

# **CENTER POINT BIBLE INSTITUTE: FALL 2006**

## **EPISTLE OF 1 PETER**

### **Message**

“Standing firm in the grace of God is established in salvation, demonstrated in sanctification, and tested in suffering.”

### **Authorship**

According to 1 Peter 1:1 the author is “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ.” Later in 5:1, the author identifies himself as “a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed.” Until relatively recently, these designations have been attributed to the Apostle Peter. However, many modern commentators have since rejected Petrine authorship. The rejection is generally made on the assumption that a common Galilean fisherman (cf. Acts 4:13) could not have written the polished Greek contained in 1 Peter, that he would not have been familiar with the Greco-Roman rhetoric that some have identified in the epistle, and that Peter would not have used the LXX over the Hebrew text.

But these objections are simply not enough to challenge the assertion made in the text itself. The polished Greek and any rhetorical flourishes might be attributable to the use of an amanuensis (see 5:12). The use of the LXX is not conclusive either way. Peter may have used the LXX because his audience consisted primarily of Gentiles. Furthermore, the case for Petrine authorship is a solid one. Not only does the text claim to have been written by Peter, but several internal clues seem to suggest this as well. First, there are indications in the text that the author was an eyewitness of Jesus’ ministry (e.g., 5:1) and a close familiarity with Jesus’ teachings. This can be seen in the following table.

FIRST PETER AND THE GOSPELS<sup>1</sup>

<u>First Peter</u>	<u>The Gospels</u>	<u>Shared Content</u>
1:10–12	Luke 24:25–27	Prophecies fulfilled in Christ
1:16	Matt 5:48	The divine standard
1:17	Matt 22:16	God’s impartiality
1:18	Mark 10:45	Jesus’ death a ransom
1:22	John 15:12	Love one another
3:9	Matt 5:39	No retaliation
3:14; 4:13	Matt 5:10	Blessing in persecution
4:11	Matt 5:16	Christian witness praises God
5:3	Matt 20:26	No lording over others
5:7	Matt 6:25–34	Let God carry anxieties

Others have noted that 1 Peter bears significant similarities to Peter’s speeches in Acts. These similarities can be seen in the following table.<sup>2</sup>

## FIRST PETER AND THE BOOK OF ACTS

<u>First Peter</u>	<u>Acts</u>	<u>Shared Content</u>
1:3, 21; 3:21	2:32; 3:15; 4:10	Resurrection
1:17	10:34	God’s impartiality
1:20	2:23; 3:18	Christ’s death foreshadowed
2:4	4:11	Christ the capstone (Ps 118:22)
2:8	1:16	Fate of disobedient foretold
2:24	5:30; 10:39	The cross a “tree”
3:18	3:14–15	Christ the righteous killed
3:19	2:27	Triumph over Hades

While it should be noted that these similarities do not “prove” Peter authored the epistle it is certainly consistent with the position. Furthermore, the external attestation of Petrine authorship is solid. Second Peter 3:1 refers to the fact that it was the second letter written, with 1 Peter presumably the first. Early Church Fathers such as Irenaeus (A.D. 140–203), Tertullian (A.D. 150–222), Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 155–215), Origen (A.D. 185–253), and Theophilus of

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<sup>1</sup> Modified from Norman Hillyer, *1 and 2 Peter, Jude*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992), 1. See also Edward Gordon Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, 2d ed. (London: Macmillan, 1947), 28-32.

<sup>2</sup> Modified from Hillyer, *1 and 2 Peter, Jude*, 2.

Antioch (d. 183–185) refer to it as a Petrine work. The early church historian Eusebius included 1 Peter as one of the universally accepted books (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.25).<sup>3</sup> Donald Guthrie concludes, “So strong is the evidence for the use of this epistle in the early church that some scholars have regarded it as proved and maintained that it was considered to be canonical as early as this word had a meaning.”<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, “There is no evidence that anyone in the early church believed that the letter was written by anyone other than Peter.”<sup>5</sup>

In conclusion, both the internal and external evidence point strongly to Peter’s authorship of 1 Peter.

