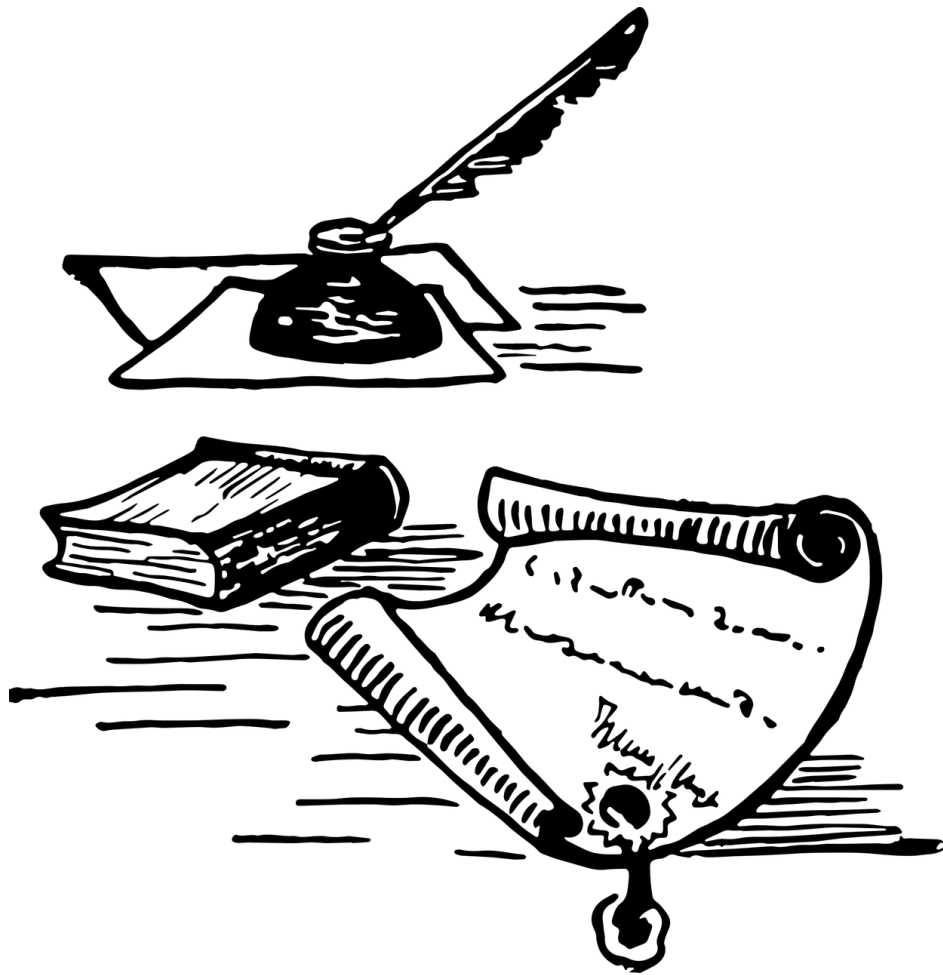


The Epistles of Peter

Study Guide



“Christian Conduct and Growth”

Kempner church of Christ, Adult Bible Class

May 2025

INTRODUCTION TO 1 PETER

I. A LETTER OF HOPE IN THE MIDST OF SUFFERING

A. There are several passages concerning suffering in the epistle:

1. In the will of God – 1 Peter 4:19
2. Of Christ – 1 Peter 1:11; 2:21, 23; 5:1
3. Expect suffering – 1 Peter 4:12
4. Be not troubled by it – 1 Peter 3:14
5. Bear it patiently – 1 Peter 2:23; 3:9
6. Rejoice in suffering – 1 Peter 4:13
7. Other brethren have suffered – 1 Peter 5:9
8. The value of suffering – 1 Peter 1:6-7, etc.
9. Warning against suffering as an evildoer – 1 Peter 2:22; 4:15

B. The epistle is predominantly practical and not doctrinal.

II. WHO WAS THE AUTHOR?

A. The epistle is universally recognized as a work of the apostle Peter.

B. Peter was assisted in some way by Silvanus (Silas) – 1 Peter 5:12

1. A well-known prophet and missionary in the early church (cf. Acts 15:32-34, 40)
2. Joined Paul in writing some epistles (cf. 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1)

B. The life of Peter:

1. Also called Simon or Simeon – Matthew 16:17
2. Born at Bethsaida – John 1:44
3. A fisherman by trade – Matthew 4:18
4. Brought to Christ by Andrew, his brother – John 1:40-42

C. His life may be divided into two major divisions:

1. Before Pentecost:

- (a) Called to be an apostle – Matthew 4:18-19
 - (b) Part of Jesus's "inner circle" – Matthew 17:1-2; 26:36-37
 - (c) Denied Christ three times – Matthew 26:69-75
2. After Pentecost:
- (a) Preached the first sermon – Acts 2:14-41
 - (b) Performed miracles – Acts 3:1-19
 - (c) Preached first to Gentiles – Acts 10:22-48
 - (d) Rebuked by Paul – Galatians 2:11-14
 - (e) Died a martyr's death in 67 or 68 A.D.

