

# OpenTheo

## 1 Peter 1:1 - 1:2



### 1 Peter - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg provides an outline of the book of 1 Peter, which gives practical advice on Christian behavior based on Christian beliefs. The letter addresses the theme of suffering and was intended to be a closing statement on the suffering that believers will face. The audience is identified as the children of God scattered abroad, including both Jews and Gentiles, and the letter outlines the privileges and responsibilities attached to being chosen as a covenant people. Gregg highlights several theological points throughout the letter, including the idea that sanctification by the Spirit means being set apart, and that the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus cleanses and identifies believers as members of the covenant community.

## Transcript

Now we'll look at chapter 1. Let me first give you kind of an outline of the book. There's kind of three essential sections of the book. In chapter 1, beginning with verse 1 and going into chapter 2, up through about verse 10, we have what corresponds to the first parts of Paul's epistles as a theological section.

The theology that informs the Christian life. Theological concepts. Paul's letters usually begin with this too.

Not all of them do, but many of them do. Colossians, Ephesians, Romans, Galatians pretty much. I mean, Galatians first has an autobiographical section, then there's the theological section.

But usually before Paul gets into his practical instructions in his letters, he will give a theological section. Because our Christian behavior, which he gives practical advice about, is based on our Christian beliefs. Our theology.

What we believe about God. What we believe about Christ. What we believe about ourselves.

These are theological issues brought out by Paul. Generally, he brings it out before he talks about practical things. So does Peter.

Chapter 1, 1 through chapter 2, verse 10. That'd be section 1 of the epistle. It's the practical, excuse me, the doctrinal section of the letter.

Then we got the practical comes up next. Chapter 2, verse 11 through chapter 4, verse 11. Essentially, the instructions that we've talked about, about how to behave as a Christian, including the household code given.

But also generic information about how to behave. All the way up to chapter 4, verse 11. Now, chapter 4, verse 11 ends with like a doxology.

It says about Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. And many scholars feel like this sounds like the end of an epistle.

It's certainly the end of a section. And some have felt like it was actually the end of the epistle. Originally.

That Peter wrote a section on theology and a section on practical behavior. And he closed his epistle, or intended to close his epistle with this statement. And in these earlier chapters, he seems to indicate that suffering may come upon them.

But at chapter 4, verse 12, he begins to talk as if the suffering is imminent, or maybe has already arrived. And he writes to them strictly about suffering. For the most part, the remainder of 1 Peter, from chapter 4, verse 12 to the end, is in the context of suffering, how the church should behave during suffering.

And it is mostly practical exhortation. There are, of course, some theological ideas woven in, as is inevitable in preaching and teaching. But we could say the last section, the third section, is about conduct in suffering.

And suffering actually comes up earlier in the epistle, even in chapter 1. But it becomes the focus, it becomes the milieu of the reader. In chapter 4, verse 12 to the end, it seems like the suffering has come. Now, there's no reason to assume that Peter couldn't have written the whole thing at one time.

He could have just organized it this way. But because there's... Suffering is spoken of more or less as a slightly abstraction in the first part, but now it's upon them. Some feel that before Peter got around to sending the letter, which he intended to end at chapter 4, verse 12, he got news of greater developments of suffering.

And then he wrote this latter section with somewhat more of an urgency, somewhat more of a focus on the need of enduring suffering in a certain way as Christians. We can't know for sure. It's awfully hard once you read a commentator or a scholar who thinks something like this, it's hard to read it without that in your mind.

And you say, well, yeah, it does kind of look that way. But it was just some

commentator's idea, really. There's no actual proof that this is behind the writing of this last section.

But one thing can be said that the theme of Peter, of 1 Peter, is suffering. And it's especially so after chapter 4, verse 12. But it's not absent from the earlier section either.

And now let's look at the opening verses of 1 Peter. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ to the pilgrims of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father in sanctification of the Spirit for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, grace to you and peace be multiplied. Now this is, of course, in some respects, a very standard opening of a letter.

Most of the letters open in general like this. The author gives his name. He calls himself an apostle of Jesus Christ.

