

I. Elect Exiles

August 31/September 2/3, 2020

1 Peter 1:1-2; 5:12-14

Aim: To introduce the letter of 1 Peter, and to be encouraged by the work of the Trinity in securing our salvation.

Gardner: The opening of this letter follows a standard form found in several other New Testament letters. It indicates who wrote the letter and his role, and then identifies the people who will receive the letter. A greeting then follows at the end of verse 2.

A. Author (1 Peter 1:1a; 5:12a, 13)

¹*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ...*

1. Peter

Gardner: The opening verse tells us that the apostle Peter was the author and from ancient times the church as accepted this.

Helm: According to verse 1 it claims Peter, the great and gregarious follower of Jesus, as its author. It is signed *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ*. Later on, as if to leave no doubt as to his identity, the writer confirms himself as Peter the Apostle by stating, ‘I exhort the elders among you, as a...witness of the sufferings of Christ’ (5:1). So, from the opening words to the final chapter, internal testimony supports the notion that the letter we are studying is from none other than Peter, a disciple of Jesus, an elder in the early church, an apostle, and a witness of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

a) Biography

Gardner: The author identifies himself as the apostle Peter of whom we read much in the Gospels and the Book of Acts. He was a brother to the apostle Andrew and made a living as a fisherman before being called by Jesus to follow Him (Mk. 1:16-17). His believing wife accompanied him on his travels for the Gospel (1 Cor. 9:5; Mt. 8:14).

McKnight: Peter...was a fisherman on the northern shore of Galilee, he was called by Jesus to follow Him (cp. Lk. 5:1-11; Jn. 1:35-42), he became the leader of the apostolic band (Mt. 10:2), he was the first to perceive Jesus as the Messiah (Mt. 16:17-19; Mk. 8:27-33), he tried to walk on water (Mt. 14:28-31), he denied Jesus (Lk. 22:21-23, 31-34, 54-71), he was restored (John 21:15-19), he was a primary leader of the new church formed at Pentecost (Acts 2-5), he received a magnificent vision about the unity of God’s people (Acts 10-11), he was miraculously released from prison (Acts 12:1-17), and he continued to have a ministry as far as Rome (cp. Acts 12:18-19; 15; Gal. 2:7-8; 1 Cor. 1:12; 9:5; 1 Peter; 2 Peter). We know that Peter’s ministry in Rome was so extensive that Roman Catholics see the foundation of their church in his ministry there; we also know that Peter’s ministry has become far too divisive of an issue between Roman Catholics and Protestants.

MacArthur: Peter was the acknowledged leader and spokesman of the Twelve; his name heads all four New Testament lists of the apostles (Mt. 10:2-4; Mk. 3:16-19; Lk. 6:13-16; Acts 1:13). Peter and his brother Andrew (who introduced him to Jesus [Jn. 1:40-42]) ran a fishing business on the Sea of Galilee (Mt. 4:18; Lk. 5:1-3). They were originally from the village of Bethsaida (Jn. 1:44), but later moved to the larger nearby town of Capernaum (Mk. 1:21, 29). The

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brothers' business was a successful one, which allowed them to own a spacious house in Capernaum (Mk. 1:29, 32-33; Lk. 4:38). Peter was married; Jesus healed his mother-in-law (Lk. 4:38-39); and his wife accompanied him on his missionary travels (1 Cor. 9:5).

MacArthur: A few weeks later, the Holy Spirit descended on Peter and the rest of the apostles, and from then on the “Rock” lived up to his name. He took the lead in finding a replacement for Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:15-26), fearlessly preached the gospel (2:14-40; 3:12-26), performed miraculous healings (3:1-9; 5:12-16), boldly confronted the Jewish authorities (4:8-20), and unhesitatingly disciplined sinning church members (5:1-11). It was Peter who confronted Simon the magician (Acts 8:20)... It was through Peter's ministry that the doors of the church were thrown open to the Gentiles (Acts 10:1-11:18).

MacArthur: After his appearance at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:7-12), Peter all but disappears from the historical record of the New Testament until he wrote his epistles. From Paul's account of their confrontation, it is evident that Peter visited Antioch (Gal. 2:11-21), and the reference to the Peter faction at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:12) suggests he may have visited that city as well... Paul alluded to Peter's missionary travels in 1 Corinthians 9:5, but the extent of those travels is not known. That the apostle addressed 1 Peter to churches in specific regions of Asia Minor may indicate that he had preached in those regions.

MacArthur: The strong tradition of the early church places Peter in Rome at the close of his life. He evidently was not there when Paul wrote Romans (c. 57 AD), since his name does not appear in the list of people Paul greeted (Rom. 16:1-15). Nor is it likely that Peter was in Rome during Paul's first imprisonment, since he is not mentioned in the Prison Epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon), which were written at that time. Peter most likely arrived in Rome after Paul's release from his first Roman imprisonment. It was there that he, like Paul, suffered martyrdom in connection with Nero's persecution. Since Nero died in 68 AD, Peter's crucifixion upside down, as tradition holds, undoubtedly occurred before that date.

McKnight: Perhaps more important for the interpretation of our letter, we can discern in Peter an ‘about-face’ over the question of Jesus' death; from outright rejection (Mt. 16:22) and denial (Lk. 22:54-71), to restoration (John 21), to preaching the death and vindication of Jesus (Acts 2), to finding in the death of Jesus the ultimate paradigm of Christian existence (1 Pe. 2:18-25). This trail of Peter's conversion is what lies beneath our letter; a Peter who found in Jesus' death and resurrection the secret of life.

b) Name

MacArthur: Peter's birth name was Simon, a common name in first-century Palestine (there are eight other Simons mentioned in the New Testament)... Peter's full name was Simon Barjona (Mt. 16:17), literally ‘Simon son of Jonas’ (or John; cp. Jn. 1:42). At their first meeting, Jesus named him Cephas (Jn. 1:42; cp. 1 Cor. 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5; Gal. 1:18; 2:9, 11, 14) which is Aramaic for ‘rock’; Peter is its Greek equivalent (Jn. 1:42). Peter was sometimes called ‘Simon’ in secular or neutral settings (e.g., in reference to his house [Mk. 1:29; Lk. 4:38], his mother-in-law [Mk. 1:30; Lk. 4:38], or his business [Lk. 5:3, 10]). At such times, the use of the name had no spiritual implications. But more significantly, Peter was called ‘Simon’ to mark the key failures in his life—those times when he was acting like his unregenerate self (Mt. 17:24-25; Mk. 14:37; Lk. 5:4-8; Lk. 22:31; Jn. 21:15-17).

Gardner: Jesus Himself had changed this man's name from Simon (a common Hebrew name meaning ‘hearing’ and linked to the Old Testament prophet Samuel's name ‘God has heard’) to

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Peter. The name change occurred after Simon had become the first person to confess that Jesus was the Messiah of whom the Old Testament prophets had spoken. He also proclaimed that Jesus was the Son of the living God. Jesus explained that this great confession of faith had come directly from God the Father and then, in a play on the word ‘rock,’ Jesus named Simon by the Aramaic name Cephas meaning ‘rock’ (Petros in Greek and hence ‘Peter’). As He did this, Jesus added: ‘on this rock I will build My church’ (Mt. 16:16-18). Peter thus becomes the first in a long line of believers throughout the ages who confess the same faith: that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.

McKnight: Another feature of his life that is fundamental for understanding his letter is that his original name was ‘Simon’ and only through a special calling by Jesus was it changed to ‘Cephas’ (or ‘Peter’) – ‘Cephas’ is an Aramaic word that is translated into Greek by ‘Peter.’ His name change included Jesus’ prediction of his role in the development of the early church. Simon would be a ‘foundation,’ a ‘rock’ (*petros*), upon whom the church would be built. In light of this, Peter developed the metaphor of Christians as ‘living stones’ (2:4-8).

c) *Apostle*

McKnight: While Paul’s greetings are frequently tinged with a necessity to defend himself, Peter’s apostolic status is not under question, leaving his title a simple, humble claim to authority (cp. 1 Peter 1:1; 5:1)... An *apostle* is one who was personally called by Jesus to a special ministry of founding the church, the corollary of that calling is that an apostle represents, as an ambassador does a president, the one who sent him. Peter, like the other apostles, was a personal representative of Jesus, and how people responded to Peter reflected how they responded to Jesus (cp. Mt. 10:40-42). Yet we should note that Peter does not brandish his authority like a saber; rather, he states his title here and then uses the more humble power of rhetoric and persuasion... Nonetheless, the letter is to be seen, not as the pious opinions of a well-wishing friend, but as the authoritative word of one who speaks for the Lord of the church Himself.

Gardner: The word *apostle* is used by Jesus in Luke 6:13 and applied to His closest twelve disciples. The word ‘apostle’ means ‘messenger’ and is first given to the twelve disciples chosen by Jesus. Later the apostle Paul was added to this special number. The fact that the apostles were eye-witnesses of Jesus gave their message a unique authority. They were God’s choice (e.g., Lk. 6:12-13) and appointed by Him as ‘servants of the word’ (Lk. 1:2). In their ministries, therefore, they carried the authority to be speaking from and for God in the way the prophets had spoken in the Old Testament. Though many go out as messengers of the gospel even today, the ministry of these apostles was unique in its authority and foundational status.

Gardner: From the Day of Pentecost onwards, when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples in power, the apostles have had the leading and guiding role in the church of Christ. The nature of the office and its authority, derived directly from Christ Himself, is affirmed here by the addition of the phrase *of Jesus Christ*, which is not attached to any other office in Scripture, not even that of prophet or teacher. Thus Peter, like Paul in the opening of his epistles, establishes clearly the authority with which he writes.

