

I Peter - A Survival Guide for the Believer - Help Sheet #1

1) Up Front

- Get a Bible – your Bible preferably. Find 1 Peter – understand its place in the Canon.
- Peter, Purpose of the letter and other good stuff
- Theme – be ready to be surprised.

The apostle Peter was the inspired writer of 1 Peter. Read Matthew 4:18; 10:2; and Acts 1:13 for information about Peter. This letter was addressed to Christians in Asia Minor; approximately 62-64 AD.

Introduction

The author of this letter is Peter, who was one of Jesus' twelve disciples and an apostle of Jesus Christ (1:1). Some people question whether Peter, who was allegedly an unschooled fisherman (Mark 1:16-17; Acts 4:13), could have written the rather polished Greek with a high literary style that is evident in this letter. First of all, the quality of the Greek should not be exaggerated. It has some affinity to 1 Thessalonians but is less sophisticated than parts of Hebrews. There is evidence of the Semitic language background of the writer. It is possible that the language and style of this letter may reflect the fact that Peter wrote this letter "through Silas" (5:12). This may mean that Silas, who was a prophet himself (Acts 15:32), wrote down the inspired words of Peter and may have helped in the composition. But Peter was more than thirty years removed from his career as a Galilean fisherman. For more than twenty years he had been serving churches with a significant percentage of Greek-speakers, who used the Septuagint as their Bible. There is no evidence that Peter knew only crude, minimal Greek.

Peter sent greetings to his readers from "she who is in Babylon, who was chosen along with you" (5:13). This probably refers to the church in Rome. The church is the chosen bride of Christ. The Greek word for church is feminine. In a similar way 2 John 1 refers to the church as "the chosen lady." Jews and Christians used Babylon as a cryptic name for Rome. It seems unlikely that Peter was writing from the ancient city of Babylon, because by this time it was largely ruined and deserted. Citing Clement of Alexandria and Papias, Eusebius wrote that Peter wrote his first epistle "in Rome itself, as is indicated by him, when he calls the city, by a figure, *Babylon*" (*The Church History of Eusebius*, Book II, chapter 15, paragraph 2).

We have no reason to doubt the ancient tradition that Peter was in Rome at the end of his life and died there as a martyr. According to Clement and Tacitus, both Peter and Paul died in Nero's terrible persecution of Christians following the burning of Rome in the summer of 64 AD. Though some give an exact date, careful scholars date Peter's death between 64–67 AD. In dating this epistle, we must allow some time for 2 Peter to be written, which was clearly written near the end of Peter's life (2 Peter 1:15).

Because this letter refers to trials and Christians being persecuted because of their faith (1:6; 4:14-16, 5:8-9), some place the writing of this letter after Nero severely persecuted Christians following the burning of Rome in 64 AD. While that is possible, there is no clear indication in this letter that Peter is talking about that specific persecution. The recipients are acquainted with Paul's letters (2 Peter 3:16), so this letter was not written before 60 AD. Allowing for some variables, it seems most likely that 1 Peter was written approximately 62–64 AD.

The people to whom Peter wrote this letter are listed in 1:1. They are the Christians who were scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. All five of these areas were located in Asia Minor (present-day Turkey). Every apostle had a responsibility for the spiritual welfare of all Christians (2 Corinthians 11:28). So, Peter writes this brief letter to strengthen and encourage Christians to stand firm as they faced trials and tests of faith. This is the purpose of this letter as Peter himself states in 5:10-12.

At the beginning of the letter (1:3-4) Peter sounds the theme that runs through all five chapters: We have the sure hope of an undying, undefiled, and unfading inheritance in heaven. Peter established two key points about this hope in the course of this letter:

- 1) Jesus' saving work established this sure hope; and
- 2) This sure hope strengthens and upholds us as we pass through the trials of this world on our way to our heavenly inheritance.

- Greeting (1:1-2)
- I. You have a sure hope awaiting you in heaven (1:3-12)
 - II. You have a call to holy living based on your sure hope
 - A. Live with one another as people who share this sure hope (1:13-25)
 - B. Crave pure spiritual milk so you grow up (2:1-3)
 - C. Living stones and priests proclaim this sure hope (2:4-12)
 - D. Submit to God's representatives as a witness of your sure hope (2:13-3:7)
 - E. Repay evil with good as a witness of your sure hope (3:8-22)
 - F. Separate yourselves from paganism as a witness of your sure hope (4:1-6)
 - G. Live in harmony with one another as a witness of your sure hope (4:7-11)
 - III. Recognize that suffering for Jesus is not unusual for those who have this sure hope (4:12-19)
 - IV. Admonition to elders/shepherds of God's flock (5:1-4)
 - V. Final exhortations and greetings (5:5-14)



2) 1:1-2 Greeting – the first of many meaningful word pileups.

- Chosen. Exiled. Scattered.
- See all of God and what he does or us.
- Grace and Peace – Cause and Effect.
- The Doctrine of Election

WELS – This We Believe

We believe that already before the world was created, God chose those individuals whom he would in time convert through the gospel of Christ and preserve in faith to eternal life (Ephesians 1:4-6; Romans 8:29,30). This election to faith and salvation in no way was caused by anything in people but shows how completely salvation is by grace alone (Romans 11:5,6).

LC-MS – Brief Statement

By the election of grace, we mean this truth, that all those who by the grace of God alone, for Christ's sake, through the means of grace, are brought to faith, are justified, sanctified, and preserved in faith here in time, that all these have already from eternity been endowed by God with faith, justification, sanctification, and preservation in faith, and this for the same reason, namely, by grace alone, for Christ's sake, and by way of the means of grace. That this is the doctrine of the Holy Scripture is evident from Eph. 1:3-7; 2 Thess. 2:13, 14; Acts 13:48; Rom. 8:28-30; 2 Tim. 1:9; Matt. 24:22-24 (cp. Form. of Conc. Triglote, p. 1065, Paragraphs 5, 8, 23; M., p. 705).

1:3-12 – You Have a Sure and Living Hope – another major word pileup.

- See all of God again.
- Happiness vs. Joy
- The prophet and angels should be so lucky.
- Focus not on the present, but on what has been done in the past and what will be in the future – all of which impacts the present.