And he addresses or identifies his audience, usually by geographical indicators. And then he says at the end of that, as he does in verse 2 at the end, grace to you and peace be multiplied. Paul usually just said grace and peace be unto you and from Jesus Christ and so forth.

Peter says be multiplied. Grace and peace are not just polite words being offered at the beginning of the letter, but there's something substantial that he wishes to see multiplied or increased in their lives. Peace can always use more of that, especially if you're under persecution.

And grace, you can always use more of that, too, especially if you're under persecution. There are places in 1 Peter where he speaks about grace in terms of an enablement to endure. This is certainly how Paul spoke of it in some places, as when he talked about his thorn in the flesh in 2 Corinthians chapter 12.

He said it was such an annoyance to him that he prayed three times that God would take it away. And Christ said, my grace is sufficient for you. My strength is made perfect in your weakness.

So instead of removing trouble, Christ says, I'll give you enough grace to endure it. And so in Peter, we're going to find grace, a theme woven through the book, often in a context that sounds like he's referring to it as an enablement to endure suffering in a certain gracious manner. We'll worry about that later, though, as we come to some of the later instances of it.

Now, the main body of the section we just read is, of course, beginning at to the pilgrims of the dispersion. And until you get to grace to you, that section in there is packed with stuff, theological stuff that can be unpacked. And the stuff that's in there is stuff that Paul writes extensively about, especially in Ephesians, but also elsewhere.

But initially, as I said, the term to the pilgrims of the dispersion dispersion is diaspora. And. The idea that Gentiles who are Christians might be regarded as a diaspora and not just seeing that term as a reference to the Jews who are dispersed, may come from a statement of John.

In John, seven thirty five, it says, then the Jews said among themselves, where does he intend to go that he may not that we might not find him? Does he intend to go to the diaspora among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? Now, the diaspora, probably in the mind of these Jews, are the Jews who are scattered among the Greeks. But they say, is he going to go among the diaspora and teach the Greeks? As if he's going to teach people who aren't even Jews, these people among the Greeks. In chapter eleven, John makes a comment that I think is very relevant to the use of the term diaspora for Christians who are not Jews necessarily.

In chapter eleven of John. The high priest Caiaphas is speaking in verse forty nine, one of them, Caiaphas, being the high priest that year, said to them, you know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people and not that the whole nation should perish. And then John comments in verse fifty one and fifty two.

Now, this he did not say in his own authority, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus would die for that nation. That's Israel. And not for that nation only, but also that he would gather together in one, the children of God who were scattered abroad.

Now, that nation was Israel. The children of God who are scattered abroad would be not that nation only, but them too. Many of the Gentiles.

Remember, Jesus said, I have sheep that you don't know about, and I must go and gather them, too, he said in chapter ten. But here John is seeing the children of God scattered abroad, which to the Jewish mind would be the Jews of the diaspora. John is using it in contrast with the Jews, in contrast with that nation, not that nation only, but also the, by implication, Gentile children of God who are scattered out there to be gathered in.

The Jews expected the Messiah to come and regather Israel from the diaspora. The Jews of Jesus day, and for that matter, many Jews of our own day, do not believe that the Babylonian exile has ever ended. It seems strange to us because it lasted for about 70 years.

And then then Cyrus rose up as Isaiah said he would. The Persian, he conquered Babylon. He released the Jews to go back home.

But only about 50,000 went originally back and later a trickle more. But most of the Jews

remained in the diaspora. Most of them never went back to Israel.

And the rabbis of Jesus day taught that when the Messiah comes, he's going to bring back the diaspora. In fact, modern rabbis sometimes say this. If you say, why don't you believe that Jesus is the Messiah? They say, well, he didn't bring back the diaspora.

He didn't bring back the Jews back to Israel. That is to say to the Jewish mind, the diaspora of which occurred with the Jews going into Babylon has only in a very small way ever been reversed. Sure Zerubbabel built a temple.

Sure a few thousand people went back. But most Jews are still outside Israel. There's more Jews outside Israel than there are inside Israel.