Sproul: The book of 1 Peter claims to be authored by the Apostle Peter, one of the two most important apostolic pillars of the early church. The basic distinction made in the early church was between Paul as the Apostle to the Gentiles and Peter as the Apostle to the circumcised Jews.

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Doriani: Peter wrote from a lifetime of wisdom and conviction. He experienced everything, not least the trials and suffering that he describes in his letter. He also walked with Jesus every day for roughly three years. Yet Peter drew on more than experience when he wrote his epistles. He was an apostle, God's ambassador, chosen by Jesus to see His deeds, hear His words, and declare what it all means. Peter was at ease with this authority. He did not trumpet his credentials. Rather, he assumed that he had the right to describe God's salvation and explain its significance.

d) *Defending Peter's Authorship*

(1) Internal Evidence

McKnight: Besides the name at the outset of the book, there are elements that confirm Peter as the author of the book. 1) The author has seen the sufferings of Jesus (2:21-24; 5:1). 2) Similarities between the teachings of Jesus and 1 Peter support an author who spent time with Jesus (cp. Lk. 12:35 and 1 Pe. 1:13; Lk. 11:2 and 1 Pe. 1:17; Mt. 5:16 and 1 Pe. 2:12; Lk. 6:28 and 1 Pe. 3:9; Mt. 5:10 and 1 Pe. 3:14). 3) There are also similarities between Peter's speeches in Acts and 1 Peter (cp. Acts 5:30, 10:39 with 1 Pe. 2:24; Acts 2:23 and 1 Pe. 1:20).

Gardner: In 5:1, the author refers to himself as 'a witness of Christ's sufferings.' Luke refers to Peter's presence during the worst of Christ's sufferings before His crucifixion (Lk. 22:54-62). In 5:13 the author refers to writing from Babylon, which clearly refers to Rome and to Mark who is with him. The early church spoke of the close relationship between Peter and the Gospel writer, Mark, and also placed Peter in Rome towards the end of his ministry. Indeed it was widely accepted that Peter died at the hands of the Emperor Nero in Rome.

Gardner: It is also noteworthy that the themes (and even some phrases) of the letter have remarkable overlaps with themes and phrases found in Peter's sermons recorded in the book of Acts (see Acts 2-5, 10, 15)... So, for example, it is worth comparing 1 Peter 1:10 with Acts 2:16-18, 29-31; 1:20 with Acts 2:23; 2:7 with Acts 4:11-12; 2:24 with Acts 5:30 and 10:39; and 4:5 with Acts 10:42.

MacArthur: Despite the cavils of the critics, the evidence strongly supports the letter's own claim to have been written by 'Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ' (1:1).

(2) External Evidence

Sproul: Concerning external testimony, the testimony of the early Christian church is universal and unanimous. This epistle was received in the very earliest times of Christian history, in the middle of the first century, as having come from Peter. That testimony is seconded by the greatest minds of the early centuries. It was affirmed by Irenaeus in his dispute against heresies, and by Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and the historian Eusebius. These are the most respected authorities outside the Bible in the early centuries of Christendom. Not until the nineteenth century in the throes of higher criticism did anyone seriously suggest that the epistle was not written by the Apostle Peter. Both the internal and external evidence agree that Peter the Apostle was the author.

(3) Quality of Greek

Gardner: The traditional view of apostolic authorship has been challenged on a number of grounds. Some have argued that the Greek in which the letter was written was too polished for an 'unschooled' and 'ordinary' man like Peter (Acts 4:13).

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Sproul: The Greek of this particular epistle is highly elegant. We think of Peter as an unschooled fisherman who, in all likelihood, would not have had the command of the Greek language displayed in this particular epistle.

MacArthur: The most telling argument for those who reject 1 Peter's authenticity is the linguistic one. A simple Galilean fisherman whose native language was Aramaic, they insist, could not have written the smooth, polished Greek of 1 Peter—especially a man described in Acts 4:13 as 'uneducated and untrained.' A corollary argument is that Peter, not a native speaker of Greek, would not have quoted from the Septuagint, as the writer of 1 Peter does.

Helm: 'This letter is simply too well written to come from Peter the Apostle.' So we arrive, even before we begin, at a contemporary charge against this piece of divine mail. There is nothing to be gained by hiding this from you. A veritable gaggle of scholars feel that the Greek used in this letter is too elevated for Peter—the vocabulary too rich and uncommon—the engaging rhetorical flow too far above the intellectual capacity of an uneducated first-century fisherman like Peter.... To support their claim, they appeal to Acts 4 where Peter is referred to as an 'uneducated [and] common' man (Acts 4:13)....

McKnight: Some, however, have argued that the Greek style of 1 Peter is simply too accomplished for Peter (cp. Acts 4:13).... Could an 'unschooled' man like Peter have written this book in such good Greek? The argument is solid but not unimpeachable. In fact, evidence from Acts suggests that Peter was in fact eloquent for someone who had not been educated (in the rabbinic manner?); this eloquence satisfies the evidence of 1 Peter.... In short, while the major obstacle of Petrine authorship style is serious enough that it must be given fair attention, the preponderance of evidence commends the traditional authorship. I will assume that Peter did in fact write this letter.

MacArthur: There are good responses to each of these allegations. First, some have exaggerated the classical affinities of the Greek of 1 Peter. Second, the epistle contains Semitic expressions consistent with Peter's Jewish background. Third, Peter was from Galilee, which even in Isaiah's day was known as 'Galilee of the Gentiles' (Is. 9:1). Greek, along with Aramaic and Hebrew, was commonly spoken throughout Palestine..... That was especially true in Galilee, where Hellenistic influence was strong, and which area was near the Gentile region known as the Decapolis. As a businessman in Galilee, Peter would almost certainly have been fluent in Greek. In addition, Peter (Acts 15:14) and his fellow Galileans Andrew and Philip had Greek names. Matthew and James, also Galileans, wrote New Testament books in excellent Greek. Fourth, Peter penned this epistle after three decades of traveling and ministering among largely Greek-speaking people, which would have given him even greater proficiency in Greek. Fifth, it was only natural for Peter to quote the Septuagint, since that was the version most of his readers were familiar with. Sixth, the phrase 'uneducated and untrained' in Acts 4:13 does not mean that Peter was illiterate, but rather that he was a layman, with no rabbinic training (cp. Jn. 7:15). Nor are scholars the only ones capable of producing literary masterpieces.

Sproul: Natives of Galilee in ancient Palestine were bilingual. They spoke Aramaic and Greek. Therefore, Greek was a native language of Peter's. Even though he had no formal schooling under Gamaliel, Hillel, or any rabbi in Jerusalem, he was certainly not unintelligent, and he was articulate, as we see in the record of his speeches, particularly on the day of Pentecost.

Gardner: It should be noted that the comment in Acts 4 is a polemic. It is made by 'the rulers, elders, and teachers of the law' who undoubtedly had an inflated view of themselves as the only

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people truly educated in matters of the faith! The word ‘unschooled’ most likely refers, in fact, to their being what we might call ‘laymen’ with regard to the Jewish faith. It is unwise to draw conclusions about his ability to speak and write good Greek when the comment is aimed at his lack of formal religious teaching.

Helm: The charge that Peter and John were ‘uneducated, common men’ can certainly be perceived as a derogatory one. Yet, and this is important, these words were not used by the biblical scholars of Peter’s day to level a negative verdict on whether or not the man standing before them was actually Peter the Apostle. Rather, these precise terms were the only ones available to adequately express their astonished surprise at the superior ability and elevated style of *this man*, Peter. In other words, these men were amazed that one so ordinary could also be one so well-spoken. Now, with this knowledge in place, the irony of the contemporary charge leveled against apostolic authorship for our letter is unmasked. If the terms *uneducated* and *common* were the ones employed by the elite of Peter’s day to support—not to deny—his person, then certainly the pundits of our day should be willing to consider that this same Peter could possess the ability to write well. In fact, if we are honest, all of us should be willing to admit that someone who is so well-spoken might also have the capability of becoming so well-written.

(4) Other Arguments

MacArthur: Despite the clear testimony of the early church, modern unbelieving skeptics, as they do with most of the rest of the New Testament books, deny the authenticity of 1 Peter. Some see in it a slavish dependence on the writings of Paul, and argue that could not have characterized a genuine writing of Peter, who was himself an eminent apostle. It is true that Peter was familiar with at least some of Paul’s writings, since he refers to them in 2 Peter 3:16. Yet the similarities between 1 Peter and Paul’s epistles are not so great as to demand literary dependencies.

Sproul: Much of the content of 1 Peter sounds almost identical to the teachings of the Apostle Paul. We know from the book of Acts that Paul and Peter did not always see eye to eye, yet this epistle reads almost like a carbon of Paul’s letters..... Although Paul and Peter were separate men and had separate emphases in their ministries, they both wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and the message they communicated was the same gospel, the same ethic, the same truth. Therefore, to see striking similarities in their teaching content is exactly what we would expect from men writing under the inspiration of the Spirit.

MacArthur: Another argument advanced by those who reject Petrine authorship is that the persecution in view in 1 Peter took place under the Emperor Trajan (98-117 AD). That, of course, was well after Peter’s lifetime, and thus he could not be the author of this epistle.... But the concept of suffering for the name of Christ (4:16) was not new to 1 Peter; it was introduced by Jesus Himself (Mk. 13:13; cp. Acts 5:41; 9:16).

