

***A SPECIAL PEOPLE***  
**1 Peter 1:1-2**  
**September 7, 2008 – Grace Covenant Baptist Church**

Many of you have probably heard the saying, “If Jesus Christ is worth living for, He is worth dying for.” To an extent, that expression is the theme of 1 Peter which we begin a series in this morning. In this letter, Peter is preparing his readers for the terrible suffering and persecution that would characterize the late 60’s A. D. under the vicious Roman emperor Nero, who reigned from 54-68 A. D. In his fanaticism for architecture, Nero would have his own city burned to the ground so that he could redesign and rebuild it. The Christians in Rome would be blamed for the fires and consequently, in sporting events to entertain the masses, they would be burnt alive, or tortured and thrown to wild animals. These events took place in A. D. 64. Given Peter’s positive view of government in 2:13-17, it seems likely that this letter was written before the peak of Nero’s persecution, probably late 63 or early 64 A. D.

Derek Thomas notes, “It was a period of time when Christians were being persecuted simply because they were Christians. They stood for something, for truth, for a way of life, and the ‘tolerant’ were tolerant of everything except conservative Christianity. There are no absolutes except you may not say that Jesus Christ is Lord. It’s a time very similar to our post-modern era. Everything is true except the statement that this is the sole truth.”<sup>1</sup> According to Archbishop Robert Leighton of Glasgow, whose commentary on 1 Peter is considered by some the most definitive, Peter has three things he wants to accomplish in this letter: *faith, obedience* and *patience*.

*Faith, to establish them in believing;*  
*Obedience, to direct them in doing;*  
*Patience, to comfort them in suffering.*<sup>2</sup>

It is in the midst of suffering, a suffering that would only intensify, that Peter wrote this letter, a letter with great theological depth, as an encouragement and an exhortation to remind his readers, as Ed Clowney suggests, that “Our deepest needs drive us to our deepest beliefs.”<sup>3</sup> Or, as I would eloquently paraphrase it, “The proof of your faith is in the pudding.”

Of course, Peter himself would be the best one to turn to for the purpose of this letter, which he shared in his benediction in 1 Peter 5:12, “I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!” 1 Peter “is a brief, and yet very clear summary both of the encouragement and direction of the Christian in his journey to heaven.”<sup>4</sup> It provides for us a real life Pilgrim’s Progress. We see this in Peter’s introduction in these two verses.

### **I. The Author (1:1a)**

Much ink has been used in many a study as to who actually wrote this letter. However, much of this ink has been wasted, along with the time invested in study and research. The letter

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.fpcjackson.org/resources/sermons/Derek%27s\\_SERMONS/1%20Peter/01apeter1.1to12.htm](http://www.fpcjackson.org/resources/sermons/Derek%27s_SERMONS/1%20Peter/01apeter1.1to12.htm), accessed 09/04/2008.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Leighton, *An Obedient & Patient Faith*, 9-10.

<sup>3</sup> Edmund Clowney, *BST: The Message of 1 Peter*, 15.

<sup>4</sup> Leighton, 9.

was structured as was common in that day, opening with what we would call “the signature” today. In the introduction we have who wrote the letter, who it was written to, and a greeting.

The first thing we note concerning the author is...

### **1. His name**

The first word in the letter, “**Peter**,” identifies its author. Again, much research has gone into determining the author, or more importantly, discounting Peter as the author. However, external evidence, that is, other documents and historical writings, and internal evidence from within the letter itself point to Peter as the author.

However, while I don’t want to seem overly simplistic about this or discount the importance of biblical scholarship, the first word of the letter plainly tells us who wrote it – “**Peter**”! This provides an opportunity to reinforce the truth of the nature of Scripture. It is the inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God in all of its words. It is God-breathed, therefore what it says God says. It is both without error as well as absolutely incapable of ever erring. If the Scriptures as given by God are any way fallible, then God Himself is fallible.

Given this understanding of the nature of Scripture, when we read “**Peter**” we need look no further as to the author of the letter. It is the man that we all like to identify with because he is so much like us. He was a dedicated follower of Christ, yet his impulsiveness often got him in trouble, especially when he was quicker to speak than to think. We see this on numerous occasions. He attempted acts of faith, and often failed, most notably the walking on water incident (Matt. 14:28-31). Peter’s wavering faith is seen most clearly in Matthew 16. In verses 15-16 we read, “He (Jesus) said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’” There is no greater testimony in Scripture of the Person and Work of Christ. Jesus commends Peter for his testimony. But then Peter turns right around “rebukes” Jesus when He tells of His impending death and resurrection (v. 22).

That is our Peter. The Peter who one minute stands up for Christ, willing to take on the army of Rome in the Garden of Gethsemane, and the next denying Christ three times. And yet, as we will see in our study in Acts in Sunday School, this man matured and grew in Christ. He preaches two of the greatest sermons ever preached in Acts 2 and 4. But there is a more important part of Peter’s brief autobiography.

