

# 1 Peter

## “Be Holy”

Bible Knowledge Commentary States:

“First Peter was written to Christians who were experiencing various forms of persecution, men and women whose stand for Jesus Christ made them aliens and strangers in the midst of a pagan society. Peter exhorted these Christians to steadfast endurance and exemplary behavior. The warmth of his expressions combined with his practical instructions make this epistle a unique source of encouragement for all believers who live in conflict with their culture.

### I. Setting

1 Peter is the 19th book of the New Testament and 16th among the Epistles or letters. They are the primary doctrinal portions of the New Testament.

It is not that the Gospels and Acts do not contain doctrine, but that the purpose of the Epistles is to explain to churches and individuals how to apply the teachings of Jesus.

Jesus' earthly life models ministry. In every area of ministry, we must apply the example of Christ. He was filled with the Spirit, sought to honor God, put a high value on people, and lowered Himself as the servant of all.

Once He ascended to heaven, He poured His Spirit out on believers and the New Testament church was formed. Acts focuses on the birth, establishment, and furtherance of the work of God in the world, through the church.

The Epistles are written to the church, further explaining doctrine.

A. 1Peter is part of a section among the Epistles commonly known as “The Hebrew Christian Epistles” and includes Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1st, 2nd and 3rd John and Jude.

1. Called Hebrew Epistles because of those to whom the letters were written.
  - a. James – “to the 12 tribes scattered abroad”
  - b. Peter – “to the pilgrims of the dispersion
  - c. Hebrews – the title, “To the Hebrews” dates back to the 2nd century. Content makes it clear the letter was written to Jewish believers.
  - d. Although not all are so addressed

## 2. Date

- a. Tradition states Peter died under Nero's persecution of the church. This took place sometime around 65AD.
  - i. 1 Peter must have been written before then, circa 63-64 AD

## 3. Author

*1 Peter 1:1 "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia . . ."*

- a. Since the First Century, it has been the position of the church that this letter was written by the Apostle Peter. Until recent times, Peter's authorship went unchallenged.
  - i. The letters of Polycarp, Clement, and Irenaeus show that the early church accepted the authenticity of 1 Peter.
  - ii. Eusebius' listed 1Peter as being part of "the undisputed books."
- b. The reason some doubt that Peter wrote this letter is the high level of Greek in which it was written. Their argument states, an uneducated fisherman from Galilee could not have produced such a work of literature. However, even today we find men and women with limited education producing great things.
  - Bill Gates
  - Steve Jobs
  - F. Scott Fitzgerald

To name a few

- c. When we consider that Peter spent over 3 years being disciplined by Jesus and was filled with the Holy Spirit, we should not be surprised that he would rise to great levels on every plane, including his linguistic ability.
- d. The issue of authorship is complicated by of a number of writings falsely attributed to Peter. The early church never accepted any of these as authentic, recognizing only 1 & 2 Peter as genuine. Among the book bearing his name that were never considered to be written by him are:

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- i. Acts of Peter
- ii. Acts of Peter and Andrew
- iii. Acts of Peter and Paul
- iv. The Acts of Peter and the Twelve
- v. Gospel of Peter

#### 4. PETER the MAN

- a. Interestingly, the Apostle Peter is the only man in the New Testament called Peter.
- b. Peter was from Bethsaida in Galilee and resided with his wife in Capernaum where he worked as a fisherman with James and John. (John 1:44).
- c. Peter came to Christ through the ministry of his brother Andrew, who was a follower of the teaching of John the Baptist (John 1:40-42).
  - i. It was then that Jesus officially changed his name from Simon to Peter.
- d. After a second encounter with Christ, Peter chose to leave fishing behind and become a full time disciple of Christ (Mark 1:16-18).
- e. Later, Peter was chosen from the disciples to be one of the 12 Apostles upon whom Jesus would build the church.
- f. This model of salvation, discipleship then service, is a good one to follow.
  - i. If you are saved, seek to become a disciple, if you are a disciple seek to be trained to serve, if you have adequate training then get busy.
- g. There are four lists of the Apostles (cf. Matt. 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16; Acts 1:13). Peter is always listed first.
- h. Peter spent 3 ½ years in the school of Christ. Upon his graduation he became one of the leaders of the early church.

- i. Peter played a key role in the book of Acts.
  - i. He led in the election of Judas' replacement (cf. Acts 1:15–26).
  - ii. He preached the first sermon on Pentecost (cf. Acts 2).
  - iii. He healed a lame man and preached the second recorded sermon (cf. Acts 3:1–10; 3:11–26).
  - iv. He spoke boldly to the Sanhedrin in Acts 4.
  - v. He presided over the church discipline of Ananias and Saphira in Acts 5.
  - vi. He spoke at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15:7–11.
- j. There is little information about Peter after the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15
  - i. Galatians 1:18 – met with Paul in Jerusalem.
  - ii. Galatians 2:7–21 – struggled to separate completely from legalists.
  - iii. 1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5 – had an influence upon the believers in Corinth, although no record of him traveling there.
  - iv. In John. 21:18-19, Jesus hints at how Peter would die.
 