Sproul: Additionally, the circumstances that prompted the writing of this letter presumably involved suffering under persecution. We know from history that the persecution by the Roman Empire against Christians did not extend beyond the city of Rome until much later, toward the end of the first century and into the second century, with the persecutions of Diocletian and Domitian. Since the occasion of the letter was to comfort people in persecution, the critics say it could not have been written during the lifetime of Peter because Peter was martyred in Rome in 64 AD.... To the best of our knowledge, the imperial persecutions against Christianity did not reach the outer parts of the Empire until late in the first century and early into the second century, long after Peter was martyred by being crucified upside down in Rome. However, local

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persecutions were constant in every decade and in every place, such as Paul suffered while on his missionary journeys in Asia Minor. People converted to Christianity in those areas constantly faced local hostility and persecution, which were keenly felt, even though not delivered by the sword of Rome.

MacArthur: Others argue that Peter, a companion of Jesus, would have included more personal reminiscences of the Lord in his epistle. But it is precisely the *presence* of such reminiscences in 2 Peter that causes critics to reject its authenticity (cp. 2 Pe. 1:16-18; 3:2). They cannot have it both ways. Nor are such reminiscences entirely lacking in 1 Peter (5:1; cp. 5:2 with Jn. 21:16; 5:5 with Jn. 13:3-5). In a related theme, 1 Peter contains striking parallels to Peter's sermons recorded in Acts (cp. 1:10-12 with Acts 3:18; 1:17 with Acts 10:34; 1:20 with Acts 2:23; 1:21 with Acts 2:232; 2:4, 7 with Acts 4:11; 3:22 with Acts 2:33; 4:5 with Acts 10:42; the use of *xulon* ['cross'; lit., 'wood'] in 2:24 and Acts 5:30 and 10:39).

McKnight: Other arguments include: 1) affinities to *1 Clement* (c. 96 AD); 2) the seeming spread of the gospel throughout Asia Minor and the need for sufficient time for such a spread; 3) a shift toward the government from Romans 13 to 1 Peter, and 4) the late use of the term 'Babylon' (5:13), since parallels to this metaphorical description of Rome are found only after 70 AD (after Peter's presumed death).

2. Silvanus (5:12a)

¹²*By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you...*

a) Faithful Brother

Doriani: *Silas* and *Silvanus* are probably variant forms of one name, like *Pete* and *Peter*. Most scholars believe the *Silvanus* mentioned here is the *Silas* mentioned seventeen times from Acts 15 to 18.

Sproul: Who is *Silvanus*? Most commentators agree that the name *Silvanus* is another way of spelling the name *Silas*, the man who traveled with Paul on his missionary journeys and rose to great importance in the early church. Presumably Peter entrusted this epistle to *Silas* to deliver to the recipients.

Gardner: *Silas* (or *Silvanus*) has acted as Peter's personal assistant in the writing and/or delivery of this brief letter. For Peter, *Silas* was a *faithful brother*. No doubt he had helped Peter in his missionary work and preached the gospel of Christ, but he had also served the apostle's personal needs. He had not run away when Peter was arrested but rather remained true to his Christian brother. Elsewhere in the New Testament, a "Silvanus" or "Silas" is mentioned, and he is probably the same person as is referred to by Peter here. Certainly *Silas* was a faithful brother helping the apostle Paul in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and Corinth, and even being sent to prison with Paul (see Acts 16:19, 25 where he and Paul are found singing praise to God in prison, 29; 17:4, 10, 14; 18:5). It is unlikely that *Silas* was known to the Christians to whom Peter had written, which is why Peter commends him with the introduction *whom I regard as a faithful brother*. Peter wants them to know just what a faithful and steadfast brother *Silas* has been.

MacArthur: The loyalty of a fellow servant of Christ was on the apostle's mind as he mentioned *Silvanus*, another name for *Silas*, who traveled with Paul (Acts 15:40; 16:25) and sometimes appears in his letters (2 Cor. 1:19; 1 Th. 1:1; 2 Th. 1:1). *Silas* was a prophet (Acts 15:32-40) and Roman citizen (Acts 16:37) who for this letter was Peter's amanuensis, or secretary. He

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recorded the apostle's words and later delivered the letter to its intended recipients. Peter calls him a *faithful brother*, a model of fidelity to the truth and the church, and to Peter himself, as indicated by the personal parenthesis (*for so I regard him*).

b) Secretary

Gardner: A further question arises with regard to the statement in 5:12 that Silvanus wrote the epistle. Perhaps it was not Peter, but, in fact, Silvanus who actually wrote the letter. The Greek may simply mean that Silvanus carried the letter to the readers. On the other hand, it may well mean that Peter used Silvanus as his amanuensis. The use of a 'secretary' in this way was certainly not unknown in the ancient world (see Rom. 16:22)... If Peter used Silvanus in this way, then it could be that it was he who produced the polished Greek. Generally, however, this seems unlikely and there is no good reason for suggesting Peter could not have produced such Greek himself.

Sproul: The first reason that Peter's authorship is questioned is that at the end of the epistle, when the final greetings are given, there is a greeting to the people from Silvanus, which indicates his involvement in the production of the letter. As a result, people say that the letter was not written by Peter but by Silvanus... The role of Silvanus in the production of this letter was, in all probability, that of an amanuensis or secretary. The Apostle Paul customarily had a secretary to whom he dictated the substance of his message. We do not know what language he used to dictate it, but it was inscribed by the amanuensis in Greek. If Silvanus was Silas, he would have been capable of writing at a high level of the Greek language, and if he wrote the epistle under the supervision and even the dictation of the Apostle Peter, that would account for the eloquence of the Greek without denying Petrine authorship.

MacArthur: Finally, it was common for ancient writers to use an amanuensis, or secretary, to assist them in writing their books. Though he was a highly educated scholar (Acts 26:24), Paul made use of such an amanuensis (Rom. 16:22; cp. 1 Cor. 16:21; Col. 4:18; 2 Th. 3:17). Peter also used one in his writing 1 Peter, dictating his letter to Silvanus (5:12), who may have, under Peter's supervision, smoothed out the apostle's literary style.

c) Messenger

McKnight: Some contend that 1 Peter 5:12 describes Silas as contributing to the letter—perhaps polishing Peter's ideas... For years scholars have argued that the expression 'with the help of Silas' described Silas's help in *writing* the letter. Such aid, it was argued, helps explain how 'unschooled, ordinary men' (Acts 4:13), among whom was Peter, could write a letter as refined as 1 Peter. Such a view is permissible. (Literally, the Greek has, 'Through Silas, to you, the faithful brother...I write.' The issue is what 'through'—*dia*—means here. Cp. 2 Th. 2:2, where *dia* is used with the clear implication that it was written, not sent, 'through us.'). On the other hand, some today argue that Silas was the one who delivered the letter. The preponderance of literary evidence supports the second position, for ancient expressions similar to Peter's wording here almost uniformly speak of the carrier of the letter, not an amanuensis.

Dorani: The phrase 'by Silvanus' means either that the epistle was delivered by Silvanus or that Peter wrote through him... The word *by* translates the Greek word *dia*, which can mean 'by' or 'through.' If Peter wrote *through* Silvanus, then Silvanus wrote the actual words of the letter. He might have taken dictation as Peter spoke. But that seems unlikely, since the letter has complex and elegant sentences, suggesting skillful, painstaking composition. Others think Peter wrote through Silvanus because he was an amanuensis, a literary secretary who had freedom to

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express Peter's thought as he judged appropriate. Some scholars are drawn to this idea, since they wonder how Peter, a Galilean fisherman, could acquire the substantial literary skill that the epistle displays. The NIV translation seems to support the view that Silas/Silvanus aided the composition of 1 Peter when it translates our phrase 'with the help of Silas' in 5:12.

Doriani: But the notion of a literary secretary has flaws. First, it is speculative; there is no evidence that Silvanus had literary training. Second, talent can surface outside schools; many great writers have no formal training. Third, if Silvanus did compose 1 Peter, it seems boastful that he would call himself 'a faithful brother as I regard him.' And who would be the *I* the sentence 'With the help of Silas, whom *I* regard as a faithful brother, *I* have written to you'? For him to promote himself in that way would clash with Peter's teaching on humility.

Doriani: But there is reason to believe that Silvanus delivered the letter, so that it came *by* his hand. In the Greek, the phrase 'by Silvanus' resembles Acts 15:22-23, where the Jerusalem Council appointed respected messengers, including Silvanus himself, to deliver a letter to the entire church. Finally, it makes sense to call Silvanus a 'faithful brother' if he delivered the letter. The messenger might need to explain aspects of its contents, and Peter's commendation would lend him authority to do so.

3. Mark (5:13b)

...sends you greetings and so does Mark, my son.

Gardner: The additional reference to *Mark*, indicates that he is known to the churches but is also closely working with Peter. This also reminds us that Mark, the Gospel writer, had eye-witness testimony right beside him as he and Peter ministered together. Peter regards Mark as his spiritual *son*, but is not referring her to a physical descendent. Peter had helped the young man Mark to grow up spiritually.

MacArthur: The believers in Rome demonstrated true love and affection by sending their *greetings*, as did Mark, whom Peter called *my son*, a designation indicating he was the apostle's spiritual son (as Timothy was to Paul). This is the John Mark mentioned in Acts 12:12. He was Barnabas's cousin, and accompanied Paul and him to Antioch and Cyprus (12:25; 13:4-5). He later deserted them at Perga (13:13), which caused Paul to refuse to take him along on the apostle's second missionary journey (15:36-41). Paul later found John Mark to be useful to him (2 Tim. 4:11); Mark was also the author of the gospel that bears his name.

