

1. **Introduction:** Peter wrote from Rome (referred to in the letter as Babylon) about 63 AD.
 - The letter was dictated to Silvanus (5:12), a man skilled in Greek. Silvanus likely “polished” Peter’s dictation.
 - Silas is mentioned as a leader in the Jerusalem church where Peter likely became acquainted with him. Silas was one of the men sent to Antioch out with Paul and Barnabas to carry the results of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:22).
 - Peter wrote to believers, both Jews and Gentiles scattered throughout Asia Minor. Many Jews had moved there to avoid persecution.
 - As he wrote, Peter no doubt used both his Jewish background and his experience in Rome to create a message of truth that would communicate easily with both groups.
 - Peter draws extensively from the OT using texts and images that would be familiar to Jewish Christians. He often reminded his Gentile readers that, as believers, they had become recipients of grace and mercy as the people of God.
2. **Historical Background:** James and Paul wrote earlier letters known to Peter.
 - The Jerusalem Council was held in 49 AD. Nero was emperor from 54 -68 AD. James was martyred about 62 AD. Paul was martyred early in 67 AD. Peter was martyred early in 68 AD by being crucified upside down.
 - The Jewish war with Rome began in 66 AD. Rome conquered Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple in 70 AD.
3. **Rome Begins Persecuting Christians:** Most early Christians were Jews. They worshipped in their homes but also attended Synagogues.
 - Because Christians attended Synagogues, Rome considered Jesus’ followers to be a sect of Judaism which was the one religion Rome excused from emperor worship. Instead of emperor worship, Jews were permitted to offer prayers of the emperor.
 - As a sect of Judaism, Christians were not required to participate in emperor worship.
 - Eventually, conflict between Jews and Christians led to Christians being expelled from Synagogues and treated as breakers of the Law of Moses.
 - Rome then treated Christians as belonging to a separate religion. They were required to worship the emperor. Worshipping any other than God was forbidden to Christians. So they wouldn’t participate in worshipping the emperor, Christians were punished
 - Intensive and widespread persecution by the Romans began about 63 - 64 AD under Nero. Christians refused to worship the emperor and steadfastly proclaimed they had no king but Christ. That violated Roman Law.
4. **Situation When Peter Wrote:** From a human perspective, the future was dark.
 - Silvanus wrote what Peter dictated. He also was perhaps the messenger who delivered the letter. Silvanus was skilled in writing and taking dictation.
 - Silvanus (Silas) was also a close associate of Paul and assisted him in his writing.

- A common Roman saying (often heard even today) was, “*while there is life, there is hope.*” This adage certainly contains an element of truth. Life requires hope. People can survive with little water, food, shelter, clothing, and affection, but not without hope.
 - Victor Frankel, a German Jew, was an accomplished neurologist and psychologist.
 - He was arrested and suffered horrible treatment in Nazi concentration camps. Through observing himself and fellow prisoners, Frankel realized that the worst problem for those in the camps was the loss of all hope. With no hope, most people died.
 - Genuine hope, giving a purpose for living, enables life be sustained under circumstances that truly seem impossible to endure. Frankel did survive. He used what he learned as the basis for a new way of doing psychology – Logotherapy. Genuine hope gives purpose to life and appears to be necessary to sustain life.
5. **A Brief Overview of the Letter:** Peter wrote of hope at a time when the threat from Rome was growing. Believers’ hope was to be in God and His promises, a hope that will enable them to rise above abuse from those who dislike, distrust, and hate them. Their hope lies in believing and relying on Christ Jesus and His sure promises.
- Peter knew those he was writing had an urgent need for hope. Conditions were bad and getting steadily worse. Peter went straight to the point saying, Christ gives hope even in the worst times of hurt. You need hope? Then Christ has answers you need.
 - Peter reminded his readers that they had been born again into a “living hope,” a hope imperishable and unfading. Christ lives! He is hope.
 - Throughout the letter, Peter doesn’t try to dodge the truth that “suffering is real” (1:6-7; 2:18-19; 3:15-16; 4:12-16; 5:8-10). He doesn’t minimize the pain being experienced.
 - He says, when you suffer, remember painful trials are not the end. Hope in Christ brings relief even in times of terrible hurt, during dreadful suffering.
 - Jesus experienced dreadful pain through beatings, being nailed to the cross and hanging there for hours. During indescribable pain, Jesus looked to the future, arranging for His mother’s care and recognizing and rewarding the confession of the thief beside Him.
6. **Hope:** Peter develops an encouraging message of hope in three stages.
- **First**, he reminds his readers of their living hope (1:1-2, 12). Grace and peace can be theirs as they claim that hope (1:2-12), as they walk in holiness (1:13-25), and as they grow in Christ (2:1-12). Grace sustains.
 - Christ’s resurrection (1:3) demonstrated that believers have living hope.
 - Christ lives and rules. Because He rose from the dead and lives today, we have hope.
 - **Next**, Peter said, a believer’s hope is not in circumstances but despite circumstances.
 - Believers are like aliens and strangers (2:13-3:7) living in a land that is not their eternal home. How are they to behave in that alien land?
 - Believers are to submit to authorities (2:13-17). They are to be humble in spirit (3:8-22) and armed with endurance (4:1-6).

