

1 and 2 Peter

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1 Peter

- Author** Peter, the 'big fishermen'; one of Jesus' disciples; leader of the early Church.
- Written to** Believers throughout Asia Minor.
- Date** AD 64.
- Place** Probably written in Babylon.
- Type** General teaching intended for public reading.
- Theme** Suffering for Christ.
- Purposes**
- to encourage Christians to stay true to the Lord during persecution and suffering.
 - to give God's perspectives on suffering.
 - to show God's grace towards those who are suffering for Christ.

Key verses

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith ... may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. 1:6,7

You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. 2:9

Outline

Greeting 1.1-1.2

Peter greets the 'elect', and reminds them that they have been chosen

- according to the foreknowledge of God the Father
- through the sanctifying work of the Spirit
- for obedience to Jesus Christ.

The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are all involved in our salvation!

Praise God for a living hope 1.3-2:3

Praise God. He has given you new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ and an eternal inheritance, kept in heaven for you.

Rejoice in this till your salvation is fully revealed, even though you are experiencing suffering right now. You may have to go through all kinds of trials but you are being shielded by God's power and God is refining your faith, proving it is genuine, and it will result in praise, glory and honour to Jesus when He is revealed.

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, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. 1:8,9.

The prophets tried to predict when this would happen but it is happening to you now!

So:

- prepare your minds for action.
- be self-controlled.
- set your hope fully on the grace of God.
- do not conform to your old evil desires.
- be holy in all you do.
- live in reverence for God.
- love your brothers in Christ deeply and sincerely, from your heart.
- rid yourself of all malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, slander.
- crave spiritual milk so you can grow in your salvation.

This is because:

- God will judge your work impartially.
- you have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ.
- you have believed in God who raised Jesus from the dead.
- your faith and hope are in God.
- you have purified yourself by obeying the truth.
- you have been born again through the imperishable living and enduring Word of God.

In other words you have been saved through the blood of Christ and have been born again according to God's Word. So put aside sinful ways and seek to grow in your salvation!

You are God's chosen people 2:4-10

Come to Jesus, the Chief Cornerstone on which all that God is doing is built. To you He is precious, *and the one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame v6* but to those who reject Him *He is a stone that makes men stumble and a rock that makes them fall. v8*

Like living stones you are being built into God's spiritual house (the Body of Christ) so you can:

- be a holy priesthood.
- offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
- declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness and into His wonderful light.

You are:

- a chosen people
- a royal priesthood
- a people belonging to God
- the people of God
- ones who have received mercy from God.

Live as God's chosen people 2:11-3:7

You are God's chosen people, built on the foundation of Jesus Christ so you must live it out in your daily lives.

- Abstain from sinful desires that war on your soul.
- Live such good lives that people in the world will see your good deeds and praise the Lord.
- Submit to all authorities as good examples of how God's people should live.
- You have freedom in Christ but don't abuse this freedom. Everyone should submit to governmental authorities; slaves (workers) should submit to their masters (bosses); wives should submit to their husbands; husbands should respect their wives.
- Be submissive, just as Christ was submissive to the Father's will when He went to the cross.

Milk is food that has already been digested by a cow! Spiritual milk is like this. It is food that has been prepared by someone else eg. in a sermon, book, or daily devotional and is useful for helping us grow in our spiritual lives.



As we mature we grow even more when we feed on the Word of God for ourselves. This is the 'meat' of the Word. See Hebrews 5:12-14.



The word 'redeem' means to 'buy back by paying a price'. We were bought back from sin by the blood of Jesus. He died when we deserved to! Because the price has been paid we now belong to God.

Christians are now God's people. We have been grafted on to the 'rootstock' of Israel as the specially chosen people of God (See Romans 11). As such we can individually and corporately bring God pleasure through our worship, praises, sacrifices

We are all Kings and Priests so don't need any human intermediary to have a relationship with God. We can reign in life (as Kings) and have access to God (as Priests) so we can know and love Him, bringing Him pleasure in all we do. This means there is no special hierarchy of clergy/laity. Everyone is special before God and has the responsibility to take their place in the Body of Christ in serving and honouring our wonderful Lord.

Submission is totally different to 'subjection'. Subjection is giving in to overwhelming power, while submission is giving in to overwhelming love. There is no element of power in submission. It is all about love.