Sproul: I doubt very much that Peter is using the term 'son' in a biological manner but rather as Paul referred to Timothy. As Timothy was Paul's son in the Lord so Peter describe Mark as his spiritual son. Peter is almost certainly indicating John Mark, the one who went with Paul on a missionary journey but was sent back. He did not make it as a missionary; the Apostle Paul had to fire him so that Mark could find his vocation. Afterward Mark went home and wrote the Gospel of Mark, which we believe to be, in a very real sense, Peter's gospel, because Peter stood behind Mark as he penned it. Now Peter makes mention against of Mark and sends Mark's greetings along.

4. Babylon (5:13a)

¹³*She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings...*

MacArthur: Three possible locations have been suggested for the 'Babylon' from which Peter wrote. Some argue for the ancient city of Babylon in Mesopotamia, but that region was sparsely

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populated in Peter's day. It is unlikely that he, Mark, and Silvanus would all have been there at the same time. Others point to a Babylon on the Nile River in Egypt. It, however, was little more than a Roman military outpost, and again it is highly improbable that Peter (along with Mark and Silvanus) would have taken up residence there. 'Babylon' is most likely a cryptic name for Rome, chosen because of the Imperial capital's debauchery and idolatry (which will characterize the Babylon of the end times; cp. Rev. 17, 18). With persecution looming on the horizon, Peter took care not to endanger the Christians in Rome, who might have faced further difficulties if this letter had been discovered by the Roman authorities. The strong association of Peter with Rome in early tradition further supports the view that the apostle wrote 1 Peter from Rome.

Gardner: Peter almost certainly wrote this epistle from Rome towards the end of his ministry. The mention of 'Babylon' refers to Rome (5:13). We know from other sources that Mark, also mentioned in 5:13, lived in Rome (e.g., Col. 4:10). The order in which the provinces are listed in 1:1 suggests travel eastwards from Rome on a circuit that eventually came back westwards. All this fits with the tradition that strongly affirms that Peter ended his ministry in Rome.

Gardner: Babylon as a metaphorical name for Rome. It is used in this way also in Revelation 17:4-6, 9, 18. There in Revelation 17:9 seven hills are mentioned which must be the seven hills for which Rome is famous. Babylon in Mesopotamia is on a plain. In Jewish thought Babylon had become a synonym for a place of great idolatry where the true God was despised and where God's people had been held in captivity. It was natural for both Jews and Christians therefore to apply the name to Rome which, by Peter's day, was the capital of the world and therefore of evil, corruption, and idolatry.

MacArthur: His love for the believers in the church at Rome, from where he wrote, is seen in the designation *she who is in Babylon*, which is an oblique reference to that church.... 'Babylon' is possibly Peter's code word or alias for Rome (cp. Rev. 14:8 where John uses Babylon to represent the entire world system controlled by Antichrist; also see 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21). Some commentators suggest Babylon summarized Rome's link to false religions. But it may be better to understand that with persecution intensifying, Peter was careful not to endanger the Roman Christians. Having written from Rome, Peter did not want his manuscript discovered and the church to be persecuted even more. Therefore he made no mention of Rome, leaving any curious and hostile authorities ignorant that this letter originated in their imperial capital.

Gardner: *She who is in Babylon* is the church that meets in Rome, where...it is likely Peter himself resided when he wrote the letter. She is *chosen* by God, like the churches Peter writes to. Greetings come from one church to another as they no doubt pray for each other and send messengers back and forth.

McKnight: Because Babylon was a notorious place of sin, it became a figurative expression for any place known for its sinfulness (cp. Rev. 14:8; 17:18; 18:2, 10, 21). However, it may be used here simply to describe where Christians have been deported from the homeland of Judea. In this case, it is the counterpart to 'scattered' (*diaspora*) in 1:1. The description of Babylon as 'chosen' favors the second view; interestingly, election is also found in 1:1; in either case, it surely describes Rome, and early Christian tradition confirms that Peter wrote from Rome.

Dorani: 'Babylon' is not the literal city, but code for 'Rome.' If the gods that oppose the faith are oppressive power, materialism, and false religion, Rome and Babylon are two cities that offered both power and wealth, both violence and sensual indulgence (Is. 46-47; Rev. 17-18). If

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Peter dwells in Rome/Babylon, his flock should see that he stands with them. Even if many miles separate the apostles and the churches, they live in the same setting.

Sproul: Some have speculated that ‘she who is in Babylon’ was Peter’s wife. Earlier, Jesus had healed Peter’s mother-in-law, so we know that some point Peter was married. However, the ‘she’ here almost certainly refers to the church, which is given a feminine title throughout the Bible. Babylon is the code name, as it were, among biblical writers of the first century, for the city of Rome. If Peter is writing this epistle from the city of Rome, he is telling its recipients that not only does he greet them but that the whole church in Rome greets them as well.

5. Date

MacArthur: The most probable date for 1 Peter is just before Nero’s persecution, which followed the great fire that ravaged Rome in the summer of 64 AD. The absence of any reference to martyrdom makes it less likely that the epistle was written after the persecution began, since numerous Christians would by then have been put to death.

Gardner: This letter was probably written around the years 62 or 63, perhaps shortly before the worst of the persecutions under Emperor Nero broke out in Rome.

McKnight: If Peter can be argued reasonably to be the author, then our letter was written prior to 64 or 65 AD, when Peter was martyred at the hands of Nero. In light of the number of references to suffering and persecution in 1 Peter, we maintain that Peter wrote this letter near the outset of Nero’s persecution of the church—perhaps between 62 and 65. Indeed, Peter’s conciliatory attitude toward the state (2:13-17) and his optimism about Christian life in the context of an unbelieving society (2:11-3:12) suggest that Peter wrote this letter near the beginning of Nero’s persecutions and that it is an early strategy for coping with serious problems from the state. We even dare to suggest that if Peter had waited five more years to write this letter, it would have been rearranged considerably. (And Peter could not have written it!)

B. Audience (1 Peter 1:1b-2a)

Gardner: Peter now provides a rather longer description than is usual of the people to whom he writes. He establishes the geographical area in which they lived and then describes the recipients in deeply theological terms drawn from the Old Testament.

McKnight: Peter’s salutation is one of the richest greetings to open a letter in the New Testament. It contains pastoral warmth and theological sweep.... Peter’s salutation contains both a penetrating description of the audience and a theological explanation of how they became Christians.

Helm: He uses three strong nouns to describe his audience: ‘*elect exiles of the dispersion.*’ In time you will see that these three words function as floor joists to the book. They undergird and support everything that Peter wants to say. Like flowers in a garden, the ideas and concepts hidden in these strong nouns will open in full bloom. In fact, one could argue that everything in 1 Peter flows from the force of these three simple words.

1. Who They Are (1:1b)

To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia...

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a) Geography



MacArthur: Pontus was in the far north, and Jewish pilgrims from there were in Jerusalem during the extraordinary events of Pentecost (Acts 2:9). The province was also the home of Aquila (Acts 18:2), the Jew who with his wife Priscilla became Christians in Rome and subsequently ministered with Paul (Acts 18:18). Galatia was in central Asia Minor and contained the towns of Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium where Paul ministered several times (Acts 14:1-13; 16:1-5; 18:23). Cappadocia was located in the east portion of Asia Minor, north of Cilicia, and is also mentioned in connection with the Acts 2:9 pilgrims. Asia included most of western Asia Minor and contained such subdivisions as Mysia, Lydia, Caria, and much of Phrygia. The province was the site of extensive ministry by Paul on his third journey (Acts 19:10) ... and is mentioned twelve other places in Acts. Bithynia was located in northwest Asia Minor near the Bosphorus, the strait separating the European and Asian sections of modern Turkey. This province is mentioned only one other place in the New Testament, when the Holy Spirit, during Paul's second missionary journey, forbade him from entering it (Acts 16:7).

Gardner: These were Roman provinces in modern day northern Turkey, an area where Peter had traveled and evangelized. The province of Pontus and Bithynia and the province of Cappadocia had coastlines bordering the Black Sea while Asia (bordering the Aegean Sea) and Galatia lay to the south. The description of these people suggests they were probably somewhat isolated groups scattered across wide areas and lived in many villages and towns

MacArthur: Peter addressed his epistles to Christians residing in 'Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,' regions within the Roman Empire that are now part of Turkey. The order in which they are named may reflect the route the bearer of the letter (Silvanus; 5:12) took when he delivered it.

McKnight: It has been suggested that the order of the provinces reflects the order in which the letter would have traveled and been read (beginning in the northern region traveling southerly to Galatia and Cappadocia, and then returning back to Bithynia through the province of Asia). We can be certain that the letter was taken to the major cities in these provinces, cities that were thriving and growing according to the pulses of the Roman empire.

MacArthur: It is not known for certain how the gospel spread to those regions. Paul ministered in at least part of Galatia and Asia, but there is no record of his evangelistic work in Pontus, Cappadocia, or Bithynia. In fact, he was forbidden by the Holy Spirit from entering Bithynia (Acts 16:7). It may be that Paul's converts founded some of the churches (cp. Acts 19:10, 26).

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And others may have been founded by those who were converted on the day of Pentecost (cp. Acts 2:9). Peter also may have ministered in those regions, though there is no record of that in Acts.