"...when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and take you where you do not want to go."

    - Some interpret this as a reference to Peter's crucifixion.

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### k. Early church tradition:

- i. Peter being martyred in Rome is mentioned in Clement of Rome’s letter to the church at Corinth in 95 AD.
- ii. Tertullian (150–222 AD) also notes Peter’s martyrdom in Rome under Nero (54–68 AD).
- iii. Clement of Alexandria (200 AD) says Peter was killed in Rome.
- iv. Origen (252 AD) says Peter was martyred by crucifixion, head down, in Rome.
- v. According to the 1911 Catholic Encyclopedia, Peter labored in Rome during the last portion of his life, and there his life was ended by martyrdom.
- vi. Origen wrote: "Peter was crucified at Rome with his head downwards, as he had desired to suffer."

### 5. Recipients

- a. 1 Peter 1:1 “...to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, . . .”
- b. Like James, 1Peter was written to believers who were scattered as a result of persecution.
  - i. This persecution is recorded in Acts 8:1-4.
    - Acts 8:4 “Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. . .”
  - ii. 1Peter reveals how far they were scattered from Jerusalem.
    - The places mentioned are in the region covered by modern turkey.

- iii. These are places where the Gospel was first introduced by
  - Those who heard Peter's sermon (Acts 2)
  - Those who were scattered by persecution (Acts 8)
  - Paul's missionary endeavors (Acts 13-20)
- iv. "Scattering" is God's method of spreading the Gospel
  - Like the seed from Jesus' parable of the soils, we are scattered to bring the Gospel to as many people as possible.
  - We should view our station in life as having been scattered by God into the world to preach the simple message of salvation through faith in Christ.
  - What would the world look like if every Christian brought the message of Christ into their home, school, job site, activity, bus ride, plane flight or even jail cell?
- v. These scattered believers were facing great difficulty.
- vi. Suffering is a common theme throughout the letter. One way to consider 1 Peter is a lesson on how to suffer well.

## 6. Message

The major issues discussed in the letter are holiness and suffering.

### a. Suffering:

- i. Jesus is presented as the example of suffering (1:11, 2:21, 23, 3:18, 4:1, 13, 5:1, 9, 10)
- ii. We are to emulate His example (1:6-7, 2:19, 3:13-17, 4:1, 12-19, 5:9)

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- iii. In light of suffering, it is not surprising how often the second coming is presented

### b. Holiness

- i. The key verse of the entire book might be:
  - 1 Peter 1:16 “Be holy, for I am holy.”
- ii. All of Peter’s exhortations are designed to produce real life, practical holiness in the believers.

## II. Doctrines in 1 Peter

In the limited time we have to discuss 1 Peter, we cannot exhaust the doctrines he covers. Our goal is to highlight a handful of the more prominent themes Peter addresses.

In what is probably a very bold endeavor, we will attempt to tackle 5 doctrines presented by the Apostle.

### A. The Doctrine of being a Christian

The congregation Peter is addressing is not unlike our own. It was made up of men, women, husbands, wives, young, old, servants, masters and Christian leaders.

While there is great variety represented by those who attend the church, Peter will list things that are true of every believer.

It seems we are very confused today as to what it actually means to be a Christian. JC Ryle once wrote:

*“Millions of people profess and call themselves Christians whom the Apostles would not have called Christians at all”*

So what is a Christian? Reading through 1Peter will give us a very thorough definition.

1. 1 Peter 1:1 – Pilgrims – an alien or resident foreigner
  - a. In this case Peter was speaking both literally and figuratively.
    - i. Literally, his readers were scattered by persecution, which forced them to leave their homes.
    - ii. Figuratively, every Christian is the citizen of a heavenly homeland (Philippians 3:20) who does not quite fit into the world’s culture.
      - We should seek to follow the example of Abraham (Hebrews 11:9-10) and Moses (Hebrews 11:24-27).
2. 1 Peter 1:2 – Elect – Chosen or hand selected can also mean “Choice” or best. Believers are those who have been hand elected by God for:
  - a. Salvation –According to Peter, this is based upon the foreknowledge of God. (Prognosis).
    - i. He who knows the end from the beginning selects those who will respond to the message of salvation with faith.
    - ii. It is important to see that the doctrines of election and faith are not contradictory but complimentary.
    - iii. This is illustrated in John 7, where a conversation between Jesus and the Religious leaders of His day, regarding the doctrines of the Sabbath and Circumcision.
      - Sabbath – no work
      - Circumcision – 8th day after birth a male child must be circumcised.
    - iv. These two seemingly contradictory doctrines would intersect on average every 1 of 7 births. Every Baby born on Friday would be circumcised on the following Saturday or Sabbath.



