciates Silas’ faithfulness.

(Ac 15:32–35) “Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message. {33} After they had spent time *there*, they were sent away from the brethren in peace to those who had sent them out. {34} But it seemed good to Silas to remain there. {35} But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching with many others also, the word of the Lord.”

We also find that Mark is with Peter when he wrote this letter. Mark was not Peter’s biological son, but was a spiritual son. Peter had a fatherly relationship with Mark, and mentored him. If you recall, Mark was Barnabas’ nephew, and Barnabas had also taken him under his wings for a season. Later, after Mark had proved his faithfulness, he also served under Paul. But Mark and Peter had a special relationship, and the Gospel of Mark was written with the eyewitness accounts given to him by the Apostle Peter.

(1 Pe 5:13) “She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and *so does my son, Mark*.”

Peter wrote this letter while he was in Babylon. Silas, and Mark were both with him in Babylon when he wrote this letter. There is some speculation about which Babylon he was referring to. Some scholars thought that Babylon was a symbolic reference to Rome, and that Peter was writing from Rome. There was another Babylon, located in Egypt, and scholars do not give any support to that being the location where Peter wrote from. Most scholars today believe that he is referring to the ancient city of Babylon, located by the Euphrates River, in Mesopotamia. This was the ancient Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar. When Peter stated the five areas, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, it was in a logical order given by someone who is east and looking westward, which strongly supports the ancient city of Babylon as the location.

Let me give just a quick background on the Apostle Peter. We find in John 1:44 that they were from a fishing village named Bethsaida. He and his brother, Andrew, were both fishermen. We find in Luke 5 that they were partners with James and John, the sons of Zebedee.

(Lk 5:10) “and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men.”

(Jn 1:44) “Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter.”

Luke recorded that Jesus said to Simon, “Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men.” Matthew added an invitation by Jesus. He said to Peter, “Follow Me and I will make you a fisher of men.” Peter and Andrew his brother, left their nets and followed Jesus. Peter did become a fisher of men, an evangelist, and the first two outpouring of souls in Acts were a result of Peter’s preaching.

(Mt 4:18–20) “Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. {19} And He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” {20} Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.”

Matthew referred to him as Simon, who was called Peter. In John 1:42, when Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus, Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas, which is translated Peter. His given name, Simon, comes from the Hebrew word, shama, which means to hear intelligently, to listen, or to obey. Cephas is Aramaic for rock and Peter is the Greek name that means rock. He is referred to as Simon, Cephas, Simon Peter, and Peter. In this letter, Peter refers to himself as Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ.

(Jn 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 is translated Peter).”

At some point, Peter moved to Capernaum. In Mark 1:29, Jesus and His disciples were in Capernaum, and Jesus entered the synagogue and began to teach. After they came out of the synagogue, they went into the house of Simon and Andrew. Simon’s mother-in-law was sick with fever, so they spoke to Jesus about her, and He came to her and raised her up, taking her by the hand, and then she waited on them. So, we learn that his house was in Capernaum, not Bethsaida, where he was originally from, and that he was married. We do not know when or why he moved there, only that he now resided in Capernaum.

(Mk 1:21-31) “They went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and began to teach... {29} And immediately after they came out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. {30} Now Simon’s mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever; and immediately they spoke to Jesus about her. {31} And He came to her and raised her up, taking her by the hand, and the fever left her, and she waited on them.”

Peter was married, but we do not know his wife’s name. We only know that he was married. In 1 Corinthians 9:5, Paul mentioned that he and Barnabas had a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas. From this, we find that Peter was not only married, but he took along his believing wife as he traveled and ministered apostolically.

(1 Co 9:5) “Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?”

In early historical documents we find that Peter and his wife were both martyred in Rome. Clement of Alexandria wrote that Peter's wife was led to execution. Eusebius wrote that Clement said that Peter saw his wife being led to death and encouraged her by saying, "Remember the Lord." These early church traditions and writings are not Biblical facts, but the things that they wrote are very probable. Clement also wrote that Peter and his wife had children. We do not know how many children, only that they had children, and these would have likely traveled with them also.