Gardner: Peter is writing to churches across what is now much of modern day Turkey. The speed of the spread of the gospel even to the more remote areas of these provinces along the Black Sea coast and into its hinterland is remarkable. By the start of the second century even the villages knew of the Christian faith and the commerce of the idol temples had largely come to a halt. People from all classes in society had been reached with the gospel. As persecutions broke out and became more intense many of them recanted, but still the number of Christians was so great as to cause serious concern to the Roman authorities.

MacArthur: As the geographical areas Peter mentioned in his salutation indicate, this letter had a very wide circulation. No doubt, in each of those areas, churches received and read the letter... So he was writing to a large number of believers scattered as spiritual aliens throughout a hostile, pagan region.

Doriani: These named areas represent millions of people across an area of roughly the size of Turkey or America's Southwest from Texas to California (about 750,000 square miles). In short, this is a universal letter, not a local letter.

a) *Elect*

MacArthur: As spiritual aliens, the most important thing for Peter's readers was not their relationship to earth but their relationship to heaven... Understanding that truth, Peter identifies his audience as those *who are chosen (eklektos)*. The apostle reiterates this concept in 2:9... Peter's Old Testament allusions in that verse make it plain that he knew God had sovereignly chosen Israel (Dt. 7:6; cp. 14:2; Ps. 105:43; 135:4)... God's sovereign love also prompted His choice of the church (Eph. 1:11; 2 Th. 2:13)... Jesus also did not hesitate to unambiguously and unapologetically teach the truth of election (Jn. 6:44; 13:18; cp. Lk. 10:20; 18:7; Jn. 17:6, 9).

McKnight: To be 'elect' means to receive God's grace; this benefit is the result of God's initiative, not ours. In other words, God has called us to His love and grace, He has prompted our faith through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, and He claims our allegiance (cp. Jn. 15:16; Rom. 8:28; 1 Cor. 1:9; Eph. 4:1; 2 Th. 2:14; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pe. 1:15; 2:4, 6, 9, 21; 3:9; 5:10). To be one of God's elect is a source of joy and comfort (for we know God's will cannot be thwarted) and of exhortation and demand (for we know God is working in us to enable us to do His will).

Helm: The word translated 'elect' simply means 'chosen.' Throughout the Bible *chosen* is the intimate term most often used to speak of those whom God loves (cp. Ez. 16:4-14)... Israel became God's chosen. They were His elect. Although born helpless and vulnerable, they were given life through God's electing love. Do you see the comfort associated with this word *elect*? The term *elect* is meant to encourage the church. It is to remind the people of God of His great love. It is not a term to be waved in front of those who don't yet know God. It should be used to bring comfort for those in the faith. Peter intended to assure his early dispersed readers of God's steadfast love. And certainly they would have basked in the reassuring strength of the word,

Gardner: The letter's recipients are *elect...chosen*. There is great comfort in this word. These people, as we shall see in the epistle, lived in difficult situations. They were and often felt like *strangers* in the world where they were serving God. But they are God's *chosen* people. Like

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the Israelites before them, called by God to be a people who would serve Him, so the readers are reminded that God has always intended that they should be His people and should serve Him where He has placed them, in these Roman provinces. Their election by God reminds them that they are Christians simply by God's grace, His undeserved mercy and love; it also reminds them that they are chosen for a purpose, and that God will keep them and protect them as they fulfill His will for them (cp. Dt. 7:6-8).

b) *Exiles*

Peter refers to these people as *strangers in the world*. The single Greek word translated in this way is used of those who are temporary residents in a land, not necessarily 'strangers' to those around, but also not citizens of the area. The same Greek word is sometimes translated by the old word 'sojourner' which is used of Abraham, for example, who was a temporary resident in the land of the Hittites in Genesis 23:4.... These Christians, as descendants of Abraham, are people who live in the Roman provinces mentioned but whose true home lies elsewhere. Their status, like Abraham's in Hittite Canaan, is temporary. Later Peter will show that they will one day be truly confirmed and established in the glory of God (5:10). The question that Peter will therefore address in various ways in this epistle has to do with how Christians who find themselves to be like resident aliens, both at home yet not at home in this world, should live.

MacArthur: The apostle describes his readers in their earthly condition as *aliens*. *Parepidēmois* ('aliens') can denote those who are temporary residents, or who are foreigners or refugees (cp. Gen. 23:4; Ex. 2:22; 22:21; Ps. 119:19; Acts 7:29; Heb. 11:13).

McKnight: The Greek word [in 2:11] for 'foreigners' or 'aliens' (*paroikos*) refers to people who reside in a given place without the legal protection and rights provide for citizens (i.e., non-citizen residents); the Greek word [in 1:1] for 'strangers' (*parepidemos*) refers to people who reside in a place but who stay there only for a brief time (temporary residents).

Dorani: The church is privileged by God; we are His chosen ones. Yet at the same time, and for the same reason, the church is disadvantaged in society. Because believers are God's chosen people, we are 'strangers' or 'exiles' in our own world. The word *stranger* or *exile* (*parepidemos*) denotes a temporary resident, a travel whose stay is measured in weeks or a few months. The term *alien* (*paroikos*), used in 1 Peter 2:11, is similar but suggests a long-term resident. It could describe an immigrant from a distant place who has lived in another land for several years, started a career, and founded a home. Both terms signify that the person originally belonged elsewhere. Peter wants believers to realize that we never fully belong in this world. Strangers have no permanent residence. Aliens cannot hold positions of power and rarely enjoy full privileges. This is essential to a Christian's identity. People in Reformed and Calvinist churches have committed to engage the culture rather than fleeing from it, and rightly so. Yet we must remember that we are exiles and therefore will never be complexly at home in this world.

c) *Dispersion*

MacArthur: The apostle further identifies them as people who were *scattered throughout* various locales. 'Scattered' translates *diaspora*, from which root another English term, *dispersion*, derives. Commentaries, theological works, and works on Bible history often transliterate *diaspora* and use it interchangeably with dispersion. In its two other New Testament appearances, *diaspora* is a technical term referring to the dispersing of the Jews throughout the world by the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. Both times the word has the definite article

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(Jn. 7:35; James 1:1). However here Peter does not include the definite article; therefore it is best to interpret the term as a non-technical reference to believers widely distributed geographically.

Gardner: The word translated *scattered* provides us with the English word ‘Diaspora’ which is used twelve times in the Greek version (LXX) of the Old Testament to refer to the scattering of the Jews among the Gentile nations (e.g., Dt. 28:25; Jer. 34:17 LXX; Jer. 41:17; see also Jer. 29:1-7). After the judgment of Israel and their transportation to Babylon and the subsequent captivities, those Jews who had been taken from the homeland of Israel were referred to as ‘the Diaspora,’ the dispersed or scattered ones. Of course, they looked forward to the time when they would once again be gathered to their homeland by the Lord. Here Peter is not thinking only of converted Jews; rather he is transferring themes from the Old Testament and showing that they should be applied to all God’s people. The church of the New Testament age is the continuation of the people of God from the old covenant and the church now finds itself ‘dispersed’ among the nations and its members are resident aliens longing eventually to be brought home to the place that God has in store for them.

Helm: During the days of the kings, they turned away from God and forfeited the glory of His approval. As a result, the great nation was carried off into *exile*; they were *dispersed* by God. The term *exiles of the dispersion* was now, for the first time, joined to the term *elect*.... Israel knew something of lost glory. They knew, all too well, that the term *elect* does at times stand beside the phrase *exiles of the dispersion*—beloved by God, yet seemingly left alone in the world. In this letter Peter does not hesitate to place these terms alongside one another to identify his readers. They are called ‘the elect exiles of the dispersion.’ How strange. One would have thought that putting these words together would be like mixing oil with water. Yet for Peter, it is no trouble at all.

Helm: There is one major difference, however, in the way Peter uses the terms. As the letter unfolds, it will become clear to us that Peter believes that his readers are exiles of a different sort. Their exilic identity has nothing to do with ancient Israel’s sin—or their own. Their *exilic* state is not the result of disobedience to God. In fact, all the evidence in the letter demonstrates that they were living faithful and fruitful lives in obedience to Christ (1:2). For Peter then—and this is most important—the phrase ‘exiles of the dispersion’ depicts the normative state of any follower of Jesus, so long as he or she remains in the world. In this sense Peter’s early readers were not very different from you and me. They were men and women who had come into a relationship with God through faith in Christ and as such remained on the outside of everything in this world.

d) *Jews or Gentiles?*

Gardner: The opening verse refers to ‘God’s elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.’ 2:12 speaks to the recipients of the letter maintaining ‘good lives among the pagans,’ and in 4:3 Peter contrasts the behavior of the Gentiles with what is expected of those to whom he is writing. This led the Greek fathers, Calvin, and other commentators to assume that Peter was writing largely to converted Jews. It is also said that Peter’s strong appeals in the letter to the Old Testament would further support this view. However, the majority of modern commentators point to other references that indicate the opposite. It is hardly conceivable, they argue, that Jews would have practiced idolatry in Peter’s day, and yet 4:3 refers to such practices as having been part of the history of these Christians. Further, it is said that Peter would hardly have spoken of their previous ‘empty way of life

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handed down’ from their ‘forefathers’ (1:18), had they been of Jewish origin. And could such Jews have been described as formerly ‘not a people’ but now as ‘God’s people’ (2:10)?

Gardner: No doubt in all the towns to which this letter was addressed there were both converted Jews and converted pagans, but the preponderance was almost certainly of converted pagans. The reference to ‘God’s elect’ and to them being ‘strangers’ is, then, Peter’s way of insisting that all the promises made to God’s people by the prophets of the Old Testament are inherited by *all* who turn to Christ, including those from a Gentile and pagan background. This is one of the greatest of privileges for those who come to faith from such backgrounds; that they are truly the people of God and inheritors of all His promises.

