

1 Peter 1: Introduction and Greeting

A Greeting from the Apostle Peter

The letter of 1 Peter opens with a greeting from the Apostle Peter himself. He addresses his readers with authority and warmth, setting the tone for the message that follows.

The Writer and Recipients of the Letter (1 Peter 1:1)

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, writes to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. These regions represent a broad audience, indicating that the letter was intended for Christians scattered throughout these areas rather than a single congregation.

Peter: The Apostle and Leader

Peter was not just one of the apostles; he was considered the leader among them. His influence in the early church was significant, and the Christians who received this letter would have felt its importance due to its author. Peter's name appears in the gospels more frequently than any name except Jesus, and he speaks more often than any other disciple. Jesus also addressed Peter more than anyone else, both in praise and correction.

- Jesus rebuked Peter more than any other disciple.
- Peter was the only disciple who dared to rebuke Jesus.
- Peter confessed Jesus more boldly and accurately than the others.
- He denied Jesus more forcefully and publicly than any other disciple.
- Jesus praised Peter more than anyone else.
- Jesus alone called Peter "Satan" among the disciples.

Peter's Prominence in Biblical History

Peter's presence in the gospel accounts is substantial. He played crucial roles in many events, such as:

- Leading the disciples to find Jesus when He was praying early in the morning (Mark 1:35-39).
- Following Jesus' direction to catch a large amount of fish (Luke 5:1-11).
- Participating in a special outreach trip (Matthew 10:1-42).

- Stepping out of the boat to walk on water during a storm (Matthew 14:24-33).
- Confessing Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God (John 6:68-69).
- Witnessing the transfiguration of Jesus alongside Moses and Elijah (Matthew 17:1-9).
- Asking how many times to forgive a brother, suggesting “seven times” (Matthew 18:21-35).
- Asking about the disciples’ reward after giving up everything to follow Jesus (Matthew 19:27-30).
- Objecting to Jesus washing his feet, then requesting to be washed completely (John 13:16-20).
- Vowing never to deny Jesus, even if it meant dying (Matthew 26:30-35).
- Cutting off the ear of the high priest’s servant during Jesus’ arrest (John 18:1-11).
- Denying Jesus three times and refusing to even say His name (Matthew 26:69-75).
- Running with John to the empty tomb on resurrection morning (John 20:1-10).
- Receiving a personal visit from the resurrected Jesus (Luke 24:34).
- Being publicly restored by Jesus in front of the disciples (John 21).

Peter’s Apostolic Authority

Peter introduces himself simply as an apostle of Jesus Christ, a title of high significance in the New Testament. Unlike other offices, only apostles are described as being “of Jesus Christ.” Peter did not need to justify his apostleship, as Paul sometimes did. His authority was recognized and unquestioned among believers.

The Pilgrims of the Dispersion

Peter addresses his readers as “pilgrims,” signifying temporary residents in a foreign land. This word suggests Christians are sojourners and travelers, always aware of their true home. The early Christian writing “The Epistle to Diognetus” illustrates this concept: believers live in their native lands as temporary residents, taking part in civic duties but considering their citizenship to be in heaven.

Peter refers to his audience as “pilgrims of the Dispersion,” a term typically used for Jews scattered after the Babylonian conquest. Here, he applies it to Christians, emphasizing their scattered presence throughout the world, similar to the Jewish Dispersion.

The regions listed—Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia—were areas where Christianity had spread after the church began. The letter was likely circulated among these regions, intended for all Christians rather than a single group.

Peter's Description of His Readers and All Christians (1 Peter 1:2)

Peter describes Christians as elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, sanctified by the Spirit, obedient, and sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ. He extends a blessing: “Grace to you and peace be multiplied.”

The Elect According to Foreknowledge

Peter calls his readers “elect,” meaning they are chosen by God in a unique way. Chosen to be the image bearers of Christ. This doctrine is meant to strengthen and encourage believers, especially in times of affliction.

