

OVERVIEW OF 1 PETER

SGL Equipping

Introduction

- Jesus appointed Peter as a key leader (Matt 16:18-19)
- Peter later carried the gospel into the Roman world
- The letter, written in AD 54-68 under Nero, was commissioned by Peter in Rome and written by Silas (5:12-13)
- 1 Peter was a circular letter to churches in Asia Minor (Turkey)
- Churches comprised mostly of Gentiles converts persecuted by Roman neighbours (2:12; 3:16; 4:16)
- Peter wrote to encourage them in the midst of their suffering (5:12)

Greetings (1:1-2)

- Peter refers to believers as “elect” (chosen) and “strangers” (exiled)
- These terms “chosen” (Gen 18:19) and “strangers” (Gen 23:4) are rooted in the OT
- Peter wants to help these Gentiles see that, through Jesus, they belong to the family of Abraham (1:14, 18; 4:3-4)
- These believers were wandering exiles looking for their true home in the Promised Land

Song of Praise (1:3-12)

- Peter praises God for causing people to be born again (1:3)
- God is calling people into a new **family** with a new **identity** and a new **hope** of a new **world** to come
- Persecution or trials is a gift from God that burns away false hope and distractions
- The gift of suffering is meant to deepen our faith and serves to remind us of our true home and hope
- Peter treats these themes in main body of the letter in greater depth

A New Family Identity (1:13-2:10)

- Peter takes OT images and applies them to Gentile Christians
- 1:13– “gird your loins” (Ex 12:11)
- 1:15-16– “holy people of God” (Lev 11:44)
- 1:17-21– “new exodus and Passover” (Ex 12-15)
- 1:22-25– “people of a new covenant” (Isa 40; Jer 31)
- 2:1-8– “new temple” (Isa 28:16)
- 2:9-10– “kingdom of priests” (Ex 19:4-6)
- Applying these images, Peter interprets their suffering in a new story

Suffering as a Witness to Jesus (2:11-4:11)

- Persecution brings clarity to their mission as witnesses of Jesus Christ (2:11-12)
- They should submit to Roman rule (2:13-17) and not resort to violence
- Christian slaves and wives should submit to and respect un-believing masters and husbands. Husbands who are believers should love and respect their un-believing wives (2:18-3:7)
- Imitating Jesus in his suffering brings credibility to their words

Suffering and Future Hope (4:12-5:9)

- Believers should consider it an honour and joy to suffer for Jesus' sake (4:12-14; cf. Matt 5:11-12)
- Peter calls on elders to care for suffering believers (5:1-5)
- Peter reminds Christians that our real enemy is the devil (5:6-8)
- So, we resist and stand firm (5:9)

Final Greetings (5:10-14)

- Peter concludes with a prayer for divine strength (5:10)
- In 5:13, he refers to Rome as Babylon, an archetype for corrupt rulers (Jer 50-51)
- The Roman Empire is where God's people are exiled from their true home in the renewed creation
- This letter is a reminder of Christian hope in the midst of suffering
- Trials and persecution present opportunities to show the love of Christ fuelled by the hope of his return

Importance of 1 Peter in Biblical Theology

- 1 Peter was addressed to Christians, who rejected civic religion and its practices and came into conflict with their neighbours
- Under pressure, many were tempted to relapse morally and to give up their faith
- The letter focuses on the nature of God, whose gracious saving actions were predicted by the prophets in the OT
- The main demonstration of this grace was the suffering of Christ and the glories that would follow (1:11)
- Peter insists that suffering strengthens one's faith (1:7)
- Thus, Peter shows God's saving activity which embraces past

Why Are We Studying this Letter?

- As we go through this time of the pandemic and economic recession, we need to stand firm in our faith in God by looking back to God's faithfulness and forward to our eternal hope
- "With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it" (5:12)

Helpful References

- Edmund Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP 1988)
- G. L. Green, “1 Peter,” *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP 2000)
- Scot McKnight, *1 Peter*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 1996)