III. THE SETTING OF THE EPISTLE

A. To Whom was the Epistle Written?

- 1. Christian "strangers" (1 Peter 1:1) or "pilgrims" (1 Peter 2:11) in Asia Minor
- 2. Areas where Paul had traveled and evangelized
- 3. Readers were saved and established through Paul's teachings

B. Why was the Epistle Written?

- 1. Christians faced persecution – 1 Peter 1:6
- 2. More suffering was imminent – 1 Peter 4:12-19
- 3. Encouragement to remain steadfast – 1 Peter 1:13; 4:16; 5:8-9
- 4. Reminder of their blessings and duties as God's elect – 1 Peter 1:2; 2:9

C. Peter writes:

- 1. To encourage steadfastness – 1 Peter 5:10
- 2. To remind them of their privilege – 1 Peter 2:9
- 3. To instruct proper conduct – 1 Peter 2:11-12

D. What is the Theme of the Epistle?

- 1. Practical conduct, especially as sojourners in a hostile land

2. How to behave under slander and abuse as Christians
3. Suggested Theme: *"Conduct Becoming the People of God"*

E. When was the Epistle Written?

1. Before Nero's death in 68 A.D.
2. Likely written around 63–64 A.D., near the time of Nero's persecution – 1 Peter 4:12-19
3. Written from Babylon

IV. KEYS TO THE EPISTLE (*Frank J. Dunn, Know Your Bible*)

A. Key Words:

1. "Suffering" – appears 21 times
 - (a) Sufferings of Christ mentioned in each chapter
 - (b) Teaches patient, joyful suffering to the glory of God
2. "Hope" – appears 3 times

B. Key Verses:

1. 1 Peter 1:2-3, 25
2. 1 Peter 3:15, 21
3. 1 Peter 4:11, 16

C. Key Phrase: "Called out of darkness into his marvelous light..." – 1 Peter 2:9

D. Key Message:

1. *"The living hope of the living church"* is the key thought
2. Patience and hope amid tribulation is the theme
3. A message of encouragement, instruction, and admonition
4. A source of consolation for suffering Christians
5. Encourages faithfulness and duty under persecution
6. In Christ, we can suffer patiently, joyously, and to God's glory

1 PETER CHAPTER ONE

Peter opens his first epistle with greetings to his audience, writing generally to Christians scattered throughout Asia Minor. He begins by encouraging them with the living hope they possess—an eternal inheritance reserved for them in heaven. This hope provides assurance that the testing of their faith will ultimately result in the joy of salvation. Peter then reminds them of the faithful, obedient, and holy conduct expected of those who have been redeemed from sin. He urges Christians to love one another fervently from a pure heart. To further strengthen their confidence in the gospel, he reminds them of the immense value God placed on their redemption, as seen in His plan of salvation unfolding throughout the ages.

Outline:

- Blessings of the Gospel. 1 Peter 1:1-12
- A Christian response to the Gospel. 1 Peter 1:13-16
- The Basis for Confidence in the Abiding Gospel. 1 Peter 1:17-25

Questions for Study

1. God has, “begotten us again unto a lively hope” by what?
2. The “trial of your faith” is more precious than _____ tried by _____.
3. What is the “end of your faith”?
4. Of what does the Christian know that the prophets of old did not?
5. The “glory of man” is compared to what?

1 PETER CHAPTER TWO

Peter stresses the need for Christians to grow in their knowledge of God's word and to lay aside anything that would hinder their spiritual development. He then teaches about the individual Christian's relationship with Christ, describing believers as part of the spiritual house of God and a holy priesthood. He addresses proper Christian conduct while living among unbelievers, emphasizing the importance of resisting the pull of the world. Peter reminds them of the necessity of submitting to governmental authority, cautioning against using their liberty in Christ as a cover for unrighteous deeds. He urges those in slavery to honor Christ through their service to their earthly masters. Finally, he reminds them of how Christ conducted Himself during His own trials and exhorts his readers to follow Jesus' example.

