

Introduction

This first epistle of Peter was written from Rome about A.D. 62 to 64, a few years before both he and the apostle Paul were to suffer as martyrs. The occasion for the writing was the fiery trials that the church was already experiencing and that would be intensified in the future, as Jesus had warned in Matthew 24. Soon after this, Nero intensified the persecution as never before.

Peter is sometimes called “the apostle of hope” because of his emphasis in this epistle on the hope of the believer. This hope is attained only through suffering for Christ’s sake and fellowship with the brethren, together walking as pilgrims and strangers in the world, striving together for the glory to come. The theme of this epistle is, “Through suffering to glory.”

Peter writes to strengthen, establish, and comfort the believers in the provinces of Asia Minor, whom he mentions in the first chapter. He encourages them to stand firm in the faith, to be ready to suffer and to die for their faith in the Lord Jesus, and he holds before them the sufferings of our Lord as an example.

When we see round about us the rapidly growing apostasy, the wicked defiance of God’s commandments, and the signs of pending persecution for the church of Jesus Christ, we realize that the epistle was written for such a time as this. It is with that in mind that we should take up a prayerful study of its contents.

I would recommend that you have a Bible dictionary, a good commentary, the creedal Three Forms of Unity, and a concordance to assist you in your study. Herman Hoeksema’s *Reformed Dogmatics*, published by the RFP, may also prove of value to you.

May God bless our every effort to search the Scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation.

Lesson One: 1 Peter 1:1–5

Greeting and Benediction

Peter refers to himself by the name that was given to him by Christ. He addresses the church as *elect* and *strangers*. They are God's elect, who have been made strangers in the midst of this present evil world. More particularly, he addresses churches in the provinces of Asia Minor.

These elect are addressed as chosen from eternity by the Father, made holy by the indwelling Spirit, and dedicated unto God by the cleansing power of Christ's blood. Upon them is placed the blessing of grace, which results in peace of heart and mind.

As we mentioned in our Introduction, the apostle Peter is sometimes referred to as "the apostle of hope." He strikes this keynote of the letter already in verses 3 to 5, where he praises God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in His abundant mercy has begotten us unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This hope is not a mere "hope so," but an assured expectation evidenced in awaiting the outcome. It is focused upon the inheritance in heaven that is preserved in safe keeping for us there. As heirs of that inheritance, we are surrounded by a wall of protection created by the power of God through faith, even unto the day that Christ returns.

Read the entire epistle.

Questions for Study

A. God's foreknowledge

1. What is the eternal basis for our salvation? (verse 2)
2. Does God's foreknowledge mean that God foresaw who would believe in Him, in time? Or is God's foreknowledge sovereign, even as God is sovereign? (Canons of Dort I, Article 6)

- a. What is the difference between *foreknowledge* and *predestination*? (Rom. 8:29, 30)
 - b. Did God choose the church as a whole, or did He choose the individual members of the church, or both? (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 21, Q&A 54)
- B. Elect strangers—How do we distinguish between the terms *strangers*, *foreigners*, and *aliens*?
1. Do any of those terms apply to us?
 2. What is meant by the *sanctification of the Spirit*? (verse 2; Eph. 5:25, 26; Rev. 1:5)
 3. To what does *sprinkling of the blood* refer in verse 2? (Ezek. 36:25; Heb. 10:22)
- C. Begotten unto a lively hope
1. What does it mean to be *begotten*? (verse 3; John 3:3, 5; 1 Pet. 1:23, 25; Canons of Dordt III/IV, Articles 11, 12)
 2. What is the *object* of our hope? (verses 4, 9)
 - a. What is the *basis* for our hope? (verse 3; 1 Cor. 15:20)
 - b. How are the certainty and the grandeur of that object pointed out to us? (verse 4)
 3. How does the power of God keep us? (verse 5)

- a. Is faith our work or the work of God? (Eph. 2:8, 9; Canons of Dordt III/IV, Articles 13, 14)
 - b. How can we be assured of the perseverance of the saints? (John 6:39; John 10:29)
4. All this comes to us in sovereign mercy. Mercy is God's strong desire to deliver the objects of His love from their present misery and to bless them with the blessings of salvation. Why is that called an *abundant* mercy? (verse 3)
- D. This should arouse in us the response of, "Blessed be God!" (verse 3; Rev.4:10, 11)

Points for Further Discussion

1. Can you find a benediction in verses 1–5? Why does the minister raise his hands when he pronounces the benediction on Sunday?
2. Which of the following is included in the hope of the believer: doubt, certainty, "I hope so," expectation, longing.
3. The idea of an inheritance is that we are heirs. That implies rightful claim. On what basis do we have a rightful claim to our inheritance in the heavens? (verse 4)
4. How can faith be a wall around our souls to guard and protect us until Christ returns?

Memory Verse (Revelation 4:10, 11)

The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.