

## Standing Fast in the Grace of God

# About the Book of First Peter

### 1 Peter 1:1-2; 5:1, 12-13

We've spent recent months learning from Hebrews what it means to *serve God acceptably* – how faith draws us near to a holy God. But faith must now take its stand. Peter's first epistle picks up where Hebrews leaves off. If Hebrews brings us into the presence of God, 1 Peter sends us out into the pressure of the world. It's the same grace, the same Christ, and the same call – only now we learn not just how to worship in the temple, but how to witness in the trial. Hebrews shows us the root of our faith; 1 Peter shows us its fruit.

There's a bridge between Hebrews and First Peter:

1. The contextual bridge – from the Temple to the trials: Hebrews 12:1 with 1 Peter 1:6
2. The theological bridge – from faith to Grace (Hebrews emphasizes faith while 1 Peter emphasizes grace: both from the same source – Christ our great High Priest: Hebrews 11:6 with 1 Peter 5:12)
3. The practical bridge – from worship to witness: Hebrews 13:15; 1 Peter 2:9

Peter's first epistle is one of the richest portrayals of Christ and the Christian life under trial.

It opens and closes with grace (1:2; 5:12) – between those verses lies a call to steadfastness, holiness, and hope.

Peter presents Christ as:

- The Spotless Lamb (1:19)
- The Chief Cornerstone (2:6)

- The Shepherd and Bishop of souls (2:25)
- The Chief Shepherd (5:4)

He develops the doctrine of Christ:

- The incarnation (1:20)
- His sinless life (1:19; 2:22)
- His suffering and death (1:11; 2:23-24; 3:18; 4:1, 13; 5:1)
- His resurrection (3:21-22)
- His ascension (3:22)
- His presence at the right hand of God (3:22)
- His second coming (1:13, 17; 4:13; 5:1, 4)

He describes believers as:

- Obedient children (1:14)
- Newborn babes (2:2)
- Living stones (2:5)
- A holy priesthood (2:5)
- A royal priesthood (2:5)
- A holy nation (2:9)
- A peculiar people (2:9)
- Strangers and pilgrims (2:11)
- Christians (4:16)
- The righteous (4:18)
- The elect of God (1:2)
- The people of God (2:10)
- The oracles of God (4:11)
- The flock of God (5:2)

- Key thought: The same grace that saved Peter now strengthens every believer to stand.

## I. THE WRITER – PETER, THE APOSTLE OF GRACE (VS. 1A)

### A. His identity – “Peter”

1. Once *Simon the son of Jona* (John 1:42): now *Peter* – “a rock.”
2. His new name testified to the transforming power of grace. Grace turned a wavering fisherman into a steadfast leader.
3. Note: In *John 1:42*, Jesus calls him *Cephas* (Aramaic), meaning a *stone*. In Greek, that’s *Petros* – related to *petra* (“a rock”). The two words share the same root: *Petros*: a single stone; *Petra*: a large, immovable rock. The difference highlights that Peter would reflect the stability of the Rock (Christ), but not replace Him. This is found in Matthew 16:18.

#### Matthew 16:18

<sup>18</sup> And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter [Petros - a stone you can lift], and upon this rock [Petra - a cliff or bedrock base] I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

4. Illustration: The same lips that once denied Christ now declare Him with power (Acts 2:14). Grace rewrote his story.

### B. His commission – “an apostle of Jesus Christ”

1. “Apostle” (ἀπόστολος) – one sent with authority. The authority came from Christ.
2. Peter writes under divine commission, not of

his own wisdom.

John 21:15-17

<sup>15</sup> So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, *Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?* He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, *Feed my lambs.* <sup>16</sup> He saith to him again the second time, *Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?* He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, *Feed my sheep.* <sup>17</sup> He saith unto him the third time, *Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?* Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, *Feed my sheep.*

3. His calling as an apostle fulfilled the charge Christ gave him to "*Feed my sheep.*"

**C. His testimony – "a witness of the sufferings of Christ" (5:1)**

1. He saw the sufferings of the Lord with his own eyes.
2. He also knew the sorrow of personal failure and the sweetness of divine forgiveness.
3. The Lord restored him so that he could serve (Luke 22:32).

Luke 22:32

<sup>32</sup> *But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*

Application: God delights to use restored servants to steady the weak.

#### 4. The Apostle of Grace

- a) Paul is the theologian of grace – he defines it in doctrine (*Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 5:20*).
- b) Peter is the testimony of grace – he demonstrates it in restoration.
- c) Paul *explains what grace is*; Peter *shows what grace does*.
- d) Grace transformed Peter's pride into humility, his failure into faithfulness, his denial into devotion.
- e) From the bitter tears of Luke 22 to the triumph of Pentecost in Acts 2, Peter became a living testimony of God's grace.
- f) Note: Peter's two epistles begin and end with grace – 1 Peter 1:2; 5:12 and 2 Peter 1:2; 3:18 – because grace defined his life and ministry.

## II. THE READERS – STRANGERS SCATTERED BUT SECURED (1:1B-2)

### A. Their description – “strangers scattered”

1. The phrase (παρεπιδήμοις διασπορᾶς) is literally “sojourners of the dispersion.”
  - a) “Strangers” (*Parepidēmos*) means a temporary resident; one living away from his homeland. It pictures the believer as a pilgrim passing through this world (cf. Heb. 11:13; Phil. 3:20).

#### Hebrews 11:13

<sup>13</sup> These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers

and pilgrims on the earth.