### Date

The date of 1 Peter is closely tied to the issue of authorship. If one rejects Petrine authorship then dating can run as late as the first century, perhaps during the reigns of Domitian (A.D. 81–96) or Trajan (A.D. 98–117). However, if one holds that Peter wrote the epistle then it must have been written prior to his death in the mid-to-late sixties.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, it is generally held that Peter writes from Rome (5:13) and Peter was in Rome in the sixties. The key for further specificity is the relationship of the epistle to Nero’s persecution which began in A.D. 64. A difference of opinion exists at this point. Although the issue is difficult, it seems likely that the epistle was written very close to the outbreak of the persecution. Peter’s question in 3:13 (“Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?”) would seem to suggest a time just prior to the

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<sup>3</sup> This is even more striking since Eusebius includes 2 Peter among the *antilegomena*, the books spoken against.

<sup>4</sup> Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 4th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 760.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2, Peter, Jude*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, The New American Commentary, vol. 37 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2003), 26.

<sup>6</sup> Dates range from A.D. 64–68.

outbreak of persecution. Thus, we suggest that Peter wrote from Rome sometime in early A.D. 64.

### **Original Recipients**

According to 1 Peter 1:1 the recipients of the epistle were Christians living in five Roman provinces of northern Asia Minor in what would now be modern Turkey (“God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia”).<sup>7</sup> There is some discussion regarding the ethnic makeup of the churches. Internal evidence within the epistle would suggest that they were predominantly Gentile (1:14, 18; 2:9; 4:3–4; 2:10) with some Jews (the use of OT language and imagery).

### **Historical Setting**

Little is known of the specific historical situation of the churches in the regions noted above. But the content of 1 Peter suggests that these believers were facing persecution (1:6–7; 2:18–20; 3:1, 13–17; 4:1–4, 12–19; 5:10, 12). First Peter 2:13–17 would seem to suggest that the persecution was not yet state sponsored.

### **Relationship to Second Peter**

It is generally acknowledged that First and Second Peter differ significantly in style, vocabulary and themes. For example, “Many scholars think that 2 Peter is grandiose and bombastic when compared to 1 Peter.”<sup>8</sup> Second Peter contains fifty-seven words not found in 1 Peter. Some major themes in 1 Peter are not found in 2 Peter (e.g., the cross, resurrection, baptism, etc.). Nonetheless, the differences between the epistles can be explained. The use of an

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<sup>7</sup> Hemer suggests that the order of the provinces follow the likely route that the letter would be carried. C. J. Hemer, “The Address of 1 Peter,” *Expository Times* 89 [1977–78]:239–43).

<sup>8</sup> Schreiner, *1, 2, Peter, Jude*, 257.

amanuensis could explain differences in vocabulary and style. Differences in themes could be attributed to different purposes in writing (persecution vs. false teaching). Furthermore, as Hillyer points out, “For all the contrasts noticed in these two letters, the differences can be exaggerated. There are an impressive number of similarities in vocabulary and ideas that could indicate that the same mind is behind their composition.”<sup>9</sup>

### **Canonicity**

The canonical status of First Peter is fairly solid. As noted earlier, a number of early Church Fathers apparently recognized it as Scripture. First Peter is not found in the Muratorian Canon but Eusebius includes it among the undisputed books (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.25).

### **Purpose**

The main purpose of 1 Peter appears to be stated in 5:12: “I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this [the epistle as a whole] is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.” Taken as a whole then, it appears the main purpose was to encourage Christians facing persecution. As Raymer puts it, “This epistle could be understood as a handbook written for ambassadors to a hostile foreign land. The author, knowing persecution would arise, carefully prescribed conduct designed to bring honor to the One they represented. The purpose then of 1 Peter was to encourage Christians to face persecution so that the true grace of Jesus Christ would be evidenced in them (5:12).”<sup>10</sup>

### **Contribution**

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<sup>9</sup> Norman Hillyer, *1 and 2 Peter, Jude*, New International Biblical Commentary, vol. 16 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), 15.

