

# 1 PETER

Hope in the Midst of Suffering

# Introduction

- Peter was part of the inner circle of the 12 disciples, when Jesus appointed him as a key leader to guide the church in Jerusalem (Matt 16:18-19)
- Peter later carried the gospel into the Roman world, and this letter was written decades into that mission
- Written in AD 65-68 under Nero, the letter was commissioned by Peter in Rome, which he called Babylon and written by Silas (5:12-13), and sent to churches in Asia Minor (Turkey)
- The churches comprised mostly of Gentiles converts persecuted by Greek and 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)

- **1** Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, <sup>2</sup>who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.
- Peter refers to believers as "elect" or chosen (Gen 18:19) and "exiles" or strangers (Gen 23:4)
- 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 like Abraham, who wandered in the wilderness, 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**
- 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

# Song of Praise (1:3-12)

- <sup>3</sup> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living **hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. <sup>6</sup> In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. <sup>7</sup> These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. <sup>8</sup> Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, <sup>9</sup> for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.
- <sup>10</sup> Concerning this salvation, **the prophets**, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, <sup>11</sup> trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. <sup>12</sup> It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

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

- Peter takes OT images and applies them to Gentile Christians
- 1:13– like the Jews who left Egypt, “gird your loins” (Ex 12:11)
- 1:15-16– believers are the “holy people of God” (Lev 11:44)
- 1:17-21– people of the “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” serving the nations (Ex 19:4-6)
- By applying these images, Peter interprets their suffering in a new storyline

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

- Persecution brings clarity to their mission in the world as witnesses of Jesus Christ (2:11-12)
- Although unjust, 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
- In spite of persecution, believers should fix their hope in future vindication and exaltation (3:8-4:11)

# 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 church leaders to care for the 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 persecutions are strange gifts, because they present opportunities to show the love of Christ fuelled by the hope of his return

# Conclusions

- 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, present, and future dimensions

# 2 PETER

Hope in the Midst of Deception

# Introduction

- Peter was eventually martyred under the reign of Nero
- 2 Peter represents his farewell speech
- Peter offers a final challenge (1:1-11) and warnings against the lifestyle of corrupt teachers (2:1-22) and their distorted theology (3:1-18)
- The purpose of 2 Peter serves as a memorial of Peter's teachings to succeeding generations (1:12-15)

# Objections Against Christianity

- **Objection #1:** The apostles made up the story about Jesus' resurrection and him being King (1:16-20)
- But Peter counters by pointing to Mk 9 when the apostles witnessed the exalted Christ
- His resurrection means he is alive and fulfills OT prophecy
- **Objection #2:** There won't be a final reckoning (2:1-3)
- Peter recalls three ancient accounts of divine justice (Gen 6; 6-8; 19), but God delivered his people (2:4-11)
- If judgment is coming, the false teachers should not continue in their sinful lifestyle because they are held in bondage to sin (2:12-22)

# Objections Against Christianity

- **Objection #3:** Where is Jesus? When will he return? (3:1-4)
- Peter argues that God is working in ways we don't recognize. The fact that the universe exists means God is keeping it going. Why is he taking so long? Our concept of time is limited. The fact that Christ's return is delayed means God is patient (3:5-9)
- To be sure, there will be a "day of the Lord" (Isa 34:4), a day of consuming fire when God will renew the heavens and the earth (3:10-13)
- This is the true Christian hope (3:14-18)