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- Circumcising on the Sabbath did not break the law, but rather completed it.
  - v. The same is true of the doctrines of election and faith. They are not contradictory but complimentary. When a person responds in faith, the doctrine of election becomes visible.
- b. Service
- i. We have been called beyond salvation to service.
  - ii. Peter was called to salvation, discipleship and apostleship; the same is true of us. The order is always the same:
    - Salvation, Discipleship, service
- c. Sanctification
- i. Peter will spend a great deal of time explaining how to live a holy life.
  - ii. Perhaps the most comprehensive definition of holiness is “to become like Jesus”.
- d. Obedience – Obedience means to comply or submit to authority.
- i. As a believer you have been chosen that you might to submit to the authority of God and His Word.
    - In fact, the proof of submission to God is to comply with the teaching of Scripture.
  - ii. Peter links obedience with the sprinkling of the blood of Christ.
    - When we fail in obedience there is forgiveness that flows from the shed blood of Christ.
    - 1 John 1:7 *“But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another,*

*and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”*

iii. 1 Peter 1:13 – Obedient children – offspring  
The Christian is the child of God in 2 ways:

- Being born again; a favorite topic of Peter (1:3 & 1:23)

- He learned this from Christ

*John 3:3 “Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”*

- This happens when we trust Christ for salvation.

*John 1:12 “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.”*

- And brings us into relationship with Christ

*Romans 8:9 “But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.”*

e. Adoption - Once adopted we become joint heirs with Christ

i. 1 Peter 1:22 – Brethren

- This is the most common New Testament description of a Christian.
  - Christian – 3 times
  - Believer – 4 times in NKJV
  - Brethren – 346 times
- God wants us that we are part of a family

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### ii. 1 Peter 2:2 – Newborn babes

- This is not a reference to new believers, but an illustration of what should be true of all believers.
- Peter is seeking to describe how important the Word of God is in the life of every believer.
- Just as infants crave milk, the believer ought to crave the Word of God.
- You will be unhealthy, weak, stunted, and grumpy without a balanced diet of Scripture.
- Hebrews 5:12-14, *“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”*

### iii. 1 Peter 2:5 – A living Stone

- Again it is crucial that every Christian see himself as part of something bigger.
- Christ, the chief cornerstone, is building a spiritual house in which we all play a role.
- Later in 1 Peter 4:7-11, Peter will discuss the role each of us should be playing:
  - Understand the temporal nature of life
  - Pray
  - Love each other
  - Be hospitable – friendly to guests
  - Use your gifts
    - Speak the Word to one another

- Serve within the church in the power provided by God

iv. 1 Peter 2:9 – Chosen Generation – elect “kin” or nation Strong’s defines as “*an aggregate of many individuals*”

- The church is made up of people from all walks of life that have trusted in Christ for salvation (Galatians 3:28).
- Many differences, one thing in common – trusted in Christ.
  - We can differ in worship style, teaching style, liturgy, dress, etc. but if we do not trust Christ as savior and Lord we are not part of His church.

v. 1 Peter 2:9 – A Royal Priesthood

- To the Jewish believer this would seem like a contrast in terms. One could not be both King and priest. Yet Peter describes the role of the Christian as both royal and Priestly.
- The primary role of the priest is to stand before God on behalf of the people.

vi. 1 Peter 2:9 – A holy nation or tribe

- Holiness in the trait that should mark the life of the believer

vii. 1 Peter 2:9 – Special People

- Special – a purchased possession or one’s own property.
- 1Peter 1:18-19 explains how we became His:

*“ . . . knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your*

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*fathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”*

- The cost of redemption reveals the value God places upon each of us. If He purchased us for \$1 Billion we would realize that was nothing to one who could create a galaxy of gold or silver. Instead He bought us with the blood of God.

### viii. 1 Peter 2:11 – Beloved – well-loved

- The one constant in life is the love of God

### ix. 1 Peter 2:25 – Sheep

- This speaks of the Christians capacity to wander.
  - “Prone to wander Lord I feel it, prone to leave the one I love.” (“Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing”, Robert Robinson)
- This speaks of the Christians capacity to be led astray.
- Peter brings this up again and speaks of how the Christian becomes the target of the devil.
  - 1 Peter 5:8-9 *“Be sober; be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.”*
- Peter gives insight into how defenseless sheep can survive the attacks of the devil.
  - Sober – Temperate, not giving into the things that lead astray.
  - Vigilant – Watchful to self and surroundings.