If someone says *You must submit to me* power is involved and the resulting action is not submission.

- Serve the Lord.
- Do what is right.
- Show proper respect for everyone.
- Love other Christians.
- Fear God.
- Honour your ruling authorities.

Living as authentic Christians, like this, will earn people's respect and is needed if we are to really glorify God.

Suffering for Christ 3:8-4:19

You will suffer as a Christian, just like Jesus did, but it is better to suffer for doing what is right, than for doing evil.

So:

- live in harmony with one another.
- be sympathetic, loving, compassionate, and humble.
- don't repay evil with evil. Instead bless those who harm you.
- keep your tongue from evil.
- turn from evil and do good.
- seek for peace.
- don't be frightened of suffering.
- make sure Jesus is Lord in your heart.
- always be prepared to share the good news with others, but do it with gentleness and respect.
- keep your conscience clear.

These are very powerful strategies for living positively while enduring suffering.

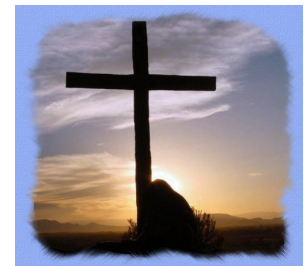
They ensure you don't lose your credibility as a Christian before God and before those who are causing your suffering.

Jesus also suffered for doing right but always focused on doing the will of God. He *died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.* 3:18,19. Jesus has now *gone into heaven and is at God's right hand - with angels, authorities and powers in submission to Him.* 3:22 Have the same attitude as He had!

You used to be like those who are causing your suffering. But now make sure you don't get involved in the evil things you did in the past, even if people think you are strange and heap abuse on you. (They will have to give account to God for their actions).

The end is close so be strong as Christians in the midst of your suffering.

- Be clear-minded and self-controlled.
- Pray!
- Love each other deeply.
- Serve others faithfully, in God's strength.
- Speak graciously.
- Don't be surprised at the painful suffering you are to endure.
- Rejoice that you are participating in Christ's sufferings.
- Don't be ashamed of suffering for Christ. Praise God for the suffering!
- Commit yourself to God and continue to do good.



This suffering is part of God's judgment on sin. It includes His judgment of the family of God (but it is much better to be part of God's family, compared to those who don't obey the gospel!).

So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good. 4:19

Final appeal 5:1-11

Elders care for your suffering flock. Serve them willingly rather than lording it over them and you will receive God's reward.

Young people be submissive to those who are older.

Everyone humble yourself before God; trust in Him; be self-controlled and alert; resist the devil; be strong *for God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.* 5:5. Then God will lift you up in due time.

Cast all your cares upon Him because He cares for you. 5:7

Then..... *After you have suffered God will restore you and make you strong. And the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered for a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To Him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.* 5:10,11

Final words 5:12-14

The letter was written with the help of Silas and its purpose was to encourage the believers so they will stand fast in the true grace that comes from God.

Peace to all of you who are in Christ. 5:14

Discussion questions

What does it mean to be make your *calling and election sure?* (1:10). What is election? How does it relate to other activities of God in our salvation such as foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justifying, sanctifying and saving? (See Romans 8:28-30). How does election fit with the fact that God has given us all a free will?

There is a tension between what God has done for us in Christ, and what we have responsibility to do for ourselves. Explore this tension as it occurs in 1 Peter 1:3-2:4.

In 2:4-12 Peter describes Jesus as the Cornerstone and us as living stones being built into God's house. What is God's house? What does it mean to be a stone in this house? How do the 'stones' in God's house interact with each other? What is the overall effect of working together as part of God's house? How can we do this better?

2:9,10 describe who we are now as God's people. Do these statements relate to Israel or the Church? What are the rights and responsibilities we have now as God's people? Are we fulfilling them?

2:13-3:7 show how we are to submit to others as Jesus submitted to the will of the Father. What does it mean to submit to authorities? What should we do if the authorities are ungodly, or ask us to do things contrary to God's standards? What does it mean to submit in the context of family relationships? What should we do if 'submission' is abused or not reciprocated?

Jesus set us a wonderful example, as described in 2:21-25. Why is example so important? How can we be a good example? What happens when we are not a good example?

What does qualities are Christians to demonstrate in living for God? (See 4:1-11). What happens when we demonstrate these qualities? What happens when we don't?

