

NT Survey – 1 Peter
Valley Bible Church Adult Sunday School
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Introduction

We are continuing our study of the “general epistles”. These letters, with the exception of Hebrews, are named after the author. Hence the name of this book is the First Epistle (or Letter) of Peter.

Author

There is no credible claim that Peter is not the author of his two letters. There is copious reference to Peter and his letters in the early church. The strong evidence of Peter's authorship include the style and vocabulary which match his preaching in the Book of Acts, quotes from Jesus to which he was a witness, and his eye witness treatment of the crucifixion of Jesus.

We know more about Peter than any NT person except for Jesus Himself. We first met him as Simon (Greek) or Simeon (Hebrew). He was the son of Jonas or John and the brother of Andrew. All of them were fishermen. Andrew brought him to Jesus and Jesus immediately renamed him Cephas (Hebrew) or Peter (Greek) which means stone or rock (John 1:40-44). Peter was called to follow Jesus (Mark 1:16-17) and appointed an Apostle (Matt 10:2; Mark 3:14-16). His boldness caused him to become the spokesman for the twelve, often speaking the words they were thinking but dared not verbalize. He is placed at the start of lists of disciples by each of the Gospel writers (Matt 10, Mark 3, Luke 6, Acts 1).

Peter is best known for his zeal which often got him in trouble and caused him to be the object lesson in Jesus' teaching on humility and discipleship. After Pentecost, he became the leading preacher of the twelve (Acts 1-12), performing miracles (Acts 3-9) and opening the door to salvation to the Samaritans (Acts 8) and the Gentiles (Acts 10). As with all major characters in Scripture, his weaknesses are shown as well as his strengths.

Peter traveled, although apparently not as much as Paul. He was probably accompanied by his wife (Mark 1:29-31; 1 Cor 9:5). Church tradition recounts that he encouraged her to "remember the Lord" as he was forced to witness her crucifixion. The story of his execution is famous and tells of his request to be crucified upside down because he was not worthy to die as his Lord had died. All historical accounts indicate he was crucified in that manner in Rome in AD 67.

Peter is the apostolic authority behind the gospel of Mark. Mark was Peter's interpreter and follower.

Irenaeus (ca. AD 115-200): “Now Matthew published among the Hebrews a written Gospel also in their own tongue, while Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome and founding the church. But after their death, **Mark also, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, himself handed down to us in writing the things which were preached by Peter, ...**” (Against Heresies, 3.1.1-4)

Place and Date

The place of writing was "Babylon" (1 Pet 5:13) which was most likely a code name for Rome used by Christian writers who wished to avoid bringing the wrath of Rome on the believers living there. There is strong evidence that Peter was in Rome during the last decade of his life and wrote this letter just before, or shortly after, the fire in Rome in July AD 64. This places the writing at AD 63-65.

Audience

This letter is addressed to the "aliens, scattered" or literally the "wanderers of the dispersion" (1:1). These were believers who were scattered throughout the northern part of Asia Minor. The Bible contains no clear record of how the gospel reached this area (perhaps an extension of Paul's ministry; or of Peter's). It contained colonies of Jews with a predominance of Gentiles. Their situation was one of persecution (4:12) from Nero and for living as a faithful believer in a pagan society. Peter writes to encourage them to rejoice and live above reproach with perseverance and commitment to Christ.

Theme

Peter states the theme:

¹²Through 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!** 1 Pet 5:12

First Peter is aimed at teaching believers facing persecution that they must live victoriously in a hostile world without losing hope by trusting in their Lord. Peter wanted his readers to live a Christian life-style that would present the gospel before the unsaved.

Outline

- I. Greetings (1:1-2)
- II. Salvation and its results (1:3-2:10)
- III. Conduct before the world (2:11-4:6)
- IV. Conduct within the body (5:1-11)
- V. The Purpose of the letter and benediction (5:12-14)

Summary

Greetings (1:1-2)

1:1-2 – Peter begins by identifying himself as an apostle – one of the twelve plus Paul who were specially commissioned by the Lord to take the gospel to certain people/areas. His audience is believers; “aliens” who have been scattered throughout the Roman empire because of persecution.

