

## OVERVIEW OF 1 PETER

**AUTHOR:** Peter is “an apostle of Jesus Christ” (1:1) and a fellow elder, a witness of Christ’s sufferings” (5:11). Peter’s work is a reflection on his experience of being with Jesus during his earthly ministry and now contemplating its implications in the light of his death, resurrection and ascension. He is almost certainly writing from Rome, referred to as ‘Babylon’ in 5:13. There are some close connections with language in the letter and that attributed to Peter in the Gospel of Mark and the book of Acts. Peter’s reference to Christ as the shepherd accords with the words of Mark 14:27. Likewise Christ is the “stone” of Psalm 118:2 (Acts 1:10-11; 1 Peter 2:7-8) and his cross is “the wood” (Acts 10:3, 9; 1 Peter 2:24).

**AUDIENCE:** Peter writes to “God’s elect” (1:1) in congregations scattered throughout five Roman provinces of Anatolia (Asia Minor). His “appeal” (5:12) is that the readers in these churches is that they stand firm in “the true grace of God”. The letter has a very pastoral tone and is a summary of the Christian life, outlining its beginnings in chapter 1 and concluding with the promise of the crown of life (5:4). It was most likely written in the 60’s during Nero’s reign, hence Peter has a good deal of timely advice about attitudes towards governments and rulers and the wider task of living godly lives in a pagan society.

**AIM:** Persecution is the experience of the writer and reader and we do well to soberly reflect on the daily challenges they must have faced and which no doubt prompted Peter to write his appeal to stand firm. Addressed as “strangers in the world” (exiles), the audience of 1 Peter teaches its hearers everywhere (1 Peter 5:9) to “set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed as his coming.” (1 Peter 1:13).

“Living” occurs no less than 9 times in the letter (only on Revelation is it used more) so these studies have adopted it as our theme for this series. The Epistle ties together the “living hope” (1 Peter 1:3) that has come to us through “the living Stone” (1 Peter 2:4) and equips to be a witness for him “who is ready to judge the living and the dead” to whom we must all give account (1 Peter 4:5).

Importantly, using OT analogy, Peter outlines how Jesus as the living Stone transforms God’s people into the spiritual house, a holy priesthood who now offer spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:4-5). This fulfilment language points to the new era that Christ has inaugurated through his resurrection. As Israel was chosen, now the people of God under the new covenant live for his praise (1 Peter 4:10-11).

## 1 PETER SERIES

OCTOBER 18

1 PETER 1:1-12 A LIVING HOPE

OCTOBER 25

1 PETER 1:13-2:3 A LIVING HOLINESS

NOVEMBER 1

1 PETER 2:4-10 A LIVING STONE

NOVEMBER 8

1 PETER 2:11-3:7 A LIVING EXAMPLE

NOVEMBER 15

1 PETER 3:8-22 A LIVING BLESSING

NOVEMBER 22

1 PETER 4:1-19 A LIVING SERVANT

BONUS STUDY

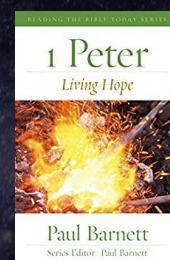
1 PETER 5:1-11 A LIVING SHEPHERD

## RESOURCE

1 PETER: LIVING HOPE

DR PAUL BARNETT

(READING THE BIBLE  
TODAY SERIES)



## CONTENT:

1 PETER 1:1-12	A LIVING HOPE	Praise God for the new birth he has given us in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and the imperishable inheritance.
1 PETER 1:13-2:3	A LIVING HOLINESS	Exhortation to obedient and holy living in the light of Christ's redeeming work.
1 PETER 2:4-10	A LIVING STONE	Christ fulfils the "stone" promises of the Old Testament and in OT analogy the church becomes God's chosen holy nation.
1 PETER 2:11-3:7	A LIVING EXAMPLE	Living in submission to God in society, the household and marriage.
1 PETER 3:8-22	A LIVING BLESSING	Being a blessing to others as we set apart Christ as Lord even if we have to suffer for doing good.
1 PETER 4:1-19	A LIVING SERVANT	Living a new life of love as we undergo trials in our unity with Christ, aware of God's judgment upon all people.
1 PETER 5:1-11	A LIVING SHEPHERD	Exhortations to elders and all to prepare for the crown of glory as we live humbly under God's mighty hand.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN 1 PETER:

**Exile:** Peter begins his letter by addressing the readers as the Diaspora (dispersed) as he writes from Babylon (Rome). The Old Testament analogy with the people of God in exile reminds the readers they too are strangers in the world looking for the revelation of their heavenly home (1:4). Until that time they are conduct themselves as aliens and exiles (2:11). Rather than disengaging with the world, however, the epistle is full of instructions about godly living in a world that will reject them just as it rejected Christ (2:21). Peter is adamant that the exilic life will be costly but by entrusting ourselves to "him who judges justly" as Jesus did (2:23) reminds us that our lives our under the direction of the "Shepherd and Overseer your souls" (2:25). Rather than live separated lives the readers are urged to be an example and recognise that our deeds will be vindicated at the return of Christ (2:12).

**Suffering:** Suffering can come through persecution (5:9) and temptation (2:19; 3;13). It is not outside God's plan but the reality of our unity with Christ (4:1). In 1 Peter it is presented as an opportunity to receive a blessing and in turn be a blessing to others (2:9-10). The apostle says we rejoice in our sufferings not as we have some macabre view of life, but because this is a reminder of God's presence in our lives (4:14) and the sobering judgment that is to come (4:17-19). Suffering carries a purpose which is both eternal, for through it Christ brought us to God (3:18) and at the same helps us to deal with each day (4:1-2) for we don't live according to human desires but for the will of God (4:3). Suffering is not a means for shame but an opportunity to bring praise to God through bearing the name of Christ (4:16).

**Glory:** The Spirit of glory rests upon God's people (4:14) through their union with Christ (2:21; 4:13) and we become partakers in the glory that is yet to come (5:1) through the resurrection of Christ (1:4). The way we live now is an expression of our unity with Christ. Our sufferings are not random but preparation for the glory that is yet to come. As Christ has suffered, so we too shall suffer, yet this is

linked to our destiny where we will participate in the promised glory (4:12-13). As Christ inaugurated a new era in his resurrection, so we belong to that age where the gospel is being proclaimed (1:11) and we set our hope upon the grace that is coming to all believers at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1:12).

**Judgment:** Jesus' judgment for us is the crux of our being restored to God (3:18), knowing that he calls all people to account and judges impartially (1:17). The revelation of Jesus Christ involves the judgment of God as well as his salvation, as outlined to reference to Noah and the ark (3:20). The inauguration of the new era through Christ's death and resurrection has brought fresh urgency to the judgment of God which begins with the household of God (4:17). Peter warns against the assumption of presumption. Israelites believed that ethnicity was the grounds upon which salvation was secured. The apostle declares that you cannot claim status under the covenant if your behaviour contradicts it through your disobedience, for if so Jesus will become "a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall"(1 Peter 2:8).

**Doing good:** Peter gives attention in his letter on the importance of "doing good" (2:12; 3:13) and contrasts this with behaviour that is wrong (1:18; 2:1, 12; 3:9). The OT parallel to this exhortation may be the word from Jeremiah to the exiles to seek the welfare of the city to which they were going (Jeremiah 29:7). So too Christians are to seek the welfare of the city in which they are temporary residents. Peter speaks of the public responsibility to do so (2:12) and the personal responsibility of good conduct in households and (2:18) marriages (3:1, 7). It is reminder that our lives are to be lived to the glory and praise of God in all spheres of life so that we might have an opportunity to testify to the hope that we have received (3:15). We are those who are to be both heavenly minded in will and of earthly use in the welfare of others.