- **And**, believers are to glorify God (4:7-11) by being self-controlled and sober minded. They are to pray fervently and keep loving one another earnestly.
 - Serve one another using the gifts God has given *“by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever”* (1 Peter 4:11, NIV)
 - Peter instructs believers who live in a hostile world. They need grace to stand firm, and a calm hope through personal submission (3:6). In times of hurt and anguish, Jesus is our example of hope and endurance. Peter concludes with comforting words for those who suffer (4:12-5:14).
 - Believers should not be surprised at difficult circumstances which seldom reach the level of what Jesus suffered on the cross on our behalf. His suffering was especially great when the Father left Him for a time (2:12). Believers will never be left alone.
 - Keep rejoicing (4:13) and keep entrusting ourselves to God (4:19). Cast worries on Him (5:7). Believers rejoice at God’s love for us and grace to us. We are to keep our attention on the firm hope we have in Christ (4:19).
 - Jesus is the foundation of hope, built on the “rock of ages” not on the sand of futility.
7. **Hope, Faith, and Love in all Circumstances:** Three great Christian virtues are faith, hope, and love (1 Corinthians 13). The three are interrelated. A believer’s living hope is a present and future oriented dimension of faith and love.
- Hope is not an abstract concept. Believers’ hope is focused on specific promises of God, especially the promises that He cares for us, and we cannot fall out of His hand.
 - The great hope of every believer is the promise of Christ’s return and our future bodily resurrection (1 Peter 1:3, 21, 3:15).
 - Peter says a great deal about how possessing a living hope should impact believers’ lives. Jesus connects love to obedience (John 14:15). Believers should always strive to always grow their trust in God and demonstrate it by their obedience to Him.
 - Believers should strive to be holy as God is holy. In the fact of trials, believers are to have faith, be obedient, and have patience.
 - (1.) Faith is necessary to establish right belief. (2.) Obedience is necessary for right living. (3.) Patient trust in the Lord is necessary for comfort in suffering.

Verse-by-Verse Comments on Peter’s Letter

8. **1 Peter 1:1-2:** *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ² according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.*
- Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia are located north and west of Jerusalem in modern turkey, south of the Black Sea and north of Jerusalem.
 - Pontus and Bithynia was a single province. The separation of the two parts by Peter is likely the sequence encountered by the one who carried the letter to the churches.

- Landing in Pontus from a Black Sea port a messenger would go overland through portions of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia and into the province of Asia. From Asia, he would go north into Bithynia and probably back to Rome via the port of Byzantium.
 - Acts 2 mentions that people from Pontus, Cappadocia, and Asia were in Jerusalem at Pentecost when Peter preached his powerful sermon.
 - Some of those people were likely among the 3 thousand souls converted on the Day of Pentecost and have returned to their homes spreading the gospel.
 - Paul ministered in all the provinces mentioned. The churches to which Peter wrote consisted of mixed groups of Jewish and Gentile converts (1Pt1:18, 2:10, 4:3-4).
 - As elect exiles, believers experience a tension between being “in the world” but no longer “of the world.” Proper balance can be maintained by walking with the Spirit (Gal 5:25).
 - To maintain balance in thoughts, words, and actions, we must cooperate with the gracious work of the Spirit as He works to transform us into a character-likeness of Christ.
 - We must not grieve or quench the Spirit. If we fail to cooperate with the Spirit’s work, we tend to drift from one extreme to another – going from unworldly to worldly.
 - Without the Spirit’s balancing work, we tend to become worldly, unspiritual, and expediently humanistic or at the other extreme – ascetic, mystical, and escapist.
9. ***1 Peter 1:3-5: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.***
- With great mercy, love, and compassion, God graciously causes new spiritual life to be born in people who have been born physically but are spiritually dead.
 - The new birth of spiritual life is made possible by the atoning life and death of Jesus Christ as certified by His resurrection from the dead.
 - In the new spiritual birth, you are born into a living hope in which we have an assured inheritance. It is an indestructible inheritance. It cannot fade or spoil. It is undefiled by sin and kept by God for us in heaven.
 - In the here and now, God begins to give our inheritance in His gift of faith and love.
 - Peter’s reference to the “God and Father” of Jesus does not imply that the Father created the Son or in any way caused Him to exist. The Son always existed, (Jn 1:1-3).
 - As “the Son,” Jesus relates to the Father through Jesus’ human nature as a human father normally relates to a Son. The Father plans and directs, the Son responds and obeys. The Father “sends.” the Son goes as bidden (Gal 4:4; Jn 3:16, 18, 5:19).
 - The Father creates “through” the Son and all things come “from” the Father “through” the Son (Jn 1:3; 1Cor 8:6; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2).
10. **Next:** Begin with 1 Peter 1:6.