And that's been the case ever since the Babylonian exile began. So to the Jewish mind, in many cases, the diaspora is something the Messiah will bring back. He'll, he'll gather together the children of God who are scattered throughout the world, the Jews back to Israel.

And when John said that Jesus was going to, you know, gather together the children of God, he actually made it clear. He's not just talking about Israel, not that nation only, but also for all the children gathered together. So John seems to be referring to the church as the diaspora that the Messiah will gather to himself.

And the Jews don't understand that way because they understand Israel to be strictly Jewish. The Christians, the apostles came to understand Peter, especially that God is not a respecter of persons. Peter with that sheep with the animals and so forth, and Jesus saying kill and eat these unclean animals.

Peter received the revelation that God isn't calling the Gentiles unclean anymore. He's not excluding them. When Peter said, I haven't eaten unclean things.

Jesus said, what I have cleansed, you don't call unclean. And when Peter went to the house of Cornelius right after they said, Oh, God has shown me not to call anyone unclean. You Gentiles, I thought of you as something different than Israel, but God's not a respecter of persons, but in every nation, those who fear God and do what is right are accepted by him, Peter said.

So the Jewish mentality that the diaspora is the Jews outside Israel is replaced, I think in the new Testament by the Christians are the diaspora in the world that need to be gathered to Christ, not geographically gathered, but gathered to the Messiah as worshipers of his. Now he says in verse two that we are elect according to the foreknowledge of God, the father. Paul said in Romans eight 29, that whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the firstborn of many brethren.

So this foreknowledge related to God's choice is confirmed by Peter. Now he doesn't say exactly in what way God's foreknowledge has an impact on election. He just said we're elect according to the foreknowledge of God.

What's that mean? A Calvinist would say, well, it just means that God foreknew and foreordained that some would be elect and we are them. We're the elect according to God's prior plan. Our minions often will say, well, foreknowledge doesn't mean God's, uh, ordination just means God knowing something in advance.

And that being so, he's just saying that God knew who would receive Christ. And therefore he chose them or elected them on the basis of what he foreknew. This verse actually is a very important verse for our minions in that respect.

So is frankly Romans eight 29 whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to be conformed to the image of his son. So the foreknowledge of God, the Armenian says God just knew who would become a Christian. God knew who would be saved, who would believe and who would persevere.

And based on his knowing who would do that, he chose them to be saved before they're even born. Just knowing in advance about them. The Calvinist is saying no foreknowledge actually means something more like God, not only just knowing, but loving, loving them beforehand, choosing them in the unilateral sense of unconditional election.

Now, of course, the third view and one that I incline toward myself is that election is always a reference to the corporate election of the body of Christ. And God foreknew before the world began that there was going to be a body of Christ. We are those people.

We are the body of Christ. We are the elect ones collectively. And God foreknew about this before there, before Jesus even came to earth, he knew he was going to have a body of Christ.

He knew there'd be us. It doesn't mean he knew who would be the composition of it, though he might have, I'm not saying he didn't, but that's not necessarily what is being affirmed. At least we don't have to assume that's what's being affirmed.

Not so much that God knew you and me and each individual before we're born would be in it. Even if that's true, that's not necessarily what Peter is suggesting necessarily, but that God knew there'd be a church. God knew there'd be people who'd follow Christ.

Whether he knew who they would be or not is a separate question, but that he foreknew there'd be an elect group. And we are in that group. We are Christians.

We are elect in Christ according to God's foreknowledge. He knew that would be the case, but he says the foreknowledge of God, the father, and the reason he singles out

the father here, I think is because he makes a contrast between the father, the spirit and the son. Here we have the whole Trinity named in this verse.

It's a, we're elected according to the foreknowledge of God, the father in sanctification of the spirit for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. So we've got all three persons there suggesting a sanctification of the spirit means set apart by the spirit in exactly what sense this is intended. Of course, we may not be a hundred percent sure we are made holy.

Sanctification means made holy by the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. So the Holy Spirit sanctifies us and makes us holy people. But also it's the, it's the very possession of the spirit that sets us apart from others who don't have the spirit.