Outline:

- Relationship with the Word of God. 2:1-3
- Relationship with Christ. 2:4-10
- Conduct among the Gentiles. 2:11-20
- The Example of Jesus. 2:21-25

Questions for Study

1. We are to lay aside what five things?
2. Christians, individually, are compared to what?
3. How should we conduct ourselves in the presence of unbelievers?
4. How are we not to use our liberty?
5. If we are "dead to sins" how should we live?

1 PETER CHAPTER THREE

Continuing his teachings on proper Christian conduct, Peter uses the example of Abraham and Sarah to address the conduct of wives toward their husbands—even those who do not believe—and of husbands toward their wives. He then turns to the conduct of individual Christians within the body, urging them to pursue purity in their relationships with one another. Peter again emphasizes the importance of maintaining sound Christian behavior, even in the face of trials and suffering. He points to Christ as the ultimate example of enduring wrongful suffering. Additionally, he includes the example of Noah, who was saved through his obedience. Peter concludes the chapter by affirming Christ's authority over all things.

Outline:

- Relationship in the Home. 1 Peter 3:1-7
- Relationship in the Church. 1 Peter 3:8-12
- Relationship with the World. 1 Peter 3:13-17
- Examples of Suffering Wrong. 1 Peter 3:18-22

Questions for Study:

1. What should a Christian's "adornment" consist of?
2. Who "will love life, and see good days"?
3. The "face of the Lord" is against whom?
4. What must we be always ready to do?
5. Why is it better to suffer for well doing than for evil?

1 PETER CHAPTER FOUR

In 1 Peter 4, Christians are urged to endure suffering in the flesh by adopting the mind of Christ and committing themselves to doing God's will. Though the world may not understand or accept their lifestyle, believers are reminded that all will give an account before God, and that the gospel empowers them to live righteously. Peter then exhorts Christians to live holy lives—being sober, loving, hospitable, and faithful stewards of God's gifts, all for His glory. Finally, he offers encouragement for those suffering for Christ's sake: they should not be surprised by trials but rejoice in sharing Christ's sufferings, glorifying God in their response, and entrusting their souls to Him, knowing that judgment awaits the ungodly.

Outline:

- The Christian and Suffering in the Flesh. 1 Peter 4:1-6
- The Christian and Holy Living. 1 Peter 4:7-11
- Encouragement for the Suffering Christian. 1 Peter 4:12-19

Questions for Study:

1. How should we live the rest of our time in the flesh?
2. Why do worldly people think Christians are strange?
3. How should we speak?
4. Why should the suffering Christian rejoice?
5. What will the end be of those who do not obey the gospel?

1 PETER CHAPTER FIVE

In the final chapter of his first epistle, Peter charges the elders to faithfully shepherd the flock of God—not by compulsion, but willingly and by leading through example. He reminds them that a crown of glory awaits those who serve faithfully. To the broader body of disciples, Peter urges submission to the elders, humility before God, and trust in the Lord by casting all anxieties upon Him. He warns believers to remain vigilant against the devil, who seeks to devour, and to resist him firmly in the faith, knowing that suffering is part of the Christian journey. Peter assures them that God will ultimately strengthen, establish, and perfect them. He concludes with commendation of Silvanus, greetings from Marcus and fellow believers, and a benediction of peace.

Outline:

- Peter's Charge to Elders. 1 Peter 5:1-4
- Peter's Charge to Disciples. 1 Peter 5:5-11
- Peter's Conclusion. 1 Peter 5:12-14

Questions for Study:

1. What was Peter a witness of?
2. What should the Christian be clothed with?
3. Why should we cast our care upon God?
4. Who is our adversary?
5. How should we resist our adversary?

INTRODUCTION TO 2 PETER

I. GENERAL

- A. The emphasis is on false teachers and false teaching.
 - 1. It is a letter of warning.
 - 2. Peter's antidote for false teaching is true spiritual knowledge.
- B. Authorship.
 - 1. The apostle Peter.
 - (a) Author was an apostle – 2 Peter 1:1
 - (b) Was a witness at the Mount of Transfiguration – 2 Peter 1:18
 - (c) Had written a previous epistle – 2 Peter 3:1
 - (d) Note also the reference to Paul – 2 Peter 3:15
 - (e) Referenced in Jude 1:17-18
- C. Background and Destination.
 - 1. This letter has a less specific address than 1 Peter.
 - 2. Most likely a follow-up letter to the same people.
 - 3. It was written in Peter's mature years.

