



A Systematic Expository Study of the Word of God

AN EPISTLE OF HOPE FOR CHRISTIANS 1 Peter 1:1,2

The First Epistle of Peter is an Epistle of hope written to suffering, scattered saints. These Christians were **"scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Capadocia, Asia and Bithynia"** (1 Peter 1:1) and were suffering persecution for their faith. They needed reassurance and comfort. So Peter wrote to them: **"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you."** **"The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth...might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ"** (1 Peter 4:12; 1:7).

Through this Epistle, Peter brought hope to the persecuted Christians so that they will not live **"as others which have no hope"** (1 Thessalonians 4:13). He starts by reminding them that God through Christ in His **"abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope"** (1 Peter 1:3). He then encourages the believers to **"hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ"** (1 Peter 1:13). As our faith has been in God, he exhorts us that our **"hope might be in God"** (1 Peter 1:21). We should so trust, love and honour our God that we will **"be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear"** (1 Peter 3:15).

Some writers and commentators have suggested that the Epistle was written to Jews who were dispersed into parts of Asia Minor. That cannot be true; Gentiles who had believed were included in his audience. Peter had Gentiles in mind when he said, **"not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in YOUR IGNORANCE"** (1 Peter 1:14). Referring to converted Gentiles, he said they were **"called out of darkness into His marvellous light: which in time past WERE NOT A PEOPLE, but are now the people of God"** (1 Peter 2:10). The Epistle contains a message of encouragement for you and for everyone.

THE SERVANT, RESPONSIBLE TO CHRIST

1 Peter 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1; John 1:40-42; Luke 5:3-11; Matthew 4:18-20; 16:15-18; 10:2; John 21:15-17; Acts 4:18-20; 5:29.

The writer of this Epistle describes himself as **"an Apostle of Jesus Christ"** (1 Peter 1:1). In his second Epistle, he describes himself as **"a servant and an Apostle of Jesus Christ"** (2 Peter 1:1). Peter is the Greek form of the name Cephas (John 1:42) which the Lord Jesus Himself had given to the Apostle, meaning **"a stone."** He was to be a stone, built upon the Rock of Ages, which is Christ (Matthew 16:18). He must have prized that name as the gift of Christ, reminding him always of Christ's promise and urging him to maintain rock-like steadfastness throughout his life.

Though he was always mentioned first in the list of Christ's Apostles, he calls himself simply **"an apostle"**, not the first or prince of the apostles, simply, **"a servant"**, **"who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ"** (2 Peter 1:1; 1 Peter 5:1). He was now, in his own words, **"clothed with humility"** (1 Peter 5:5).

As a servant and an Apostle of Jesus Christ, he is sent by the Lord with a message for the Church. The consciousness of being sent directly by Christ gives earnestness, weight, and dignity to the words of Christ's faithful ministers. The readers and hearers must receive his message with reverence and obedience because the Lord had said, **"He that heareth you heareth Me"** (Luke 10:16). His message is in perfect agreement with that of Christ. He echoes the recognition and blessing of Christ on those who had not seen, but yet had believed (John 20:29; 1 Peter 1:8). He bids us **"gird up the loins of mind"** even as Christ had said, **"let your loins be girded about"** (1 Peter 1:13; Luke 12:35). The Lord told His disciples that He came **"to give His life a ransom for many"** and Peter reminds us **"that we are redeemed ... with the precious blood of Christ"** (Matthew 20:28; 1 Peter 1:18). Many other points of similarity occur between what He had said and what Peter now writes in this Epistle. Read and compare 1 Peter 2:5 and Matthew 16:18; 1 Peter 1:22 and John 13:34; 1 Peter 2:7 and Matthew 21:42; 1 Peter 2:5 and Matthew 16:18; 1 Peter 2:12 and Luke 19:44; 1 Peter 2:21 and John 13:15; 1 Peter 2:25 and John 10:11,14; 1 Peter 3:9,14 and Matthew 5:39-41; 1 Peter 3:20 and Matthew 24:37,38; 1 Peter 4:10 and Luke 12:42; 1 Peter 5:2 and John 21:15-17; 1 Peter 5:3 and Matthew 20:25-27. Truly, as a servant of Christ, he faithfully submitted to and taught the Word of the Master. That is all we are called to do!

THE STRANGERS, REDEEMED BY CHRIST

1 Peter 1:1; 2:11; Hebrews 11:13-16; John 17:14-16; Psalm 119:19; 2 Corinthians 5:6; Acts 8:4; John 15:18,19.

Peter addressed the Epistle to "**the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.**" Who were these "**scattered strangers**"? Were they Jewish Christians only? Were Gentile believers included? We must remember that Peter's ministry was not limited to the Jews. "**Peter rose up, and said unto them, ... ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel and believe**" (Acts 15:7). The Epistle itself witnesses to the general character of its message. There is no allusion to the law of Moses, an omission which would be surprising if the Epistle were addressed exclusively to Jewish Christians. Passages such as 1 Peter 1:14; 2:10; 4:3 show that Peter had the Gentile Christians in mind as part of the Church that would hear and read the Epistle.

The word "**strangers**" in 1 Peter 1:1 is used metaphorically as in 1 Peter 2:11 and Hebrews 11:13 to represent all true believers in Christ who are dispersed here and there among the unbelievers in different parts of the world. Strangers are temporary residents in a foreign country. Christians are citizens of another country, members of another nationality. We belong to "**a better country, that is an heavenly**" (Hebrews 11:16). We must keep ourselves separate from all entanglements of the world, keeping ourselves apart as oil from water. We must always live in the consciousness that we do not belong to this world. We are "**strangers and pilgrims on the earth**" (Hebrews 11:13). We are not of this world as our Lord and Master Jesus Christ was not of this world. Our governing principles, motives, ambitions and pursuits must not be of this world.

SANCTIFICATION, RECEIVED BY CHRISTIANS

1 Peter 1:2; Matthew 22:14; 23:37; John 15:16; Acts 15:18; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Acts 20:32; Romans 15:16; Hebrews 13:12-14, 20, 21; 5:9; 12:24; 2 Peter 1:2.

"**Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.**" The elect are those who are chosen. "**Many are called, but few are chosen**" (Matthew 22:14). Certainly man is free; he is given the power of choice (Deuteronomy 30:19), he is commanded to repent and believe (Acts 17:30; 16:31) and he is held responsible for not believing and obeying to be saved (Matthew 23:37). Salvation is offered to all; God is "**not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance**" (2 Peter 3:9). Yet God knows what each man's choice will be, because "**known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world**" (Acts 15:18).

"**Through sanctification of the Spirit.**" Supposed "**election**" or "**predestination**" without sanctification will meet with eternal disappointment. The Bible tells us that "**without holiness no man shall see the Lord**" (Hebrews 12:14). This holiness or sanctification is the heavenly-mindedness that fills the believer with strong and deep love of God. It rules his heart and leaves no room for sin in his heart or life. No power of man can effect this complete change of heart, it is the peculiar work of God. Sanctification makes us fit for unbroken fellowship with the Holy One. God reveals unto the saved, the chosen, "**the elect**", the surpassing beauty of Christ so that the heavenly vision kindles the flame of divine love in his soul. That love so dominates his heart, and spreads itself through the heart, driving out all law and earthly desires, lifting up the soul to God. The sanctifying influence of the Spirit results in unquestioning, implicit obedience to God. Obedience is the work of the Spirit: for the "**fruit of the Spirit is love,...**" "**and if a man love Me, he will keep My words**" (Galatians 5:22; John 14:23).

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