

The First Epistle of Peter

Background

Peter most likely wrote this letter around 62-63 A.D. during the reign of Nero. Although persecution of Christians was widespread (i.e., happening in many places) during this time, it was also sporadic and was not because of an official government policy. Believers were often subjected to discrimination and verbal abuse and only occasionally physical abuse, a situation not unlike our own.

Audience

Peter's audience (1:1) was probably mostly Gentile Christians (1:14, 18; 4:3-4) scattered throughout Asia Minor, an ethnically, linguistically, and culturally diverse region

Exigency (occasion and purpose)

Peter is writing to encourage believers who are undergoing persecution and suffering because of their faith (1:6-7; 2:12, 18-20; 3:17; 4:12-19; 5:9). Suffering is part of the *sanctification* process. They should not give up hope, but should instead strive to live holy lives. God has promised that just as His Son suffered and was glorified, their suffering would end and they would one day share His glory (5:10).

Theme

Holy living (i.e., **holiness**) amidst suffering brings glory to God

Frequently Occurring Words

- (46) God
- (22) Christ
- **(16) Holy, holiness, sanctification**
- **(14) Glory, glorify**
- **(12) Suffering, persecution**
- (10) Grace, gracious
- (10) Forever
- (09) Jesus
- (08) Lord

- (08) Spirit
- (08) Man (i.e., human)
- (07) Living
- (07) Body, flesh

Other frequently occurring words:

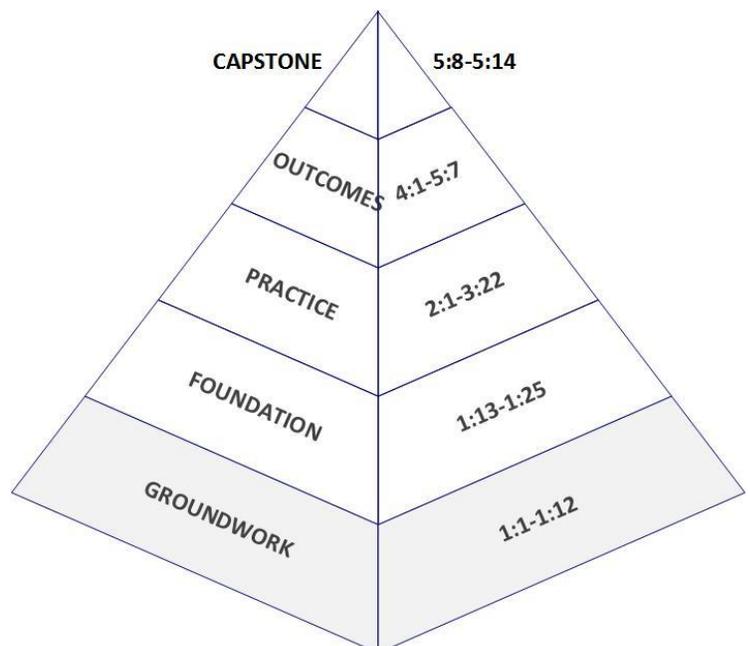
Called, Word, soul, conduct, sin, submission, stone, faith, outcome

Basic Structure of the Letter

Peter's prepares the doctrinal groundwork, lays a foundation of essential truths, and proceeds to practical instruction followed by a description of outcomes. His capstone provides hope for believers.

Foundational Passage: 1:13-16

Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."



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Outline

- I. Groundwork for Holiness (1:1-1:12)
 - A. The premise (1:1-1:2)
 - B. The prerequisite (1:3-1:12)
 - C. The promise (1:10-1:12)

- II. Foundation of Holiness (1:13-1:25)
 - A. The call (1:13-1:16)
 - B. The cost (1:17-1:21)
 - C. The culmination (1:22-1:25)

- III. Practice of Holiness (2:1-3:22)
 - A. In oneself (2:1-2:3)
 - B. Toward God (2:4-2:25)
 1. Holy priesthood (2:4-2:8)
 2. Holy nation (2:9-2:20)
 3. Holy flock (2:21-2:25)
 - C. Toward others (3:1-3:22)
 1. Wives to husbands (3:1-3:6)
 2. Husbands to wives (3:7)
 3. Everyone (3:8-3:22)
 - a) How we should act (3:8-3:12)
 - b) How we should react (3:13-3:17)
 - c) How Christ acted and reacted (3:18-3:22)

- IV. Outcomes of Holiness (4:1-5:7)
 - A. Holy living (4:1-4:6)
 - B. Holy service (4:7-4:11)
 - C. Holy suffering (4:12-4:19)
 - D. Holy leadership (5:1-5:4)
 - E. Holy submission (5:5-5:7)

- V. Capstone of Holiness (5:8-5:14)
 - A. Final instructions (5:8-5:9)
 - B. Future hope (5:10-5:11)
 - C. Family greetings (5:12-5:14)