In Matthew 16, Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" They gave various answers and then He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Upon hearing that, Jesus said, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it." Peter is not the rock that the church is built on; Jesus is the rock. Jesus is the chief Cornerstone. Jesus is the foundation that the church is built on. Peter was an apostle that would be laying the foundation of Christ in churches. That was the revelation that Peter had.

(Mt 16:13–18) "Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" {14} And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." {15} He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" {16} Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." {17} And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. {18} I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it."

Jesus had many disciples, but He only called twelve of them to be apostles. After spending the night in prayer, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them as apostles. In Revelation, we find that these twelve are called the apostles of the Lamb. Paul, Barnabas, Timothy, Titus and others were also apostles, but not apostles of the Lamb. The qualifications given in Acts 1 to replace Judas were only the qualifications for an apostle of the Lamb. Paul, Barnabas, and the other apostles did not meet the same qualifications as the apostles of the Lamb.

(Lk 6:12–16) "It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. {13} And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles: {14} Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James and John; and Philip and Bartholomew; {15} and Matthew and Thomas; James *the son* of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot; {16} Judas *the son* of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor."

(Re 21:14) "And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them *were* the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."

What is an apostle? The word apostle literally means sent one. Apostles were sent out by the Lord to preach the gospel, plant churches, encourage and equip the saints, train and ordain elders, and to help bring the body to maturity. When Jesus sent out His apostles, He gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. We find that great signs and wonders were being done by the apostles. There were

also signs being done by some in the church that were not apostles, so this power and authority was not limited to just the apostles, as some in the church today preach.

(Mt 10:1) “Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.”

Peter was not just one of the twelve, he was one of the three in Jesus’ inner circle. Peter, James, and John were the three closest to Jesus. He allowed them to accompany Him to raise Jairus’ twelve-year-old daughter from the dead (Mk 5:37). They saw His power over death. Jesus brought these three with Him when He was transfigured. They saw Elijah and Moses speaking with Jesus, and they heard the Father say, “This is My beloved Son; listen to Him.” (Mt 17:1-8) In Peter’s second letter (2 Pe 1:16-18), he wrote that they were eyewitnesses of His majesty. They saw His glory at the transfiguration. Jesus also brought these three with Him to the Garden of Gethsemane, where He prayed. They saw Jesus’ anguish and agony prior to His crucifixion; they saw Him suffer (Mk 14:32-42).

Peter was a fisherman, and did not have a religious education like a Pharisee. When Peter and John were arrested and put in jail in Acts 4, the Sanhedrin Council understood that they were uneducated and untrained men; they did not have a formal religious education. That does not mean that they could not read or write. They were from Galilee, which had many Gentiles in it, and so they knew Greek as well as Hebrew. The Council also observed their confidence and recognized that they had been with Jesus. Jesus had trained and prepared His disciples. Now, they were being persecuted by the Jews.

(Ac 4:3-13) “And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening... {13} Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and *began* to recognize them as having been with Jesus.”

In Acts 5, the apostles were put in jail again. The Council had Peter and the other apostles flogged and were ordered not to speak in the name of Jesus. But the apostles rejoiced that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for Jesus’ name, and they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus.

(Ac 5:18-42) “They laid hands on the apostles and put them in a public jail... {40} They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and *then* released them. {41} So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for *His* name. {42} And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus *as* the Christ.”

In Acts 12, Peter and James were arrested and James was put to death with a sword. On the night before Herod was going to kill Peter, an angel rescued him from prison, and he went to Mary’s house, the mother of John Mark, where they were praying fervently for him. I mention these glimpses of suffering that Peter had experienced. When Peter wrote about dealing with suffering and persecution, he was writing from experience.

2. Recipients

Peter addressed this letter to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. These were believers that had been scattered throughout Europe and Asia, in an area that is now Turkey.