In his greeting, Peter lays out the doctrine of election. He wants to make it clear that the salvation he will talk about is initiated with God and for God’s glory. They are aliens because of God’s doing.

^{1b}who are chosen ²according 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 Pet 1:1b-2

Election is God’s unconditioned choice before the foundation of the world (eternity past) of those individuals whom He would save (Matt 22:1-14; Rom 3:10-13; 8:27-30; 9:6-24; 1 Cor 1:18-19; Eph 1:3-11; 2:8-9; 2; Acts 13:48; 1 Thess 1:4; 2 Thess 2:13; 2 Tim 2:10; 1 Pet 1:1-2; 2 Pet 1:10; 2:13). All whom the Father appoints to eternal life (Acts 13:48), He will call to Himself (Rom 8:30) by sovereignly causing the gospel to be told to them (Acts 10; Rom 10:8-17). God’s choice is required because all people are dead in their trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1) and cannot chose to come alive.

❖ Who do I give the glory for my salvation?

Salvation and its results (1:3-2:10)

1:3-9 – A living hope – The Father has CAUSED us to be born again to a living hope. Our hope is not dead, but alive and active. The hope of glory (Col 1:27) is what we should exult in; it is our anchor.

¹Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and **we exult in hope of the glory of God.** Rom 5:1-2

¹⁹**This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil,** Heb 6:19

❖ What is my “anchor”?

The blessings of salvation are innumerable, but Peter lays out a few here to encourage his readers of their position in Christ.

- an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away (v4)
- an inheritance which is reserved in heaven (v4)
- a salvation protected by God's power (v5)
- a salvation that will cause rejoicing (v6, 8)
- a salvation that perseveres and matures and glorifies God in trials (v6-7)

❖ Do I meditate on the wonder of salvation and the character of God that has brought it to me?

1:10-12 – Revelation – The Holy Spirit revealed the grace and glory of salvation through the prophets who understood that the Messiah was going to suffer, but the revelation of suffering was mixed with the revelation of glory. They did not know the exact time or circumstances, but it was revealed to them that their message was for others.

The holy angels (those that did not follow Satan in the rebellion) have no need of salvation. Their entire existence is to glorify God in praise and worship (Heb 1:6; Rev 4:8; 5:11-12; Psa 148:1-2; Isa 6:3; Luke 2:9-14). Since they are not in need of salvation, they look with fascination at God's love, grace, and mercy. They seek to view salvation's greatness so they may glorify God all the more.

❖ Do I seek to glorify God all the more?

1:13-16 – Salvation results in hope and holiness – Thoughts of the revelation (or return) of Christ should move us to holy conduct and godliness.

¹¹Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, **what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,** 2 Pet 3:11

❖ Am I striving for holy conduct and godliness?

Peter has just described the blessings of the salvation richly provided to us. Now he moves to what results from that salvation and what we are commanded to make result from that salvation.

Believers are to “fix our hope completely on the grace to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ”. This hope is the “light at the end of the tunnel” which is the anchor for our soul.

¹⁸**For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.** ... ²⁴For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he *already* sees? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it. Rom 8:18, 24-25

❖ Is my hope completely fixed on glory? If not, what is it fixed on?

“Preparing your minds for action” and “keep sober in spirit” are modifying phrases that describe how we are to “fix our hope”

- “Prepare” has the idea of pulling up all loose ends, getting ready for swift movement, and removing obstacles to our mind being ready for action.
- “Sober” has the idea of not being out of control; instead we are to be filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18; Col 3:16).

❖ Is my mind ready for action? Is it saturated with the Word of God?

Christians should respond to God's holiness by leaving the lusts of their former ignorance and adopting God's own behavior as their patterns of holiness. Those who have been given the gift of true saving faith (Eph 2:8-9) will be characterized by obedience. Sin has already been put off and righteousness has been put on in positional sense. Yet we are also to strive to be putting off sin and putting on righteousness (Eph 4:22-24; Col 3:1-13).

❖ Am I putting off sin and putting on righteousness?

1:17-21 – Salvation results in fear – Because of the incomprehensible value of the One who redeemed us (v18-20), the true believer conducts themselves with fear (reverence, awe, respect) during their stay on the earth.

²⁸Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; ²⁹for our God is a consuming fire. Heb 12:28-29

❖ Do I fear God?