Discuss the concept of 'suffering according to God's will'. (See 4:12-19). Does this mean that God causes suffering? How should we respond when we are suffering? What value is there in suffering for being a Christian? Unfortunately many Christians don't appreciate that suffering has value. Why not?

How do you humble yourself before God. (See 5:5). Why is humility such a powerful Christian virtue?

How do you resist the devil? (See 5:8,9). On what basis can we do this, so we know that the devil will be overcome?

2 Peter

Author	Peter, the 'big fishermen'; one of Jesus' disciples; leader of the early Church.
Written to	Believers throughout Asia Minor.
Date	About 64-68AD, not long before Peter was martyred.
Place	Probably written in Rome.
Type	General teaching.
Theme	Preparing for the Day of the Lord.
Purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- to show how believers can be effective and productive- to reinforce that the Scriptures are divinely inspired- to warn about false teachers- to outline the events that will happen at the Day of the Lord- to encourage believers to live godly lives as the Day of the Lord approaches.



Key verses

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. 3:9-12

Make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with Him. 3:14

Outline

Greeting 1.1-1.2

Peter greets *those who through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours* v1 and wishes them grace and peace.

Cultivation of Christian character 1:3-21

God has given everything needed for you to live for Him in a godly way:

- so you can participate in His divine nature
- so you can escape the corruption of the world caused by your evil desires.

So, grow in the Christian qualities of faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, kindness and love. These are the qualities that will make you effective and productive as a Christian. If you don't have them you are shortsighted and blind, and have forgotten that God has cleansed you from your past sins.

Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. v10,11

The gospel is not a 'cleverly invented story', in fact, Peter was an eye-witness of the coming and power of Jesus. He was there when God said of Jesus: *This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.* v17.

The gospel is based on the sure foundation of God's Word revealed by the Holy Spirit through the prophets and *no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.* v20,21



Condemnation of false teachers 2:1-22

Watch out for false prophets and teachers. They teach heresies, deny God, bring the truth into disrepute, exploit and lead people into bondage. God has condemned them and will bring judgment on them (just as He did when angels and the people in Noah's time sinned). God protected the righteous (like Noah and Lot) and *the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment. This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority.* v10,11.

The false teachers are not afraid to slander and blaspheme but they will be paid back for the harm they have caused. They appeal to the worst parts of human nature and continually entice people to live in error. They promise freedom but lead people into depravity so they become slaves to sin. It is especially bad when they entice Christians back to evil ways because the Christians become worse off than before they came to Christ.

It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. v21

Confidence in Christ's return 3:1-18

There will be scoffers in the last days who say Christ's return won't happen. They forget that God created the heavens and the earth, and has promised to judge those who are ungodly. This judgment hasn't happened yet because God is being patient, not wanting anyone to perish, but for everyone to come to repentance. When the day of the Lord comes everything will be destroyed and there will be a new Heaven and a new Earth in which righteousness dwells.



Be patient and live holy and godly lives as you wait for Christ's return:

You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. v11-14

So be on your guard so that you are not carried away by error and fall from your present secure position in Christ.

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen. v18

Discussion questions

God has provided everything we need for life and goldliness through our knowledge of Jesus. (1:3). Why is it that so many Christians are bound up in sin, and seem to be continually defeated and ineffective in building the Kingdom of God? What does Peter say to these Christians?

In 1:12-21 Peter describes genuine prophecy and its sureness. How do we test prophecies so we can be certain they are genuine? How much credibility do we give to prophecy these days? Why?

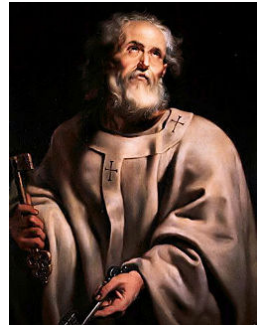
In 2:1-22 Peter condemns false teachers. How would we discern today that someone is a false teacher? What characteristics would indicate that someone might be a false teacher? Because every teacher is limited in their understanding aren't all teachers false in some way? How should we allow for this?

Chapter 3 deals with the last days, and confidence in Jesus' soon return. Over 2000 years have passed and Jesus has not yet returned so, for many Christians, the imminence (or importance) of Jesus return is irrelevant. What effect does this have on their Christian lives? Why is it important to be living in a constant anticipation of Jesus' return? What does Peter say we should be like in anticipation of the second coming? Do you think Jesus will return soon?