(1 Pe 1:1-2) “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen {2} according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.”

Peter makes it clear that these are believers by saying, who are chosen or elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. Every person that receives Christ in their life is chosen. Jesus was chosen, and those in Christ are chosen. God, in His foreknowledge and omniscience, knows who will become believers and who will reject Him. In Ephesians 1, Paul wrote that “He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will.” God had a plan of redemption before the foundation of the world. He predestined to adoption all who would place their faith in Christ, and these are the elect or chosen ones.

(Eph 1:4–5) “just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love {5} He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,”

Peter wrote that they were “chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood.” When a person receives Christ, he is born of the Spirit. This is not a work of the flesh, but of the Spirit. It is the Spirit of Christ that sets us apart and makes us holy. How does it do that? We are sanctified with the blood of Christ. Without the perfect, spotless, blood of Christ, there is no forgiveness and there is no sanctification. When we receive Christ, we confess Jesus as Lord or Master, and we are committing ourselves to follow and obey Him. There are many today that have said a prayer to become a Christian so that they could be saved, but they never committed themselves to following and obeying Jesus. You cannot separate the two. If you receive Christ as Lord, you are yielding your life to Him, and committing yourself to follow and obey Him. The Spirit of Christ comes into you, and He forgives you of your sins, and He sanctifies you.

(1 Pe 1:1-2) “... who are chosen, {2} according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood:...”

Some of the discussion about being chosen is theological. In either case, believers must believe that Jesus is the Son of God, died for our sins, and was raised from the dead. On the practical side, notice what we have been chosen to do. In our text, we are chosen to obey. Are you chosen? Are you one of the elect? Do you obey God? We saw in Ephesians 1:4-5 that we have been chosen to live holy and blameless lives. Are you living a holy and blameless life? And, in John 15, Jesus said that He chose us to go and bear fruit and that our fruit would remain. Are you bearing fruit? Are you bearing eternal fruit that will remain? Those are three quick ways to see if you have been chosen.

(1 Pe 1:1–2) “... who are chosen {2} according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ ...”

(Jn 15:16) “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain ...”

He wrote to believers who were scattered and living as aliens. The Greek word for scattered is diaspora (Strong’s G1290), and it means to be scattered or to be dispersed. There were three main scatterings. In Acts 18:2, there was an expulsion of Jews from Rome by Claudius, which is why Aquila and Priscilla are in Corinth. These were Jews, not necessarily Christians.

(Ac 18:2) “And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them,”

The next scattering was under Nero’s persecution of Christians. Peter, Paul and many others were put to death at that time. That persecution began after the Great Fire in Rome, which was in AD 64. Since Peter wrote this letter sometime between AD 62 and AD 64, which was before this scattering took place.

The third diaspora the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7-8 (mid 30’s). The Jews began to persecute the Christians, imprisoning them and putting them to death. When we first learn of Paul, he was a young Pharisee and was holding the coats of those stoning Stephen to death, and he was in hearty agreement with it. I believe that the believers that scattered at that time are the ones that Peter is addressing. They scattered and were living as aliens in other places. These were not where they were from originally; they were just living there. As believers, our home is in heaven, and we are living as aliens here on earth. While that is true, I believe that Peter is using the term literally, and is not saying that they were aliens because their true home is in heaven.

(Ac 8:1) “Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered (diaspeiro, Strong’s G1289) throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.”

Where did they scatter to? Looking westward from Babylon, the first place would be Pontus, which was along the southern coast of the Black Sea. Pontus comes from the Greek word, pontos, which means sea. There was a diversity of topography, in that it had mountains and coastal areas. Pontus and Bithynia were part of the Roman province of Bithynia and Pontus.

(1 Pe 1:1) “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen”

The second area mentioned was Galatia. It was named after the Galatians, who were Celtic people. There was a northern region of Galatia and a southern region. When Paul wrote the book of Galatians, it was a letter to the churches scattered throughout Galatia.