Each believer will be judged based on their works. Believers will be judged after the rapture according to their works done since the time of salvation. This is the judgment seat of Christ and is not a judgment for salvation, but for the glory given to God for the worship life of the believer.

¹⁰For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. 2 Cor 5:10 (cf 1 Cor 3:11-15)

❖ Am I striving to accomplish God's works (Eph 2:10) according to His power which works mightily within me (Col 1:29)?

1:22-25 – Salvation results in love – Believers have been born again, made new (2 Cor 5:17). Our souls have been purified as we surrendered our lives to Christ as Lord and Savior in obedience to God's Word. A result of true saving faith is new brotherly-love relationships with the family of God. Since this is true, we must sacrificially love one another fervently (to go all out, to reach the furthest extent). A theme in 1 Peter is fervent love among God's children. This kind of love stands as a beacon among a lost world bringing persecution to believers.

³⁴A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵**By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.**” John 13:34-35

❖ Does love characterize my life?

2:1-10 – Salvation results in growth – Remembering that God's word is powerful, living, and enduring (i.e. therefore), Peter calls us to put off in practice what has been put off in position. The pre-requisite for spiritual growth is turning from “all” know sin. Having turned from sin, we are to long for the Word of God so that we can mature. God causes individual growth through His Word.

❖ Am I longing for the Word of God?

Individuals make up the united-in-Christ body. The church is a living body that gives sacrificial service to God (v4-5). Christ was the life-giving Stone who enables His followers to produce spiritual sacrifices of obedience, worship (Rom 12:1-2) and ministry (Heb 13:15-16).

¹Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Rom 12:1-2

¹⁵Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. ¹⁶And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. Heb 13:15-16

❖ Does my life have the sweet aroma of sacrifices to God?

The church is a building built on Christ, the Cornerstone (v6-8). Peter quoted the OT to show that Christ was to be a foundation stone for believers and a stone of stumbling for appointed unbelievers.

Believers are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession. We were not a people, but now we are the people of God; we had not received mercy, but now we have received mercy. The purpose of our calling was to **“proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”**

❖ Am I fulfilling my purpose?

Conduct before the world (2:11-4:6)

Peter is now going to give his readers life areas in which they should display conduct that is vastly different than the world. In light of believers being aliens and strangers to this world, we are commanded to “abstain from fleshly lusts”. We are to do this in a warfare manner. We are to bring all resources to bear on our enemy.

❖ Am I warring against sin?

Believers are to keep our behavior excellent among the Gentiles (unbelievers). The understanding of this passage is varied. One is that the unbelievers will come to salvation as they observe believers' lives. The other is that in the judgment they will glorify God as they declare the uprightness of the believers they persecuted as they kneel before Jesus (Phil 2:10-11). Either way, believers are to keep their behavior excellent.

2:13-17 – Submission to the government – Spirit-filled believers willingly come under those who God has placed over them; they submit. Believers are commanded to submit themselves to governing authorities. Government's ideal is to punish evildoers and the encouragement of doing right. By obeying governing authorities, believers silence the ignorance of unbelievers.

❖ Do I live a life of submission to Christ first?

In our conduct, we are free from sin and free to choose in non-moral areas, but we are not to use that freedom as a covering for evil, but be governed as bondslaves of God.

❖ Am I a fence leaner?

2:18-25 – Submission to masters – In relation to their owners, slaves were to be in submission to them. The incentive for doing this, even in the presence of provocation, was the moving example of Christ's obedience and servant spirit.

❖ Do I have a workplace witness?

3:1-7 – Submission in the family – “In the same way” refers to the previous two examples of submission that Peter has already covered. Submissive wives can be the instrument through which the Lord draws unbelieving husbands to Himself as believing wives live out the gospel. A godly woman's behavior is “chaste” and “respectful”. Outer beauty fades, but the godly wife is to have an inner beauty demonstrated by an imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit.

The believing husband is to submit to his wife by sacrificially serving her. The husband is to live with his wife in an understanding way being a student of his wife. He is to cherish his wife and care for her as someone created by God differently than himself. The husband is to show his wife honor as a fellow created being and particularly a believer. By obeying God in the marriage relationship, the husband's prayers will not be hindered.

