

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 RFPFA, 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.

Lesson Two: 1 Peter 1:6–12

The Joy of the New Testament Church

In verses 6 through 12 Peter speaks of the joy of faith that fills the hearts of the believers, which is a *joy unspeakable and full of glory*, or glorious.

True, the saints experience this joy while smiling through their tears, since they experience sufferings for the name and cause of Christ. Even so, God measures out to them the trials of their faith necessary unto their salvation.

Theirs is a joy rooted purely in faith. They have not been eye witnesses of Christ when He was on earth, yet they see Him with an eye of faith and embrace Him as their Savior and Lord. Thus they experience in hope a foretaste of the eternal joy that will be theirs when Christ appears and takes them to Himself in glory.

The prophets in the old dispensation saw from afar the sufferings that the church would experience for Christ's sake, as well as the glories that would result from their sufferings. Even though they could not fully understand these sufferings, they still spoke of them. They inquired as to when and how these things would be experienced, and they were told that they spoke in prophecy. They would not experience it themselves, but the church would experience it after Christ suffered and the Spirit was poured out on the church.

Even the angels in heaven eagerly follow the course of events here below because the salvation of the church involves them also, and their future blessedness in the new creation.

Read chapter 1.

Questions for Study

- A. The elect stranger possesses a living hope wherein he rejoices, even amid great heaviness.
1. This heaviness is brought about by manifold temptations. (verse 6)
 - a. There is a difference between *trials* and *temptations*. Trials are sent

by God. His motive is always love. He warns even as He tries, and His purpose is to bless. Temptations come from Satan. His motive is hatred. His method is deception. His purpose is to draw away from the truth and to destroy.

b. How do trials become temptations for us?

c. How severe are these temptations? (verse 6; 1 Pet. 4:12, 14; Heb. 10:32–34)

d. How valuable is the faith that is tried? (verse 7)

2. How great is the joy of the believer? (verse 8)

a. One reason for our joy comes from the temptations we endure that are necessary for us (*If need be*, verse 6). Why are temptations necessary? (verse 7; Rom. 5:3–5; James 1:2–4)

b. Another reason for our joy is that the temptations are but *for a season* (verse 6). Who determines the extent of the temptations?

c. The final reason for our joy is that *your faith . . . might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ* (verse 7). What is meant by *praise*? (Rev. 5:12). What is meant by *honour*? (Phil. 2:9–11). What is meant by *glory*? (Rev. 19:11–16).

B. The object of our joy is Christ, whom we see not, yet we love Him and believe in Him. (verse 8)

1. The apostles were eye witnesses of Christ in His suffering and in His resurrection. When they saw His miracles, they worshipped Him as their Lord. After the amazing wonder of His resurrection, almost all of them had to see Him before they believed that He was risen. (John 20:29)

2. Why did Pentecost make us so much richer than the church of the past? (2 Cor. 3:7–11)

- a. How is it possible that we love the exalted Lord? (Rom 5: 5; Heb. 11:1, 27)
 - b. What makes our joy indescribable and glorious? (2 Cor. 8:1, 2)
3. When is our salvation completely realized? (verse 9)
- C. This salvation was eagerly anticipated by the prophets of old and is still eagerly expected by the angels in heaven. (verses 10–12)
1. How did the prophets know about our salvation? (verses 10–12; 2 Pet. 1:21)
 2. Many of the Psalms are clearly Messianic. Psalm 22 and Psalm 69 plainly speak of the sufferings of Christ. See also Isaiah 53.
 - a. Did the prophets fully understand all that was revealed to them? (verse 10)
 - b. Were they eager to know? (verse 11)
 - c. Did they know that these promises were not for them, but would be fulfilled in the future? (verse 12; Dan. 9:24; Heb. 11:39, 40)
 3. When did the promises of the Old Testament begin to be realized? (Acts 2:4)
 4. Why are the angels so interested in the salvation of the church? (Eph. 1:20, 21; Rev. 5:13).
 5. The reason for the keen interest of the prophets of old, and the angels, in the salvation of the church of the new dispensation is because we have:

- a. A richer Spirit (John 16:13)
- b. A richer revelation (1 Cor. 2:9, 10)
- c. A richer life (Gal. 2:20)

Points for Further Discussion

1. What is inspiration? What is verbal inspiration?

2. Are angels involved in our daily lives? How?

Memory Verse (Hebrews 11:39, 40)

And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

Lesson Three: 1 Peter 1:13–21

Hope That Never Dies

The previous verses belonged to the introduction that spoke of the hope of the elect pilgrim and stranger, which is fixed upon the inheritance in the heavens and experienced in this present time in the midst of suffering. The apostle now strikes the keynote of his epistle, urging us that amid the present and future trials, we hope perfectly upon that grace we shall experience at the coming of the Lord. We will be with God and like God. This requires single-mindedness and sobriety.