<sup>10</sup> Roger M. Raymer, “1 Peter,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton: Scripture Press Publications, Victor Books, 1983), 838.

First Peter makes several important contributions. First, it provides helpful teaching on living in the midst of persecution and suffering. Second, 1 Peter presents a strong theology proper. Ralph Martin notes, “Probably no other document in the New Testament is so theological as 1 Peter, if we understand ‘theological’ in the strict sense as teaching about God.”<sup>11</sup> Third, 1 Peter gives a strong emphasis on the death and suffering of Christ (1:18–21; 2:21–25; 3:18) and how His death and suffering provides a pattern for believers (1:21–25; 3:13–22; 4:12–19; 5:1).

### **Literary Features and Structure**

Few have questioned the literary unity of 1 Peter. Similarly most commentators have understood 1 Peter as a circular epistle which follows a typical epistolary form. This epistle contains an introductory salutation (1:1–2), the body of the epistle (1:3–5:11), and a conclusion and benediction (5:12–15).

Concerning the contents there is a fair amount of discussion regarding the use of pre-existing material. We have already noted the similarities of 1 Peter to Gospel material and some have identified two passages which might be early Christian hymns (1:3–12, 13–18; 2:21–24; 3:18–22). Peter quotes or alludes to the Old Testament (Gen 18:12; Ps 22:14; 34:9, 13–17; 110:1; 117:22; Lev 19:2; Isa 11:2; 28:16, 40:6–8, etc., LXX) often and his epistle is sprinkled with vivid imagery (girding minds [1:13], longing for the pure milk of the Word [2:2], fiery ordeal [4:12], shepherding the flock [5:2], roaring lion [5:8], etc.).

### **Analytical Outline**

- I. Peter introduces his epistle by addressing and affirming those whom he will encourage to stand firm in the grace of God (1:1–2).

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<sup>11</sup> Ralph P. Martin, *New Testament Foundations: A Guide for Christian Students*, vol. 2, The Acts, The Letters, The Apocalypse (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), 344.