Simon Peter

Peter was originally called Simon. His brother Andrew brought him to Jesus and Jesus called him Peter (in Greek) or Cephas (in Aramaic). The words for *Peter* and *Cephas* mean *rock*. John 1:40-42

Simon Peter was one of the original 12 disciples of Jesus Matthew 10:2, and later became the leader of the early Church.



Peter was originally a fisherman from Bethsaida Matthew 4:18, John 1:44 and later lived in Capernaum. (You can still see the remains of his house there, even today).

- Jesus called Peter to follow Him with the words *Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men*. Matthew 4:18,19.
- Jesus proved himself to Peter by showing him where to catch a lot of fish. After this Peter left everything and followed Jesus. Luke 5:1-11
- Jesus healed Peter's mother in law. Matthew 8:14-15 (This shows that Peter was married. 1 Corinthians 9:5).
- Peter is always mentioned first in the lists of the twelve disciples. He is also part of the special group of three (with James and John) who were present at the transfiguration. Matthew 17:1-8
Peter was often the spokesman for the disciples and one to whom Jesus gave special authority.

Peter really loved Jesus and was determined to follow Him, whatever the cost. He did have his ups and downs, though!

- Peter initially refused to allow Jesus to wash his feet. When Jesus responded *Unless I wash you, you have no part in me* Peter replied *Then, Lord, not just my feet but my hands and head as well*. John 13:7-9.
- When Peter saw Jesus walking on the water he asked Jesus if he could also walk on the water. *Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."* "Come," he said. *Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"* Matthew 14:22-32.
- During the last supper Jesus said that one of the disciples would deny Him three times that day. *Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will."* "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, *"this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times."* But Peter declared, *"Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you."* And all the other disciples said the same. Peter did deny Jesus three times and was very remorseful afterwards. Matthew 26:69-75
- Peter was the first person to enter the empty tomb, and went inside to check it for himself. Luke 24:1-12
- Jesus specially revealed Himself to Peter after the resurrection. Luke 24:34, 1 Corinthians 15:5.



- Jesus also showed himself to a number of disciples (including Peter) as they were fishing. Peter jumped into the water in excitement at seeing Jesus!
- Peter re-affirmed his love for Jesus three times (reflecting his previous threefold denial) and Jesus reconfirmed Peter's position (John 21:15–19).

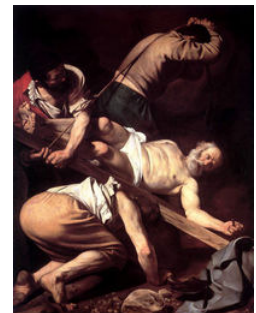
Peter became the leader of the early Church. He led the selection of a replacement for Judas, Acts 1:15-26 and was the main speaker on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:14-41. He was twice brought before the Sanhedrin (with John), and directly defied them saying *Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.* Acts 4:1-31, 5:18-42.

A very important moment in Peter's life (and ours!) occurred when God revealed to Peter that nothing He had made was unclean. Peter realised then that the gospel did not require obedience to the Jewish Law, and that Gentiles could be saved through Christ alone. Peter went on a missionary journey to Lydda, Joppa and Caesarea and there saw the Holy Spirit fall on Gentiles so they became believers and were baptised. Acts 9:32-10:48. Afterwards Peter argued at the Council of Jerusalem that Gentiles could be accepted as Christians without being circumcised. *So, then God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life.* Acts 11:1-18



Peter helped Mark write his gospel. Much of the content of Mark's gospel was explained directly from Peter's recollection of events.

Peter was martyred in Rome in 64AD and his tomb is in St Peter's Basilica. John 21:18,19 has been interpreted as referring to Peter's martyrdom by crucifixion. *Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God.* Then he said to him "Follow me!" John 21:18–19.



Peter as Pope?

Because Peter was the leader of the early Church he is sometimes considered to be the first Pope, and that the Church was built around him. This is a misunderstanding of Jesus' words in Matthew 16.

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ. Matthew 16:13-20



The rock that the Church would be built on was not Peter! It is built on the Rock of Jesus! Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God! God's Church is always to be focused on Jesus, not on a man. Peter himself taught this in 1 Peter 2:4-12.

Peter is a great example of someone who loved the Lord, and spent his life serving the Lord, even though he had many ups and downs!