As children of God, fully restored in the likeness of Christ, we already bear His image in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. We are capable of knowing, loving, and serving Him. To experience the blessed hope, we must be holy even as God is holy. That God is holy means He is completely devoted to Himself as the only good. We also must be consecrated to Him in all our conversation. We must live as obedient sons and daughters before Him, fighting the sinful lusts that still war in our members.

God does not look at faces or regard the outer appearance, but He judges the heart. We call Him Father. God requires of us that we love Him in child-like devotion and fear. This is not the fear of a slave or the dread of punishment, but a fear rooted in love and expressing itself in worship and adoration. This should govern our thinking, desires, words, and deeds.

Our incentive must be that we are purchased with precious blood—far more precious than all the silver or gold of this world. Silver and gold are corruptible and could never purchase an incorruptible inheritance. God gave His Son, and the Son gave His life as the sacrifice of the spotless Lamb upon the altar of God's justice to satisfy for our sins and to redeem, to purchase us, unto God.

Christ was first in God's decree. By Him and for Him all things were made. All history centers about Him. The Old Testament spoke of His coming. In the fullness of time He was born, suffered, died, arose, and went into glory. The next event in these last days is His return. In Him we are sons of God, heirs of salvation.

Read chapter 1 again.

Questions for Study

A. Hope perfectly, always, with your whole being. (verse 13)

1. What is the difference between the hope of the believer and the "I hope so" of the unbeliever?
 - a. Hope is faith reaching out for the future. What do we hope for, according to Romans 8:25?
 - b. What else does Romans 8:25 say about that hope?
 - c. What do we hope for, according to verse 13?
 - d. Of what does that consist? (1 Pet. 1:4)
2. To *gird up the loins* meant to tie up the loose garments so that they would be no hindrance. The *mind* in Scripture refers to all our desires and thoughts. How do we gird them up? (verse 13)
3. What does it mean to be *sober*? (verse 13; Eph. 5:18; James 1:6–8)
4. What is the grace, the beauty, that we shall experience when Christ returns? (verse 13; 1 John 3:2)

B. Be ye holy, for God is holy. (verses 14–16; Lev. 11:44)

1. Peter calls us *children*, which was already implied when he spoke of the inheritance in the heavens. We are children by adoption, but we are

also restored in the image of Christ. What is included in the *image* of Christ? (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10)

- a. Which sins are included in *the former lusts*? (verse 14; Gal. 5:19–21)
 - b. Why is it still possible for us to fashion ourselves after these lusts? (Rom. 7:22, 23)
2. He who has called us is holy. God's calling is both external and internal.
 - a. It is *external* through the preaching of the Word. (Rom. 10:14)
 - b. The *internal* calling is by the Spirit in our hearts. (Eph. 5:14)
 3. Besides freedom from sin, what is implied in holiness? (Lev. 11:44, 45)
 - a. Which fruits of the Spirit belong to holiness? (Gal. 5:22)
 - b. What is meant by *obedient children*? (verse 14; 1 John 1:7)
- C. The *fear* of the children of God (verse 17)
1. What does John mean when he says that *there is no fear in love*? (1 John 4:18)
 2. What kind of fear is meant here? (Heb. 12:28)
 3. What is included in this fear? (Phil. 2:12, 13)
- D. Redeemed (purchased) by precious blood (verses 18–21)
1. From what slavery must we be redeemed? (verse 18)
 - a. All that is vain is empty, and therefore wicked. (1 Cor. 10:21)

- b. How do sinners carry the tradition of sin onward from their fathers? (verse 18; Tit. 3:3).

2. Why cannot silver or gold—no matter what amount—redeem us? (verse 18; 1 Cor. 3:11–13)

3. To what in the Old Testament does the *lamb without blemish* refer? (verse 19; Exod. 12:5, 12, 13). How was Christ the fulfillment of this Old Testament type? (John 1:29; Matt. 26:59, 60; Luke 23:14, 15)

4. What does *foreordained before the foundation of the world* mean? (verse 20; Col. 1:15–18; John 17:5)

5. Of what does Christ's glory, attained through suffering and death, now consist? (verse 21; Col. 1:18, 19; Phil. 2:9–11; Rev. 5:11, 12)

6. How do we become partakers of Christ and all His benefits? (verse 21)

7. What is the ultimate purpose of our salvation? (Rev. 5:13)

Points for Further Discussion

1. Are doctrine and walk closely related? Can we live a godly life that is not founded on sound doctrine?

2. Does an Arminian, who bases his salvation partially on his own works, truly experience assurance of faith?

3. What is often the cause for spiritual doubts? How do we overcome them?

Memory Verse (1 Peter 1:18–21)

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, , but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.