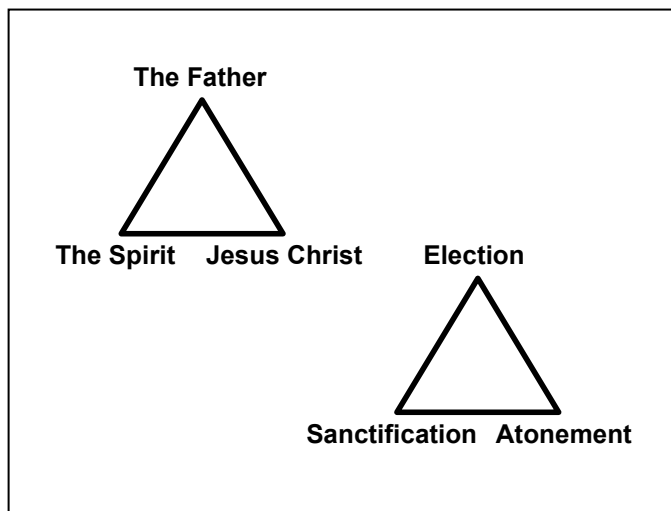
- A. Peter addresses the church (1:1).
  - B. Peter affirms the church (1:2).
- II. Standing firm in the grace of God begins with salvation (1:3–2:10).
- A. Salvation is a God ordained living hope (1:3–12).
    - 1. Salvation is a hope of future inheritance (1:3–5).
    - 2. Salvation is a cause for rejoicing even in suffering (1:6–9).
    - 3. Salvation is a fulfillment of prophecy (1:10–12).
  - B. Salvation is a God ordained life of holiness (1:13–2:10).
    - 1. The God ordained life of holiness requires preparation (1:13–16).
    - 2. The God ordained life of holiness requires piety (1:17–21).
    - 3. The God ordained life of holiness requires purification (1:22–2:3).
    - 4. The God ordained life of holiness requires priestly service (2:4–10).
- III. Standing firm in the grace of God involves sanctification (2:11–3:12).
- A. Sanctification involves the exercise of self-control (2:11–12).
  - B. Sanctification involves the exercise of submission (2:13–3:7).
    - 1. Submission is exercised in relation to civil authorities (2:13–17).
    - 2. Submission is exercised in relation to slavery (2:18–25).
    - 3. Submission is exercised in relation to marriage (3:1–7).
  - C. Sanctification involves the exercise of selflessness (3:8–12).
- IV. Standing firm in the grace of God responds appropriately to suffering (3:13–5:11).
- A. Responding appropriately requires a willingness to suffer for good (3:13–22).
    - 1. The right response requires the right commitment (3:13–17).
    - 2. The right commitment also requires the right example (3:18–22).
  - B. Responding appropriately requires a Christlike attitude (4:1–11).
    - 1. A Christlike attitude lives for God's will (4:1–6).
    - 2. A Christlike attitude lives for the church (4:7–11).
  - C. Responding appropriately requires a certain expectation of suffering (4:12–19).
  - D. Responding appropriately requires accepting responsibility (5:1–9).
    - 1. The responsibility of the elders is to shepherd (5:1–4).
    - 2. The responsibility of the young men is to submit (5:5a).
    - 3. The responsibility of all is to trust in God and resist the devil (5:5b–9).
  - E. Responding appropriately requires an eschatological hope (5:10–11).
- V. Peter concludes his epistle by exhorting and affirming his audience to stand firm in the grace of God (5:12–14).

**Synthetic Chart**

Introduction of address and affirmation (1:1-2)	<b>Standing firm in the grace of God begins with salvation (1:3-2:10)</b>		<b>Standing firm in the grace of God involves sanctification (2:11-3:12)</b>			<b>Standing firm in the grace of God responds appropriately to suffering (3:13-5:11)</b>				Conclusion of exhortation and affirmation (5:12-14)
	Salvation is a God ordained living hope (1:3-12)	Salvation is a God ordained life of holiness (1:13-2:10)	Sanctification involves the exercise of self-control (2:11-12)	Sanctification involves the exercise of submission (2:13-3:7)	Sanctification involves the exercise of selflessness (3:8-12)	Responding appropriately requires a willingness to suffer for good (3:13-22)	Responding appropriately requires a Christlike attitude (4:1-11)	Responding appropriately requires a certain expectation of suffering (4:12-19)	Responding appropriately requires accepting responsibility (5:1-9)	

**Exposition**

- I. Peter introduces his epistle by addressing and affirming those whom he will encourage to stand firm in the grace of God (1:1-2).
  - A. Peter addresses the church (1:1).
  - B. Peter affirms the church (1:2).





- II. Standing firm in the grace of God begins with salvation (1:3–2:10).
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<b>Household Rules in the New Testament</b>		
<b>Ephesians 5:21–6:9</b>	<b>Colossians 3:18–4:1</b>	<b>1 Peter 2:18–3:7</b>
<b>wives-husbands (5:22–33)</b>	<b>wives-husbands (3:18–19)</b>	
<b>children-fathers (6:1–4)</b>	<b>children-fathers (3:20–21)</b>	<b>slaves (2:18–25)</b>
<b>slaves-masters (6:5–9)</b>	<b>slaves-masters (3:22–4:1)</b>	<b>wives-husbands (3:1–7)</b>

- C. Sanctification involves the exercise of selflessness (3:8–12).
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