(Ga 1:2) “and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia:”

The third area was Cappadocia. It was characterized by broad plateaus, mountainous terrain, and a colder climate than the coastal regions. In Acts 2:9, at Pentecost, there were Jews from all over the world who had gathered for the feast, and Pontus, Cappadocia, and Asia are all mentioned.

The fourth area was Asia, and it was a Roman province in the western part of Asia Minor along the Aegean coast. Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamum were all in Asia. Paul and his team had planted churches throughout that region.

The fifth area was Bithynia, and it bordered the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara. It had fertile valleys, forests, and had excellent harbors, and had a thriving trade business.

3. Greeting

Peter's greeting is very simple and was a common one. He wrote, "May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure." In the Hebrew culture, people did not say, "Hi, how are you." They greeted one another with a blessing of peace. Typically, they would say, "Shalom," which means peace. Having grown up in the Middle East, our normal greeting to people was "Salaam," which means peace. The full greeting is salaam malaikum, which means peace be upon you. It is customary to greet and bless people with peace. The peace that Peter blesses them with is a peace that surpasses all comprehension. It is a supernatural peace. It is not the absence of trouble, conflict, hardship, or difficulty, which are all external matters. God's peace is an internal manifestation. He gives us peace in the midst of troubles.

(1 Pe 1:2b) "... May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure."

Peter not only greets them with peace, but also grace. There are two definitions of grace that I want to quickly mention. Grace can mean the unmerited favor of God. It is by this unmerited favor or grace that we are saved. Our salvation is not as a result of works that no man should boast. This is an unmerited, undeserved favor that we are given by God. We cannot earn this grace. This grace should create in us a gratefulness and should be reflected in our worship and praise to Him. We find this grace in Ephesians 2.

(Eph 2:8-9) "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; {9} not as a result of works, that no one should boast."

There is another type of grace that we have. The Lord told Paul in the midst of his afflictions that His grace was sufficient for him. This grace is not just the unmerited favor, but it is the desire and ability to carry out God's will. Grace can also mean the measure of God's provision in strength, ability, power, gifts, and resources to carry out His will.

(2 Cor 12:9) "And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me."

In Romans 12, Paul wrote about this grace, and he spoke boldly into their lives by the grace that was given to him. Paul was doing an apostolic work and was given the grace to do this work. Paul did not have any more favor with God than you or I. Paul had a desire and ability to do a certain work that God had called him to. He alludes to this grace again at the close of his letter. He wrote them very boldly on some points and he could do that because of the grace that was given to him by God.

(Ro 12:3) "For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith."

(Ro 15:15) "But I have written very boldly to you on some points, so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God,"

In Romans 12:6, Paul says that each of them had gifts that differed according to the grace given to them. Like Paul, each of us have been given certain gifts, abilities, and resources to carry out God's call for our lives. Therefore, each of them was to exercise them accordingly.

(Ro 12:6) "And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;"

4. Overview and purpose

In the introduction I mentioned that I had taught many messages out of 1 Peter, but had never preached through the whole book. Let me expound on that for a minute. I have often referred to 1 Peter 2:1-2, where Peter exhorts us to long for the pure milk of the word, so that we can grow in respect to our salvation. I pray, teach, and encourage people to do that on a regular basis.

I refer to 1 Peter 2 quite often when speaking about what God is building, and our identity in Christ. We are living stones and are being built into a spiritual house for a holy priesthood. We are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, and we are to proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. It is a wonderful passage about our salvation.

I taught 1 Peter in a series on honor, Peter exhorts us to honor all people, and to honor the king. Submission to authority is a huge sub-theme in the book, and we are taught to submit ourselves to every human institution. Servants are to submit to their masters. Wives are to submit to their husbands. In chapter five, all of us are to submit to the elders of the church.