- Resist – stand against

-Eve failed when she doubted Word

-Jesus success was attributed to the Word

- This also speaks of the fact that we are part of a fold.
- x. 1 Peter 5:4 – Jesus will be called the Chief Shepherd who is coming.
- xi. 1 Peter 5:16 – FINALLY, Peter refers to us as Christians.
- This is one of the least common yet most telling titles for believers.
    - Christian – Christ like or Christ follower
    - Was first used in Acts 11:26 “...*And the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch*”
  - A Christian is not one who simply:
    - Believes in God
    - OR goes to church
    - OR has a Bible
  - A Christian is someone who trusts in, follows after, serves and becomes more like Christ

## B. The Doctrine of Suffering

1. 1 Peter 1:6, “*In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, . . .*”
- a. Trial – an experiment or test designed to prove something. Strong’s defines it as: “Adversity, affliction or trouble sent by God to test and prove ones character faith and holiness”.
- b. Peter refers to the suffering of Christ: 1 Peter 1:21, 3:18, 4:1 and 4:12.

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- c. In 5:1 Peter refers to being a witness of Christ’s suffering and explains that in the midst of suffering Christ did not sin in action or in word.
- Committed no sin.
  - Spoke no deceit or untruth.
  - Job commonly associated with suffering, failed by speaking deceit in his suffering. He eventually accused God of wrongdoing.
- d. Peter also refers to our suffering:
- 4:12 – do not entertain the idea that you are unique in suffering. See also 5:9
  - 4:13 – Rejoice in suffering
  - 4:15 – Do not suffering for doing wrong
  - 4:16 – Suffer as a Christian
  - 4:19 – suffering is the will of God
- e. Why? Peter gives at least 4 reasons
- 4:13 – We partake of Christ’s sufferings. This may be an allusion to the fellowship we enjoy in the midst of trying times.
    - Paul spoke of this in Philippians 3:10
    - Shadrach and Co. experienced it in the fire (Daniel 3)
  - 4:1 – Suffering can help overcome sin.
    - Suffering has no value in itself, however, when Christ leads us into trials and we cling to Him, we will find ourselves letting go of other things.

- 3:14-15 – A witnessing tool.
  - One of the great exhortations to witness has its context in suffering.
  - People want to know what you hope in when they see you excel in trying times.
- 5:10 – Suffering perfects, establishes and strengthens us.

### C. Doctrine of Holiness

1 Peter 1:2 “...elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: . . .”

1. 1 Peter 1:15-16 “. . . as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’”

- a. It seems that the church has always struggled to define holiness. It has become common to define it by:
  - i. Contrasting whatever is happening in the culture.
    - If women are wearing pants, holiness is not too.
    - If men have long hair, holiness is short hair.
    - If music is loud, holy music is soft.
  - ii. In the church it is often defined by reacting to the generation that has gone before us, this seems to be the case today.
    - The last generation of Christian leaders in America did not drink so there is a large push for Pastors to be free to drink alcohol.

*This is not the best way to define holiness!*

- b. Peter goes into great lengths to explain what holiness looks like by calling us to what he calls “Holy Conduct”



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- i. 1 Peter is filled with exhortations that, if we take to heart and put to practice, we will be living a holy life.
  - 1:14 – Do not conform to your former lusts.
  - 1:17 – Conduct yourself in fear.
    - Fear of God.
    - Fear of Sin.
  - 1:22 – Love each other fervently.
  - 2:2 – Desire the Word of God.
  - 2:4 – Come to God, offering sacrifices of Praise (2:5, 2:9).
  - 2:11 – Abstain from the lusts that war against the soul.
    - Galatians 5:17 – describes the battle between flesh and spirit.
    - To win we must starve the flesh and feed the spirit.
- ii. 1 Peter 3:8 – have the mind of Christ
- iii. Peter also addresses specific members of the church so we can learn what holiness looks like in the community, the workplace and the home.
  - 2:15 – citizens must submit to the ordinances of man
  - 2:18 – servants (workers) must submit to the authority of their bosses
  - 3:1 – Wives must submit to their husbands
  - 3:7 – Husbands must dwell with their wives with understanding, giving them honor and treating them carefully.

- When they do they will experience “The grace of life”

#### D. The Doctrine of Christ

Peter was a witness of Christ, became a follower of Christ, spent 3 years with Christ and has a lot to tell us about Christ.

It is interesting to keep in mind that of all he knew about Jesus he hand selected these things to pass on to us. They are of the utmost importance.

1. 1 Peter 1:3 – Christ is Lord.
2. 1:7 – Christ will return.
3. 1:11 – Christ was the inspiration behind the OT writings.
4. 1:11 – Christ suffered.
5. 1:19 – Christ redeemed us from the penalty and power of sin.
6. 2:4 – Christ is the chief cornerstone.
7. For life to be done right it must be built on the foundation of Christ.
8. 2:21 – Christ should serve as our example for living.
9. 2:25 – Christ is the good shepherd.
10. 3:18 – Christ suffered for our sins, rose again and preached to those imprisoned.