MacArthur: The congregations consisted primarily of Gentiles (cp. 1:14, 18; 2:9-10; 4:3-4), but undoubtedly included some Jewish Christians as well.... Though God called Peter to be the apostle to the Jews (Gal. 2:7), the absence of the definite article with *diaspora* argues that Peter was not addressing Jews as such in his salutation. Another passage supports that interpretation. In 2:11 he identifies his readers, not racially or nationally, but spiritually.... Thus the apostle addressed not only Jews who were dispersed from their native land, but Gentile believers, both of whom were spiritually ‘aliens’ in the world.

McKnight: While it is possible that evidence like quotations from the Old Testament (e.g., 1:16, 24; 2:3, 6, 9-10, 12) and the use of designations for Israel (1:1 [‘elect’], esp. 2:9-10) could indicate that the readers were formerly members of non-Christian Judaism, I am persuaded that the readers were mostly Gentiles who had probably previously become attached to Judaism through local synagogues and other forms of Judaism. Thus, their former life was a life of living in ignorance (1:14), which was handed on to them by their fathers (1:18). That they were formerly ‘not [my] people’ (2:10) points in the same direction, as does their earlier pagan lifestyle (4:2-4). Yet it is likely that the road to Christianity for these Gentile pagans included a stop at the local synagogue, where they were instructed in the Torah and the ways of the Jewish people. This permits an easy reference to the Old Testament for Peter. It is also likely that some of the Christian converts were formerly Jewish in race and heritage.

McKnight: What is dramatically interesting about this audience is that though they came from a Gentile background, Peter addressed them as if they were Israel. That is, they have in some sense ‘replaced’ national Israel as the people of God and are now the new and true Israel. From the beginning of the letter to the end Peter describes the church with terms that have been used in defining Israel. They are the ‘elect’ and ‘scattered’ ones (1:1) and a ‘holy priesthood’ (2:5). Most prominent here is 2:9-10.... This is the language of fulfillment and replacement. In general, then, we can safely conclude that the audience of Peter was comprised of Gentile converts to Christianity who had probably been proselytes to Judaism or at least God fearers.

Dorani: Most commentators believe Peter’s audience consists primarily of Gentiles, not Jews. Peter’s people ‘were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down...from your forefathers’ (1:18). For years, they did ‘what pagans choose to do’ (4:3). Their neighbors it ‘strange’ when they abandoned their former life of dissipation (4:4). Their lifestyle was manifestly different from the conduct of others in the empire. So most of Peter’s people did not grow up in the covenant. God’s election, salvation, and subsequent sanctification estranged them from their native culture.

Sproul: Traditionally, *pilgrims* or *sojourners* was the term used by the Jews to describe Gentiles. For the most part, the churches established in Asia Minor in the apostolic age were established

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among Gentiles, and since Peter was the Apostle to the circumcision, not to the Gentiles, it seems unlikely that this Apostle would address his letters to a Gentile community..... We can assume that Peter was not writing to Gentiles but to Jewish converts numbered among the Diaspora. Those were Jews who had fled from Jerusalem, expelled [from Rome] under the Emperor Claudius, and they had settled in little communities in Asian Minor..... The fact that this letter is addressed ‘to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia’ does not necessarily mean that it was addressed to Gentile converts in Asia Minor. [DSB Note: Sproul is the only source who takes this position that the audience is primarily Jewish rather than Gentile. I think this is in error.]

e) *Application*

Doriani: Peter says that we are aliens but he never tells us to alienate ourselves from this world by abandoning or cursing it. God did not abandon His creation; He sent His Son to redeem and restore it and fully renew it one day. Since God’s ways are our model, we should remain engaged with this world. Historically, the Reformed or Calvinistic branch of Christendom has engaged the culture. We hope to form, reform, and transform it, not abandon it..... Scripture holds two ideas in tension. We are, simultaneously, exiles in this world and agents of change within it. Because we are exiles, we resist conformity to the patterns of this age... Clearly, we must flee the corrupt world, for judgment will fall upon it (Rev. 18:4). Yet we are reformers, constantly ready to engage society. Jesus notes that His disciples are ‘in the world’ but that ‘they are not of the world any more than I am of the world.’ ... So, then, we are engaged exiles.

2. How They Are (1:2a)

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:

Gardner: In three brief clauses Peter now describes how they came to be God’s people, and the goal of their life. This is a strongly Trinitarian passage involving Father, Spirit, and Jesus Christ.

Helm: According to Peter, we owe our full identity as *elect exiles* to the mysterious plan of God. It is no accident that the three concrete nouns Peter used to identify his readers in verse 1 are followed by three descriptive phrases explaining how this came to be. To ensure that his readers don’t misunderstand him, Peter plants his thoughts in the soil of a Trinitarian formula.

McKnight: We need to look at each of these expressions. At the outset, observe that each one describes, in a different way and from the angle of a different member of the Trinity, the complex nation of conversion.

Sproul: When we talk about the work of redemption, we talk about it as a triune activity. There is the Father’s work in election and His sovereign plan to save His people. That redemption is accomplished by Christ and applied to people’s lives by the Holy Spirit. The Father sent the Son, the Son accomplishes the work, and that work is brought home to the lives of individuals through the intervention and the power of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit brings us to faith in Christ, He does not stop with the initial work of regeneration or rebirth; He is also the chief architect of our sanctification, of our being brought into conformity to Christ. All that is contained in this verse of introduction.

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a) *God the Father*

Gardner: According to the *foreknowledge of God the Father* refers to the heavenly Father's activity in knowing not only facts in advance but in knowing what He will *do* in advance. Again this brings comfort to Christians because it reminds them that God has known them personally with a deep fatherly love and has known where He will place them, how they will live, and what varieties of sadness they will face, and therefore He will provide the right resources for them.

Helm: In the strongest way possible, Peter has told us: The Lord God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, is behind all of this. The hidden counsel of the Eternal Trinity has planned for us to be known as His 'elect exiles.'

McKnight: According to the NIV, these Diaspora Christians have been chosen 'according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.' Theological debates have issued forth from this expression and others like it. Is God's election (and predestination) *based* on His knowledge that certain people will believe (which gives the human decision paramount importance), or is God's foreknowledge the determinative factor in choosing certain individuals to be part of His people? (I would also add that if election is based on the knowledge that God has of those who will believe, then election as a category has almost no meaning.... Why would we say that God has elected someone who has already chosen Him? What kind of election would this be?)... Surely the second is to be preferred: God's foreknowledge is more than prescience (knowing ahead of time), for it is effective, active, and determinative.

MacArthur: The usage of the Greek word rendered *foreknowledge* in verse 2 also proves it cannot mean simply knowledge of future events and attitudes. *Prognōsis* ('foreknowledge') refers to God's eternal, predetermined, loving and saving intention. In 1:20, Peter used the related verb 'was foreknown,' a form of *proginōskō*, in reference to God's knowledge from eternity past that He would send His Son to redeem sinners.... In the same way that God the Father foreknew His plan for Christ's crucifixion from before the foundation of the world (Acts 2:23; cp. 1 Pe. 2:6), He foreknew the elect. In neither case was it a matter of mere prior information about what would happen. Therefore, *foreknowledge* involves God's predetermining to have a relationship with some individuals, based on His eternal plan. It is the divine purpose that brings salvation for sinners to fulfillment, as accomplished by Jesus Christ's death on the cross, not merely an advance knowledge that observes how people will respond to God's offer of redemption.... The point is not simply God having information *about* someone, but His establishing an intimate relationship *with* someone. And *foreknowledge* was God establishing that by divine decree before time began.

b) *The Spirit*

Gardner: Normally we see the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit as a process of becoming more and more Christlike throughout our lives. In other words, sanctification by the Spirit is His ongoing work in each believer's life. But here Peter is thinking about how people of this dispersed church came into being. This people of God were formed by the electing grace and foreknowledge of the Father and *through the sanctifying work of the Spirit*. That is, the Holy Spirit is involved in the 'setting apart' of the people of God. Again, Old Testament ideas are being drawn into the New Testament understanding of the people of God. In being called out by God from among the nations to be God's people they became a 'holy' or 'set apart' (sanctified) people (cp. 1 Cor. 6:11).... It refers to the past activity of God in calling His people into being. Of course, this *sanctified* people must live out life in holiness and so we find that, although the

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Holy Spirit separates them in the first place as part of God's calling work, His continuous presence is also needed to help them *be* the holy people they should be. The combination of these two ideas is seen in Lev. 20:26.... In verses 15-16, Peter will speak to the fact that a holy people need to live as holy people.

MacArthur: The outworking of God's choice of the elect made in eternity past begins in time *by the sanctifying work of the Spirit*. The 'sanctifying work' encompasses all that the Spirit produces in salvation: faith (Eph. 2:8), repentance (Acts 11:15-18), regeneration (Titus 3:5), and adoption (Rom. 8:16-17). Thus election, the plan of God, becomes a reality in the life of the believer through salvation, the work of God, which the Holy Spirit carries out. *Sanctifying work (hagiasmō)* refers to separation, consecration, and holiness. First Peter 2:9-10 illustrates the principle.... At salvation, 'the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit' sets believers apart from sin to God, separates them from darkness to light, sets them apart from unbelief to faith, and mercifully separates them from a love of sin and brings them to a love of righteousness (Jn. 3:3-8; Rom. 8:2; 2 Cor. 5:17; cp. 1 Cor. 2:10-16; Eph. 2:1-5; 5:8; Col. 2:13).