I have taught about humbling ourselves before the Lord in 1 Peter 5. God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

In 1 Peter 5, he gives three exhortations to pastors on how to shepherd the flock. I have taught this passage to many different churches and pastors. It is one of the best, if not the best passage on church leadership, that I know.

Having said all of that, I have taught much of 1 Peter, but have never taught the book as a whole. My wife likes to work puzzles. My teaching in 1 Peter has been like a puzzle. I have taken a few pieces here and there and put them together, but I have never worked the whole puzzle. Therefore, I have never seen the whole picture that Peter was giving, and how all these various pieces fit together.

What is the overall theme of 1 Peter. How does all this fit together? In 1 Peter 5:12, Peter tells us why he wrote the letter. He said, "I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!" It was written so that these believers, who had been scattered because of the severe persecution of the church, would stand firm in the grace of God.

It was an exhortation from the Apostle Peter to the church for them to stand firm in the grace of God in the midst of suffering.

(1 Pe 5:12) “Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard *him*), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!”

Most of the commentaries say that this book is about suffering. There is good reason to think that it is about suffering. Suffering, or a variation of suffering, is used sixteen times in the letter. The believers at that time were suffering. They had been suffering, and they were still experiencing suffering. Peter was not a stranger to suffering; he had been imprisoned, flogged, and persecuted. If he had not been miraculously removed from the prison in Acts 12, he would have been martyred, just like James. He is writing to them about something he is very familiar with. As we look at suffering, Peter starts in chapter one, telling them that they greatly rejoice, even though they are distressed by various trials so that the proof of their faith, which was more precious than gold, which is perishable, would be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. He said the outcome of their faith would be the salvation of their souls.

(1 Pe 1:6–7) “In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, {7} so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;”

In chapter two, he reminds them that Christ suffered, leaving us an example to follow in His steps. He told that that when they suffer unjustly for doing what was right, it finds favor with God.

(1 Pe 2:19–21) “For this *finds* favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly... But if when you do what is right and suffer *for it* you patiently endure it, this *finds* favor with God. {21} For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,”

In chapter three, he again talks about suffering for the sake of righteousness, and wrote that they are blessed for it. Not many people consider themselves blessed when they experience suffering. In my first church plant, Apostle Mike Haley preached about going through the storms of life, and it was an outstanding message. Afterwards, one of our members said he did not like the message because he did not experience storms. God always warned him ahead of time so that he did not have to suffer. He did not believe that spirit-filled and spirit-led believers should experience suffering. God does not promise that His grace will prevent suffering; He promises His grace so that we can faithfully endure it.

(1 Pe 3:14) “But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, *you are* blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED,”

In chapter four, Peter reminds them again that Christ suffered in the flesh, and they were to arm themselves with the same purpose, for those who suffer in the flesh have ceased from sin.

(1 Pe 4:1) “Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,”

Then, Peter wrote them not to be surprised at the fiery ordeal among them, which comes for testing, as if some strange things were happening to them. He told them to keep rejoicing when they share the sufferings of Christ, and that they are blessed.

(1 Pe 4:12–14) “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; {13} but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. {14} If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.”

Then, in chapter five, he wrote that after they have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. Then, he ends the book with his exhortation to stand firm in God’s grace. The setting is suffering; the context is that believers were suffering. The believers, who had been scattered all over Asia and Europe, were suffering. The exhortation is to stand firm in God’s grace in the midst of their suffering. God will perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish them for standing firm in the midst of their suffering.

(1 Pe 5:10) “After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you.”

Conclusion and Applications

This letter, written by the Apostle Peter to believers who were scattered throughout Asia and Europe, was an exhortation to stand firm in the true grace of God in the midst of the suffering that they were going through. Peter was very familiar with suffering, have been imprisoned, flogged, and persecuted many times. When these believers had scattered during the persecution that followed the stoning of Stephen, the apostles remained in Jerusalem, where much of the persecution was taking place. So, his exhortation does not come from someone unfamiliar with suffering; it comes from someone who has experienced much persecution himself.