Philippians 3:20

<sup>20</sup> For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

b) “Scattered throughout” (*diaspora*) was a familiar term to Jewish believers describing those scattered from Jerusalem, yet it fits every Christian living outside his true country – heaven.

2. Application: We live *in* the world but not *of* it. Every believer is a stranger with a heavenly citizenship and as ambassadorial purpose.

Peter was writing to people who felt out of place where they were, reminding them that they were placed exactly where they needed to be according to God’s plan.

## **B. Their dispersion – “Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia”**

1. These provinces stretched across northern Asia Minor (modern Turkey).
2. The gospel had already reached many of these regions through scattered believers and earlier missionary work (Acts 2:9).

Acts 2:8-11

<sup>8</sup> And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? <sup>9</sup> Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, <sup>10</sup> Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, <sup>11</sup> Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues

| the wonderful works of God.

3. Their scattering was not an accident but a strategy that God used to spread light where darkness reigned.
4. Application: God often moves His people by means of trial so that the message of Christ moves farther.

### **C. Their designation – “The elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father” (1:2)**

A deeper look at the term *elect* and the doctrine of election will be explored in the next message to clarify how Scripture defines it

What I will say here is that Peter’s emphasis here is pastoral (which he was - 5:1) rather than philosophical. He writes to assure suffering believers that they are not forgotten or abandoned, but known and purposed by God.

In days of persecution, believers needed to be reminded that they were part of God’s plan, not victims of chance. Their trials were not evidence of rejection, but proof of relationship.

## **III. THE REGION – THE PLACE AND COMPANIONS IN WRITING (5:13)**

### **A. The place – “the *church that is at Babylon*”**

Some believe this refers to the literal city of Babylon in Mesopotamia, where Jewish communities still lived. Others understand it as a symbolic name for Rome, a usage already common among first-century Jews and Christians to describe the world’s power opposed to God.

Whichever view one holds, the point of the verse isn't the geography but the grace: Peter was writing from a place of pressure to believers under pressure, reminding them that God's grace reaches His people wherever they are.

From this setting – whether the literal Babylon of the East or the symbolic Babylon of Rome – Peter sends greetings from fellow believers who were standing firm in the same grace. Though scattered in different places, they were united in the same faith and fellowship in Christ.

## **B. The people – “elected together with you”**

1. This refers to the congregation from which Peter wrote, joined in the same faith and favor of God.
2. The phrase reminds those suffering believers that they were not alone; that there were others standing firm with them in the same grace.

## **C. The partner – “Marcus my son”**

1. Identity: John Mark—the cousin of Barnabas (Col 4:10), companion of Paul and Peter.

Colossians 4:10

<sup>10</sup> Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)

2. History of restoration: once turned back from the missionary journey (Acts 13:13), he was later called “profitable for the ministry” (2 Tim 4:11).

Acts 13:13



<sup>13</sup> Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.

2 Timothy 4:11

<sup>11</sup> Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.

3. Peter calls him "my son," likely because Mark came to faith or maturity under Peter's ministry.
4. Lesson of grace: The same apostle who knew restoration now embraces another who experienced it.

#### IV. THE REASON – TO EXHORT AND TESTIFY OF TRUE GRACE (5:12)

##### A. The purpose stated – "I have written briefly"

This indicates he had more to tell them – and he quite possibly could have written more times to them but this was the only portion that was part of the inspired Scripture

##### B. The ministry described – "exhorting"

1. This word (παρακαλέω) means to call alongside, conveying both comfort and encouragement.

John 14:16

<sup>16</sup> And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

2. Peter's ministry was to stand beside suffering saints with the truth of grace.
3. Application: When we exhort others, it should sound like grace walking beside them, not law

standing over them.

**C. The message declared – “Testifying that this is the true grace of God”**

1. The verb “testifying” (ἐπιμαρτυρέω) means to bear strong or emphatic witness (the root of the word is where the English word “martyr” comes). It’s only used this one time in this form in the New Testament.
2. *“This is the true grace of God”* contrasts the genuine Gospel with counterfeit teachings that depend on works or ritual.

Acts 20:24

<sup>24</sup> But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

**D. The mandate given – “wherein ye stand”**

1. To “stand” (ἵστημι) means to take one’s place and remain unmovable.
2. Grace gives both our position before God and our power to persevere for God.
3. Standing implies active resistance, not passive existence (Eph. 6:13).

Ephesians 6:13

<sup>13</sup> Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

**V. THE REMINDER – GRACE: THE MESSAGE IN A WORD**

### **A. Grace introduces the epistle (1:2)**

From the first sentence, his focus is not on persecution but on provision—God’s multiplied grace.

### **B. Grace concludes the epistle (5:12)**

The letter that opened with grace now closes with it, framing every exhortation between two reminders of divine sufficiency.

#### **2 Peter 3:18**

<sup>18</sup> But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him *be* glory both now and for ever. Amen.

### **C. Grace defines the believer’s life**

1. Grace saves – Eph. 2:8-9
2. Grace strengthens – 2 Cor. 12:9: *“My grace is sufficient for thee.”*
3. Grace sustains – 1 Pet. 5:10

### **D. Grace glorifies God (5:11)**

Conclusion:

As we close this introduction to Peter’s first epistle, we are reminded that every line of this letter flows from the heart of a man transformed by grace and that same grace is still needed today. It saves us when we fall, strengthens us when we suffer, and steadies us when the world shakes around us.

So let us stand firm in the true grace of God, trusting the One who called us, knowing that His grace will carry us safely home.