McKnight: Both theological reasoning and spiritual experience confirm that God prompts us to believe through the convicting and regenerating work of His Spirit. The process of sanctification, a word drawn from Old Testament tabernacle and temple worship, involves God's setting His people apart and the lifelong work of His Spirit to effect God's will on earth.... *Sanctification*...refers to three features of Christian existence: the initial separation from sin (clearly in 1:2; cp. Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Cor. 1:2, 30; 6:11; 2 Th. 2:13), the hard work of growing in holiness throughout life (Rom. 8:13; 2 Cor. 3:18; 7:1; 1 Th. 5:23; Heb. 12:10, 14), and the final act of God when He makes His holy people completely holy for eternity (Eph. 5:25-27). Peter is referring here, then, almost exclusively to the first dimension of our sanctification: God's gracious act of turning sinners into His people. Later, he emphasizes the lifelong process of sanctification (cp. 1:14-16, 22; 2:1-2, 9-10, 11-12; 4:3-4).

c) *Jesus Christ*

(1) Obedience

Gardner: These people have been chosen for a purpose, that is, *for obedience to Jesus Christ*. Peter again refers to their initial response to the gospel and what happened as they found themselves a chosen people. But this also leads to the ongoing life of obedience where Peter insists that gospel people are to be 'obedient children' (v. 14), not conforming to the world. The purpose of God's choosing a people for Himself is that they should be obedient to Christ.

MacArthur: Obedience to Jesus Christ is the effect or by-product of divine election (Eph. 2:10).... For one *to obey Jesus Christ*, then, is the equivalent of being saved. Paul called it 'the obedience of faith' (Rom. 1:5). Believers do not obey perfectly or completely (1 Jn. 1:8-10; cp. Rom. 7:14-25; but nonetheless there is a pattern of obedience in their lives as they through Christ become servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:17-18; cp. Rom. 8:1-2; 2 Cor. 10:5b).

McKnight: These believers have been chosen by God *so that they may be obedient*, that is, so that they may respond to the demand of the gospel and become children of obedience (1:14) and pure children of God (1:22).

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(2) Blood

Gardner: Furthermore, these people were chosen with the purpose that they should be recipients of the grace and forgiveness achieved by Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Thus, they are a people sprinkled *by His blood*, that is, who have come to know that Christ died for them and that His blood was shed for them in order to bring them into a covenant relationship with God the Father. Peter is probably thinking of the account of the great ceremony of covenant initiation in Exodus 24:5-8. There Moses sprinkled the blood of sacrificed animals on the people. For Christians chosen by God their initiation into the people of God required the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross. They have been, as it were, sprinkled with His blood. They have been brought into the new covenant established not by the blood of animals but by the blood of Jesus (cp. Heb. 12:23-24).

MacArthur: Another profoundly important, practical component of election is security for the believer.... God indicates that security in that the elect are *sprinkled with His* [Christ's] *blood*. Peter's metaphor here looks back to the time in the Old Testament when blood was sprinkled on the people of Israel. That event is significant enough that the letter to the Hebrews mentions it once specifically and once by allusion (9:19-20; 12:24; cp. Ex. 24:3-8).... Israel made a promise of obedience to God, mediated through sacrifice. The blood splattered on the altar represented God's agreement to reveal His law, and the blood sprinkled on the people signified their consent to obey. The Holy Spirit compares that unique pledge to the inherent covenant in saving faith in Jesus Christ, which entails a similar promise to obey the Word of the Lord. When believers trust in Christ's atoning sacrifice for them, they are not just accepting the benefit of His death on their behalf. They are also submitting to His sovereign lordship (cp. Mt. 7:24-27; 1 Th. 1:9; 2:13; James 1:21-23).... Peter states that when believers were spiritually *sprinkled with Christ's blood*, they entered into a covenant of obedience.

MacArthur: To recapitulate the Old Testament analogy: the blood sprinkled on God's altar symbolized His commitment to forgiveness (fully realized in the sacrificial death of Christ), and the blood sprinkled on the people symbolized their intention to obey God's law (more fully realized when Christians walk in the Spirit and obey the Word) (cp. 1 Jn. 2:3-6).... As a coin has two sides, the new covenant has two sides: salvation and obedience. As a result of divine election, God's children are saved from sin and given the desire to obey Him, and He promises to forgive them when they do not do so. The same blood of Jesus Christ that sealed the new covenant keeps on spiritually cleansing the sins of Christians when they disobey (cp. Heb. 7:25; 9:11-15; 10:12-18; 1 Jn. 1:7).

Sproul: The *sprinkling* of Christ's blood is clearly a reference to the Old Testament. On the Day of Atonement, when reconciliation was made for the people of God, the blood of slain animals was taken by the high priest into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled on the mercy seat. That sprinkling of the blood of the sacrifices served as a blood covering on the throne of God. It was a symbol of the covering of our sins by the blood of the sacrifice. All the symbolism carried out on the Day of Atonement pointed beyond the Old Testament to the sacrifice that was made once for all in the atoning death of Jesus Christ, who effects our reconciliation by shedding His blood. When Jesus was on the cross, His blood was not sprinkled but poured out, yet the same principle is in view here. What took place on the Day of Atonement in the Old Testament points to the accomplishment of our redemption by Jesus with the pouring out of His blood on the cross.

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Helm: He has done all of this through the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus. So take heart. Be encouraged. Christians are those who are chosen by God *and* called to live in this world. There is something in this letter for every Christian.

d) Summary

McKnight: In sum, then, Peter sees the electing work of God as leading to the *conversion* of the disenfranchised sojourners of Asia Minor. Each of the three prepositional phrases in verse 2 is predominantly a reference to conversion, to the act of God's saving these people. They were effectively called and spiritually made holy, and this election led to their obedience to God's call and to forgiveness under the new covenant. While the first two emphasize God's work, the last expression emphasizes the believer's response.

e) Encouragement

Gardner: This lengthy description of the recipients of this letter is all about *encouragement!* These Christians who have been called to live in a difficult world of temptations and persecutions are to be greatly encouraged as they reflect on the fact that God Himself has chosen them and planned out their life as individuals, but also and more importantly, as the church, the people of God. They have been set apart for God in order that they may be a people who obey the Lord as those living in a covenant relationship with Him established by the blood that Jesus shed on the cross. They are indeed God's covenant community, in a wonderful relationship with Him. Because of His electing love, they will be kept safe in this relationship forever.

Gardner: The Spirit has set us apart for a purpose. In its detail that purpose will be different in each Christian's life, but looked at broadly that purpose is to be a holy people for God. Specifically, Peter talks about the purpose being 'obedience to Jesus Christ.' Nothing is more counter-cultural than such obedience.... Grace, as we shall see in this epistle, is the basis on which we are called and chosen and born again. It is all provided from the total love and underserved mercy of God. Grace is also the basis, as we see in these opening verses, by which we are to live for Him and which enables our obedience to Christ.... 'Obedience to Jesus Christ' is a product of the 'sanctifying work of the Spirit.' Peter's whole point is that Christians will 'perform' differently in the living out of their lives from the way unbelievers will perform. This is what gives the ground for Peter to insist that we must 'be holy in all [we] do' (1:15). Because of the Spirit's work, we *are* obedient children (1:14) and therefore a certain way of living is not merely an optional extra but a requirement.

C. Address (1 Peter 1:2b; 5:14)

3. Opening Greeting (1:2b)

Gardner: Peter is concerned that his readers know and experience the continuing *grace* of God in their lives and the objective reality of *peace* with Him *in abundance*. Peter has spoken of how these Christians have been chosen by God and received their new status as members of God's people. Grace and peace are words with a substantial background in the Old Testament.

May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

a) Grace

Gardner: *Grace* points to the undeserved covenant love of the Lord so often experienced by the people of Israel. (The Hebrew word *hesed* specially highlights this faithful covenant love of God

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for His people...). God's people have always known that it is not only entering the covenant relationship with God that is by grace, but also remaining in that relationship with Him. In prayer form, the greeting thus begins to address the current scene for these Christians. They need God's continuing grace if they are to achieve the purpose for which they were chosen.

Dorani: Peter did betray Jesus, but even his failures fascinate us and illustrate both the man and the message. It is fitting that Peter, who betrayed the Lord and received the grace of forgiveness, both opens and closes his epistle by offering his churches the grace of God (1:2; 5:12)... Knowing Peter's history, we understand that his talk of grace is no mere formula. Peter denied Jesus three times, insisting, with oaths, that he did not even know Jesus. He did this despite warnings, despite vows to the contrary, and at the hour of Jesus' greatest need. Yet Peter repented, in tears, and received forgiveness and reinstatement as an apostle (Lk. 22:62; Jn. 21:15-17). Because he knew the depth of his need and because he understood the perfection of Jesus' offer, Peter loved the grace of God.

b) *Peace*

Gardner: *Peace* is another 'covenant' concept and reflects the Hebrew idea of *shalom*, the peace experience by those who are God's people, who have been forgiven and who inherit His blessing. Peter prays that these dispersed strangers in the world will know the peace of an established relationship with God and the peace of living in the shadow of the One who alone can fully and unfailingly deliver on the resurrection hope and the eternal inheritance (vv. 3-4).

c) *Multiplied*

Sproul: 'Grace and peace' was the usual greeting, and here Peter is asking that such grace and peace be multiplied to his readers, elect, sanctified, and reconciled by the grace of God, and who therefore have peace with God as a result of that reconciliation won for them by Jesus Christ.... We do not believe that the grace of justification can be augmented or diminished, but the grace of sanctification can be augmented or diminished, so the prayer of this Apostle with the heart of a pastor is that the grace of God would increase and multiply in their lives.