❖ Am I working out righteousness in my family relationships?

3:8-12 – Holy living – Finally (to sum up), believers are to be:

- Harmonious (have the same thinking) – Having a common mindset of glorifying God, committed to His Word.
- Sympathetic (sharing the same feelings) – Coming alongside and sharing in the feelings of others; bearing one another’s burdens (Gal 6:2).
- Brotherly (affection among people who are related) – Having the special bond of affection among God’s people
- Kindness (feeling compassionately and deeply for someone else) – Being so impacted by the pain of others so as to feel it deeply.
- Humble in spirit (lowly, esteeming ourselves small; the proper estimate of oneself before God) – willing to put someone else's interests and needs before his or her own (Phil. 2:3-4).

The example of how to treat people should not come from their enemies, but from their God. In contrast to seeking revenge, Peter commands blessing.

❖ Am I living out the “one-another’s” in my body relationships?

3:13-4:19 – Suffering – Peter now deals with the problem of persecution and suffering in the lives of believers which occurred despite their desire to live peacefully and their eagerness to do good deeds.

¹³Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? ¹⁴But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED, ... ¹⁷For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.

Suffering for righteousness does no eternal harm but brings opportunities:

- We may have opportunity to explain our hope, but we must be ready (v15)
- We may put our slanderers to shame by our response (v16-17)
- We may be like Jesus and Noah who brought glory to God in the midst of suffering (v18-22)
- We may live for the will of God, not the lusts of men (4:1-6).

⁴In *all* this, they are surprised that you do not run with *them* into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign *you*; ⁵but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

❖ Do I have the proper fear: God or man?

Peter believed Christ’ coming for His saints was near (v7) and urged his readers to make the best use of their time now. Christ's return is an incentive for action and an encouragement to obedience.

- Keep fervent in our unconditional, sacrificial, servant love for one another because love forgives unconditionally and covers a multitude of sins (1 Cor 13:4-8)
- Be hospitable (love strangers) to one another without complaint.
- Serve the body of Christ with our spiritual gift. The purpose of the gift(s) is to serve in the power of the Spirit.

❖ Do these things characterize me?

Trials should not come as a surprise (v12), so instead of complaining we should rejoice that we can share in Christ's sufferings and we know testing brings maturity. Peter warned his readers against involvement with evil actions remembering that even though believers face difficulties, the fate of the unbelievers is terrifying. Those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

Conduct within the body (5:1-11)

5:1-4 – Conduct of elders – In view of the inevitability of trials, Peter gave a special charge to elders. Elders are the caretakers of the church (1 Tim 3:5); ruling and exercising oversight (1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 5:17; 1 Pet 5:2). They shepherd the flock of God (Acts 20:28) to: feed (1 Tim 3:2); lead (Heb 13:7; 1 Pet 5:2); protect and watch over (Heb 13:17); care for (1 Thess 2:7); and equip (Eph 4:11-12). Caring for God's people is a rough job even when things are good, and especially hard when things are bad. Peter urged them to assume their tasks not because they felt obligated, but because they chose to eagerly. At Christ's return the faithful leaders were promised an unfading crown.

❖ Do I pray for my elders?

5:5-11 – Conduct of the body – The body must appreciate and esteem elders very highly (1 Thess 5:12-13); obey and submit to elders (Heb 13:17); and be subject to elders (1 Pet 5:5).

❖ Does this summarize my attitude towards my elders?

Believers are to clothe themselves with humility toward one another because God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. We must be humble, casting “all” our anxiety on Him because He cares for us.

❖ What is my attitude concerning the difficulties of life – “hunker down” or “surrender”?

We are in a fight for holiness against the Devil, the world, and the flesh. We are to be alert and self-controlled because the enemy (the Devil) is prowling, looking for victims. We must stand firm in the fight, resisting him, firm in our faith.

❖ Am I standing firm?

Believers are not alone in their suffering – other believers are suffering also and above all Christ is with them.

The Purpose of the Letter and Benediction (5:12-14)

5:12-14 – Peter closes with greetings and a benediction. He gives them a final command:

¹² ... I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God.

Stand firm in it!

Homework

Read 2 Peter and Jude.