### **2. His calling**

This Peter proclaims that he is “**an apostle of Jesus Christ.**” “**Apostle**” means “sent one” or “messenger.” But the term had a deeper meaning concerning those who Christ chose to proclaim His truth after He was gone, upon which His bride the Church would be established and sanctified. These men, apart from Paul, spent the entirety of Jesus ministry walking side-by-side. Jesus poured His life into these men. They would also have been eyewitnesses to His resurrection. But most important is that these men were called and commissioned by Christ to proclaim His truth. Peter gleans this when he notes that he was “**an apostle of Jesus Christ.**” He, along with the others, was commissioned as an agent or messenger of His truth, chosen and sent by Him.

Therefore, in opening the letter, Peter reminds his readers of his credentials. His words had the authority of Christ. His words were God’s words and should be received by his readers as God’s words. Peter literally spoke for Christ. Ed Clowney shares the significance of this apostleship:

As an apostle, Peter shared with others in teaching the faith. He did not desire to attract a personal following of those who would relish his distinctive insights or experiences. He was one of a company charged by the risen Christ to testify that ‘he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead.’ The teaching of Jesus during his ministry, and especially in the forty days between his resurrection and ascension, moulded the apostolic tradition. The gospel that Paul received was the apostolic deposit, the pattern of sound teaching that proclaimed fulfillment of the Old Testament promises in Christ. The apostolic message was not a *mélange* of individual testimonies prepared as the twelve spoke for five minutes each on ‘what the resurrection means to me.’ Rather, it was the Lord’s interpretation of his own work in light of his own word; he must ‘suffer these things and enter into his glory.’ Peter preached the apostolic message at Pentecost; the church was established in the tradition of apostolic teaching.<sup>5</sup>

It is upon this authority as the called and commissioned “**apostle of Jesus Christ**” that Peter wrote this letter to his readers and to us. Who were those readers?

## **II. The Recipients (1:1b-2a)**

### **1. Chosen / elect**

**Luther – *Bondage of the will***

**Spurgeon – “I never try to ‘reconcile’ friends.”**

It has been rightly suggested by many that when we see the doctrine of election in Scripture, whether it be God, Jesus, Paul, Peter, or others, that it is always given as to encourage the believer to persevere. It should come as no surprise, then, that Peter begins this treatise on the suffering of the saint by grounding it in the elective love of God, an election that includes being “**chosen**” to suffer.

“**Chosen**” is then described by Peter with a Trinitarian foundation.

#### **(1) Foreknowledge of God**

**Not simply to know beforehand, His prescience. God is omniscient and know all things past, present, and future.**

**It implies that they were the object of God’s love and concern from all eternity.**

**1 Peter 1:20** – For He (Christ) was foreknown before the foundation of the world. The believers election is as sure as God’s election of His own Son to accomplish salvation for them.

#### **(2) Sanctification by the Holy Spirit**

##### **1 Pet. 1:3**

*The Holy Spirit brings to pass what God from eternity had decreed.*

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<sup>5</sup> Clowney, 30.

**Luther – “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to Him.”**

**Ephesians 2:1** – And you were dead in your trespasses and sins.

**1 Corinthians 12:3** – Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus is accursed”; and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.

**2 Thessalonians 2:13-14** – But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **(3) Sprinkling with the blood of Christ**

Speaks of the ratification of the covenant between God and His chosen people.

Exodus 24 speaks of the ratification of the Mosaic covenant

- Moses built an altar
- Moses offered burnt offering and peace offerings
- Moses sprinkled half the blood on the altar
- Moses read the book of the covenant to the people
- The people agreed to the stipulation of the covenant
- Moses sprinkled the other half of the blood on the people

However, when we move into the New Covenant, we see that the believer enters into covenant with God through the sprinkling of the blood of Christ to which these Old Testament rituals pointed.

**Hebrews 9:11-14** – But when Christ appeared *as* a high priest of the good things to come, *He entered* through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

“**Sprinkling**” captures the truth that the blood must not merely be shed, but applied as well. This “**sprinkling**” comes only to those who trust Christ savingly.

### **1 Pet. 1:18-19**

**Obedience –**

**Ephesians 1:4** – “Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.”

## 2. Aliens

**Jews (*diaspora* – James 1, “*twelve tribes*)**

**Acts 2:9 – Present in Jerusalem** – “Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia.”

“Scattered in the countries, and yet gathered in God’s election, chosen or picked out; strangers to men amongst whom they dwelt, but *known* or *foreknown* to God; removed from their own country, to which men have naturally an unalterable affection, but *heirs* made of a better (as follows, ver. 3, 4).”<sup>6</sup>

**Hebrews 11:13** – All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were *strangers and exiles* on the earth.

**1 Peter 2:11** – Beloved, I urge you as *aliens and strangers* to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.

**Philippians 3:20** – For our citizenship is in heaven

### III. The Greeting (1:2b)

#### 1. Grace

#### 2. Peace

Gethsemane and Jesus arrest - “Now Peter, the Apostle of the risen Lord, can pronounce peace; the peace that comes, not by the sword, but by the cross.”<sup>7</sup>

### Conclusion

#### (1) Remember who you are

- **In the world, not of the world**
- **Do not be satisfied with the things of this world**

#### (2) Remember whose you are

**Ephesians 1:4-6** – In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

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<sup>6</sup> Leighton, 12.

<sup>7</sup> Clowney, 28