And sanctification can simply refer to the positional fact that God has set us apart as a special group to belong to him and giving us the spirit is that which sets us apart from those that he hasn't chosen because he hasn't given his spirit to others. The church, the elect body of Christ possesses the spirit and that sets the church apart from everyone else in the world who does not possess the spirit. And therefore we have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God in that setting apart of the spirit for two things related to Jesus.

One of them is obedience. The other is the sprinkling of blood. Now the sprinkling of blood of the blood of Jesus is something that comes up again in this chapter later on and verse 19 says, we've been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ as of with a as of a lamb without blemish, without spot.

And the sprinkling of blood is something that we find referred to in Hebrews chapter nine that we have our conscience sprinkled. Uh, or the blood of Christ sprinkles us from an evil conscience it says. And sprinkling goes back to the time when Moses instituted the old covenant.

And sprinkled the blood of animals on the congregation, setting them aside and establishing the old covenant. And so this reference to us being sprinkled by the blood of the new covenant, the blood of Christ may very well simply be emphasizing that there's a new covenant that's replaced the old covenant. Israel was sprinkled by the blood of bulls and goats in that ceremony with Moses.

We have been sprinkled in the inauguration of a new covenant, a new people have got a new Israel. And we've had blood sprinkled on us too, but it's the blood of Christ, which cleanses us, purifies us, but also identifies us as the covenant people because we have had that blood sprinkled upon us, so to speak. But also there's the obedience issue here.

God has chosen us to go to heaven. Well, maybe, but it doesn't say so. He's chosen us to obey.

Israel was chosen not to be saved specifically, but to obey. God chose Israel to do something. Of course, if they did it obediently to God, he would bless them and they would experience his deliverance and salvation from their enemies and so forth.

But that was corollary to their choosing. They weren't chosen just to receive privileges. They were chosen for a task to which privileges would be attached.

Likewise, when we are chosen, people say, I'm one of the chosen ones. I'm going to heaven. Well, maybe you are, maybe you're not.

But the point is that's not what chosen refers to. Being chosen doesn't mean God chose some people to go to heaven and others not. It's that he chose some people to be his functionaries, to be his, his servants doing his will on earth, obeying his commands.

Yeah. His servants will be rewarded in this life and in the next. There's not, that's a, that's a separate issue.

God chose us for obedience to Jesus. That's something that's a responsibility. And Peter's very much into the need for obedience.

In verse 14 of this chapter, he says, as obedient children, we need to be like obedient children. In verse 22, he says, since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth, obedience is simply the description of what a Christian is. And Peter who wrote this also is speaking in Acts chapter five to the Sanhedrin, Acts 5, 32, Peter was speaking.

And he says, and we are his witnesses to these things. And so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him. So Peter, in describing Christians, it was natural for him to describe the Christians as the ones who obey Christ.

There's people in town who do obey Christ. They're, they're the Christians. There's people who don't obey Christ.

Obviously they're not the Christians. The Christians are the ones who obey him, said Peter in Acts 5, 32, and said, Peter, here that God has chosen us for obedience and to be obedient children. So here in the opening of the letter, before he actually gets into his subject matter, he's introduced quite a few theological points.

He's introduced the father, the son of the Holy Spirit as having separate roles in the life of the believer, the father in choosing us, the Holy Spirit in sanctifying us and Christ in, in commanding us and sprinkling us with his blood. The idea of being of course, that we are apparently the new Israel, the new diaspora chosen as Israel was chosen, sanctified as Israel was once sanctified and sprinkled with blood as Israel was once sprinkled with blood and obedient as Israel was supposed to be. But unfortunately in the old Testament failed to be.



So God has called us to step in where there was a failure before on Israel's part. And that's how he introduces his listeners to themselves. This is what you are.

All these things. God has had this involvement in all these ways in your life. Then of course he begins his subject matter after his grace and peace be multiplied, which we're not going to speak about that yet until we talk about grace later on in the epistle.

But we'll stop there because this is the end of an introduction and not only our introduction to first Peter, but his introduction to first Peter in those first two verses. Take the rest of the letter and subsequent sessions.