II. OCCASION AND DATE

- A. Occasion and Date: Gnosticism was a primary reason for this epistle.
 - 1. 2 Peter is older than Jude as Jude refers to 2 Peter.
 - (a) False teaching is treated as future in 2 Peter.
 - (b) Jude treats it as present.
 - 2. Written about A.D. 66–67.

III. PURPOSE AND PLAN

- A. Purpose
 - 1. To stir up readers to growth in Christian character.
 - 2. To encourage them into a patient expectation of the Lord's return.
 - 3. To warn them against "being carried away with the error of the wicked."
 - 4. To show life cannot be separated from doctrine.
- B. Theme: Grow in Grace
 - 1. Chapter 1: The ingredient of spiritual growth. 2 Peter 1:5–11
 - 2. Chapter 2: The opponent of spiritual growth. False teachers, doctrine, attitudes, promises, and living
 - 3. Chapter 3: The motivation for spiritual growth. The coming of Christ – 2 Peter 3:10–14
- C. Key verse: 2 Peter 3:18

2 PETER CHAPTER ONE

In the opening chapter of his second epistle, Peter begins with a warm greeting, reminding believers of the precious faith they share and the power of God's word and promises that equip them for godly living. He then urges Christians to diligently cultivate the Christian graces—faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love—emphasizing their importance for spiritual growth, fruitfulness, and assurance of salvation. Peter concludes the chapter by pointing to the source of true spiritual knowledge. He stresses the need to remember and be grounded in the truth, affirms the authenticity of their faith through eyewitness testimony of Christ's majesty, and declares that prophecy does not come from human will but from God, as men spoke by the Holy Spirit.

Outline:

- Greetings and Introduction. 2 Peter 1:1-4
- The Christian Graces. 2 Peter 1:5-11
- The Source of Our Knowledge. 2 Peter 1:12-21

Questions for Study:

1. Through what has God “given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness”?
2. What seven things are we to add to our faith?
3. What should we do to make our “calling and election sure”?
4. What did the voice, which Peter heard in the holy mount, say?
5. How did “holy men of God” speak?

2 PETER CHAPTER TWO

In 2 Peter chapter 2, the apostle issues a sobering warning against false teachers. He predicts a coming apostasy in which individuals will secretly introduce destructive heresies, deceive others with cunning words, and bring swift destruction upon themselves. Peter emphasizes that just as God did not spare the sinful angels, the ancient world, or the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, He will likewise bring judgment upon the ungodly. At the same time, God is able to rescue the righteous, as demonstrated in the deliverance of Noah and Lot. Peter goes on to describe the false teachers as arrogant, corrupt, and persuasive, luring others into sin with empty promises while remaining enslaved to their own corruption. In the end, he compares them to dogs returning to their vomit and pigs to their mire, tragically turning away from the holy commandment they once knew.

Outline:

- Warning Against False Teachers. 2 Peter 2:1-9
- Characteristics of False Teachers. 2 Peter 2:10-22

Questions for Study:

1. What motive does Peter assign to the false teachers?
2. What did God do with the angels who sinned?
3. What do we learn from the example of Lot?
4. False teachers are compared to what Old Testament person?
5. What are the “false teachers” servants of?

2 PETER CHAPTER THREE

In 2 Peter 3, the apostle affirms the certainty of the Lord's second coming. He urges believers to maintain a pure mind, remembering the words spoken by the prophets and apostles. Peter warns that scoffers will arise, mocking the promise of Christ's return and walking according to their own lusts. These scoffers are willfully ignorant of God's past judgments—such as the flood—and fail to realize that the present world is reserved for fire on the day of judgment. Peter reassures Christians that the Lord is not slow in keeping His promise but is patient, desiring all to come to repentance. He describes the circumstances of the second coming as sudden and unexpected, urging believers to live holy and godly lives in anticipation. Christians must be diligent to remain steadfast and to continually grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Outline:

- The Certainty of the Second Coming. 2 Peter 3:1-9
- The Circumstances of the Second Coming. 2 Peter 3:10-13
- The Consequences of the Second Coming. 2 Peter 3:14-18

Questions for Study:

1. Why did Peter say he was writing this epistle?
2. The scoffers are willfully ignorant about what great past event?
3. What will happen to the “heavens” and the “elements”?
4. How should we conduct ourselves considering the dissolution of all things on the “day of God”?
5. What things are we to grow in?