Peter addressed the letter to the chosen or elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood. God knew that Adam would sin, and that we would all need to be saved from our sins. In Acts 2:23 we find that God had a predetermined plan to save us; it was for Jesus to come and die for our sins.

(Ac 2:23) “this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death.”

God’s plan was open to whoever would believe. God said that He does not desire for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance. He tells us that He desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

(2 Pe 3:9) “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”

(1 Ti 2:3–4) “This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, {4} who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

There may be someone today hearing this message that has never received Christ. God wants you to be saved; that is His will. He wants to forgive you of your sins and sanctify you so that you can have fellowship with Him. And just as He called out to Peter, “Follow Me, and I will make you a fisher of men,” He is calling you to follow Him and to obey Him. If you believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that He died for our sins, and was raised from the dead on the third day, you simply need to receive Him into your life as your Lord and Savior. Just pray something like this:

“Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God, and that You died for my sins, and were raised from the dead on the third day. I ask You to come into my life and to forgive me of my sins. I want to follow and obey You, and I now confess You as my Lord and Savior. I pray this in Jesus name, Amen.”

There may be some of you today that are going through some kind of trial or suffering. God wants you to know that He is with you in that trial; you are not on your own. He wants you to stand firm in His grace. He will give you the grace and strength to endure the trial. If you need wisdom, He will give you wisdom in this trial. Your faith, which is more precious than gold, is being tested and proven, and it will result in praise and glory and honor. After you have suffered, God will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. He wants you to be strengthened and encouraged today to stand firm in your faith in the midst of your suffering.

Closing Prayer

Father God, thank You for sending Jesus to die for our sins. Thank You for Your predetermined plan and for making salvation available to all. Thank You for Your saving grace, and also for your grace to live our lives and fulfill the calling in each one of us. Jesus, thank You for the example that You gave us in suffering. Help us to stand firm in Your grace in the midst of our trials and suffering. As we begin our study of the book of 1 Peter, give us understanding and applications in our lives. Bless our study of this book. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Discussion Questions

- If you were one of the aliens that had been scattered, and you received this letter from Peter, how would it have encouraged you?
- Why is it significant that Peter, the one that preached at Pentecost and again, after the healing of the lame man, write to these believers who had scattered everywhere? What is his relationship with them?
- What is the difference between the saving grace in Ephesians 2:8-9, and the grace that Peter refers to in his exhortation in 1 Peter 5:12, to stand firm in God's grace?
- What are some ways or things to do to stand firm in God's grace?
- In 1 Peter 1:2, why does Peter say that we have been chosen?
- In John 15:16, why did Jesus say that He had chosen the disciples?
- What did Peter mean when he said, “be sprinkled with His blood?”

Introduction to 1 Peter (1 Pe 1:1-2)

- 1. Author** (1 Pe 1:1, 5:12, Ac 15:27-35, 1 Pe 5:13, Lk 5:10, Jn 1:44, Mt 4:18-20, Jn 1:42, Mk 1:21-31, 1 Co 9:5, Mt 16:13–18, Lk 6:12-16, Re 21:14, Mt 10:1, Mk 5:37, Mt 17:1-8, 2 Pe 1:16-18, Mk 14:32-42, Ac 4:3-13, 5:18-42, 12:1-19)
- 2. Recipients** (1 Pe 1:1-2, Eph 1:4–5, Jn 15:16, Ac 18:2, 8:1, Ga 1:2)
- 3. Greeting** (1 Pe 1:2b, Eph 2:8-9, 2 Cor 12:9, Ro 12:3, 15:15, 12:6)
- 4. Overview and purpose** (1 Pe 5:12, 1:6–7, 2:19-21, 3:14, 4:1, 4:12-14, 5:10)

Conclusion and Applications (Ac 2:23, 2 Pe 3:9, 1 Ti 2:3-4)