The nature of their election is “according to the foreknowledge of God.” God’s choosing is not random, but based on His omniscience. While this includes knowing our response to the gospel, it is not solely dependent on it.

God’s election involves more than just prior knowledge of our actions. It is not merely a cause-and-effect relationship, but a deeper, divine choice. God elected to create man in His own Image.

Sanctification and Obedience

An essential result of God’s election is sanctification by the Spirit and obedience. Election is not only about eternal destiny but also has practical effects on life. Evidence of sanctification and obedience is needed to confirm being among the elect.

Sprinkling of the Blood of Jesus Christ

Since none of the elect achieve perfect sanctification and obedience, Jesus Christ provides cleansing from sin through the sprinkling of His blood. In the Old Testament, blood was sprinkled in three situations:

- At the establishment of the Sinai covenant (Exodus 24:5-8).
- At the ordination of Aaron and his sons (Exodus 29:21).
- At the purification ceremony for a cleansed leper (Leviticus 14:6-7).

The sprinkling of Jesus’ blood forms a covenant, ordains believers as priests, and cleanses them from sin, all accomplished through His sacrifice on the cross.

The Work of the Trinity in Salvation

Peter naturally combines the roles of God the Father, the Spirit, and Jesus Christ in salvation, reflecting the New Testament's approach to the Trinity. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have always existed together, each equally God. The terms "Father" and "Son" describe their relationship rather than hierarchy or origin.

The Greeting of Grace and Peace

Peter concludes his greeting with "Grace to you and peace be multiplied," blending elements from Greek and Jewish culture. This greeting was common among early Christians, expressing both the favor of God and harmony among believers.

What It Means to Be Saved and to Live Saved

Thankfulness for the Father's Work of Salvation (*1 Peter 1:3-5*)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Praising God for Salvation

When reflecting on the salvation granted by God, Peter's immediate reaction is to praise Him. This response stems from recognizing that the motivation for God's saving work is found in His own abundant mercy—not in anything we have done. **All His goodness toward us begins with mercy, for without mercy, other divine attributes would not have provided hope. Justice would condemn, holiness would disapprove, power would crush, and truth would confirm the law's threats, while wrath would fulfill them. Therefore, all hope originates from the mercy of God.**

Born Again to a New Life

Peter's phrase "has begotten us again" conveys the same meaning as being "born again." Salvation transforms a person into a new creation, as described in ***2 Corinthians 5:17***. This new birth is the foundation of the Christian life.

A Living and Eternal Hope

Being born again grants us a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This hope is alive because it is based on an inheritance that **is incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading—reserved in heaven**. Unlike earthly inheritances, which are temporary and perishable, this heavenly inheritance is secure and everlasting.

This hope is called “living” because it never perishes. Earthly hopes may fade or fail, but the hope anchored in God and Jesus Christ endures eternally, rising above all worldly changes and disappointments.

The Nature of Our Inheritance

Peter emphasizes what our inheritance is not: it cannot perish, it cannot spoil, and it cannot fade away. Its greatness is beyond description, but we know it is secure. Our inheritance is like the gifts given to Aaron and the Psalmist, which are ultimately the gift of God Himself. Since God gives Himself to us now, our inheritance has already begun.

However, this inheritance can only be experienced by those who are born again. Without spiritual rebirth, a person lacks the capacity to enjoy this inheritance, just as a blind man cannot appreciate a beautiful sunset or art.

When sharing the message of salvation with others, it is important to highlight not only the consequences of rejecting Christ, but also the glories of heaven that are missed without Him.

Kept by the Power of God Through Faith

The certainty of our inheritance comes from being kept by the power of God. This divine security enables believers to endure through faith until Jesus returns. God’s power functions as a protective fortress, and it is activated by our ongoing faith. The person who is kept by God is one who continues in a relationship of faith, trusting in Him.

This assurance is especially comforting: knowing that our inheritance is reserved in heaven might bring little comfort if we were not also assured that we ourselves are being kept for its full enjoyment. Faith, therefore, is the means by which God’s preserving power operates in the believer’s life.