4. Closing Farewell (5:14)

a) *Kiss (5:14a)*

¹⁴*Greet one another with the kiss of love.*

Gardner: And so Peter ends his 'brief' epistle with a reminder that they *should greet one another with a kiss of love*. A physical demonstration of their love and care for each other will remind them that they are a family, the family of God, that they are brothers and sisters in Christ, and that they are to 'love each other deeply' (4:8). It is one of the good reminders to us, in this day and age, that even a brief physical expression of love for each other is something that binds people together.

MacArthur: *Greet one another with a kiss of love* is another obvious indicator of the affection believers should have for each other. The holy kiss—men to men, and women to women—was a customary outward sign of affection among believers in the early church (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Th. 5:26; cp. Lk. 7:45; 22:47-48).

McKnight: Peter then urges his readers to 'greet one another with a kiss of love,' the standard form of greeting in the ancient world (cp. Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Th. 5:26)

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and in many parts of the world today. Americans tend to shake hands while other cultures hug one another or give one a kiss.

Sproul: Elsewhere it is called a ‘holy kiss.’ It was the way ancient Near Eastern people greeted each other at that time and still do today. We are not obligated to continue that custom in our nation but we may greet one another with a holy kiss, if we desire.

Doriani: The kiss of love meant the ritual touch of cheeks, not lips. Further, the kiss was given from man to man or woman to woman, not man to woman. In the empire, the kiss of greeting was common when friends or family reunited. But not everyone kissed. The kiss demonstrated friendship, kinship, and affection.... the kiss of love is still known in many cultures, but where the practice is alien, we find other ways to demonstrate our affection. That could be a handshake or a hug. Physical affection is important, as the fivefold command to greet with a kiss shows (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Th. 5:26; 1 Pe. 5:14; cp. Lk. 7:45; Acts 20:37). But the custom must be grounded in reality. We need genuine ties for the *signs* of affection to carry weight. It’s awkward, not helpful, to hug a stranger. We need relationships and must take time to form them.

b) Peace (5:14b)

Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

Gardner: The final statement is one similar to the opening and closing of many Christian letters. The *peace* referred to includes a number of wonderful privileges that belong to those *who are in Christ*. Above all, it is a prayer that these Christians will truly know and experience the peace with God gained by Christ’s suffering death, resurrection, and ascension. The peace with God, though, also results in peace with God’s family, that is, peace between brothers and sisters. People enjoy and share this peace only if they are *in Christ*. To be ‘in Christ’ is to acknowledge Jesus as King and to be united with Him through faith.

Sproul: Peter concludes the epistle the same way that Jesus concluded His teaching to His disciple: giving them the legacy of Christ. Jesus had no earthly estate. His only garment was His robe, which was taken by His captors who gambled for it. All He had left to give His disciples was peace (Jn, 14:27).

D. Additional Information (1 Peter 5:12b)

1. Background

McKnight: In light of the relationship of Christians to the Roman-led government of Asia Minor, how should Christians live in Peter’s day? Any reading of 1 Peter brings this issue to the surface immediately. It begins in the first verse: ‘Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to God’s elect, *strangers in the world, scattered...*’

MacArthur: Throughout the nearly two millennia of its existence, the church of Jesus Christ has been no stranger to suffering. The clash of truth with error, of the kingdom of light with the kingdom of darkness, and of the children of God with the children of the devil inevitably results in severe conflict. Opposition, rejection, ostracism, scorn, contempt, persecution, even martyrdom have been the lot of believers through the centuries. That the evil world system vents its fury on the church should surprise no one, for that is how it treated the Lord Jesus Christ.

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MacArthur: As Peter penned this epistle, the dark clouds of the first great outbreak of official persecution, instigated by the insane Emperor Nero, were already gathering on the horizon. Seeking scapegoats to divert the public's suspicion that he had started the great fire of July, 64 AD that devastated Rome, Nero pinned the blame on the Christians, whom he already perceived as enemies of Rome because they would worship none but Christ. As a result, they were encased in wax and burned at the stake to light his gardens, crucified, and thrown to wild beasts. Though the official persecution apparently was confined to the vicinity of Rome, attacks on Christians undoubtedly spread unchecked by the authorities to other parts of the Empire. It was as a result of Nero's persecution that both Peter and Paul were martyred. But before he died, Peter wrote this magnificent epistle to believers whose suffering would soon intensify. Throughout the centuries, beleaguered Christians have benefited from the apostle's wise counsel and gentle, encouraging words of comfort.

2. Situation

MacArthur: Peter addressed such a wide audience because the Roman persecution of Christians had swept across the Empire. Believers in every place were going to suffer (cp. Lk. 21:12; Phil. 1:29; James 1:1-3). The apostle wanted those believers to remember that, in the midst of potentially great suffering and hardship they were still the chosen of God, and that as such, they could face persecution in triumphant hope (cp. 4:13, 16, 19; Rom. 8:35-39; 2 Tim. 3:11; Heb. 10:34-36).

Dorani: Although suffering is never far from Peter's mind, it is not the focus of Peter's attention.... The suffering of the churches is an inevitable result of their new life, but not the core of that life.... That said, suffering is prominent in 1 Peter. In the apostolic era, neither the empire nor the Jewish establishment settled on a policy of systematic persecution of the church. Nonetheless, persecution was always a possibility, since believers refused to worship the emperor.... This helps to explain why trials and suffering are a topic in every chapter of 1 Peter (1:6-9; 2:18-25; 3:13-18; 4:12-19; 5:9), and the strength of the warning seems to grow sharper as the epistle progresses.

McKnight: Writing sometime in the early 60's then, Peter, through his letter-carrier (or fellow author) Silas, encourages a series of small churches throughout northwestern Asia Minor by asserting their particular Christian identity (the family of God), by exhorting them to love one another, and by explaining to them the apparent inevitable tension that being a Christian will generate in a society that does not look tolerably on religious innovations.

McKnight: Peter's contentions are clear: Believers in Asia Minor are to live honorable and holy lives (1:14-16, 18, 22; 2:1, 5, 9, 11-12, 15, 20; 3:6, 15, 17; 4:1-6), they are to endure suffering (1:6-8; 2:18-25; 3:13-17; 4:1-6, 12-19; 5:8-9, 10), they are to live within social structures (2:13-17, 18-25; 3:1-6, 7, 8-12), and they are to be respectful to outsiders (2:11-12).

Sproul: It is ironic that Peter writes to those suffering persecution and tells them, as we will see, that they ought not to think it strange that they should have to suffer. He once had thought it impossible that this would be the course of Christianity, but as the years passed he understood what Jesus had said about the cost of discipleship. Peter's intimate knowledge of persecution for the gospel comes across with a pastor's heart in this epistle.

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3. Purpose (5:12b)

...I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.

Gardner: Peter's purpose in writing this epistle is rather straightforward. It is perhaps best summarized in the words of 4:19, that 'those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.' As the churches of Asia Minor began to expand they faced greater suffering and antagonism. Since this was already happening in part and undoubtedly would become more severe in the near future, Peter wrote to encourage Christians to stand firm in their faith, and to witness to their Lord in the pagan society in which God had placed them. They needed to know and to rejoice in the fact that 'God's power' was guarding them and that they had 'a living hope' and an imperishable 'inheritance' guaranteed by Christ (1:3-5). Peter returned to this theme of rejoicing in the eternal hope and the anticipation of future glory on several occasions.

MacArthur: Peter also parenthetically injects a summary of his purpose as having written...*briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God.* What can he mean by this other than the letter itself, with all its gospel taught coming to his readers and all others who love the true, saving, sanctifying, and glorifying grace of God? This is a claim to inspiration that in a sense previews Peter's statement in 2 Pe. 1:20-21.... Because this is true, the apostle exhorts believers to faithfulness to the truth of his letter by exclaiming, *Stand firm in it!*

Helm: We are told that Peter has exhorted and declared to us the meaning of 'the true grace of God.' Indeed he has. 'True grace' is that mysterious union that joins suffering to glory—this present day with being born again to a living hope.

MacArthur: Peter's expressed purpose in writing his epistle was that his readers would stand firm in the true grace of God (5:12) in the face of escalating persecution and suffering. To that end he reminded them of their election and the sure hope of their heavenly inheritance, delineated the privileges and blessings of knowing Christ, gave them instruction on how to conduct themselves in a hostile world, and pointed them to the example of Christ's suffering. Peter wanted his readers to live triumphantly in the midst of hostility without abandoning hope, becoming bitter, losing faith in Christ, or forgetting His second coming. When they are obedient to God's Word despite the world's antagonism, Christians' lives will testify to the truth of the gospel (2:12; 3:1, 13-17).

Gardner: Peter summarizes the letter he has written as one in which he has been *encouraging*, or exhorting them.... The word 'encourage' is used in 5:12 and exhorts the Christians to exhibit right behavior and a godly life among their opponents.... *This is the true grace of God* refers probably to all that Peter has been saying about their calling their salvation God's help for them, and His deliverance and the glory that awaits them. For Peter it has been vital that a people who are feeling challenged in their faith and life by the pagan culture around, and by the antagonism and persecution they are facing, should understand that the whole of their life from calling and conversion through persecution and suffering into the time of eternal glory is *the true grace of God*. Peter can testify to it in his own life, but for all Christians the whole story of life is evidence of how God's grace is the start and the end of it all. Truly all Christians must *stand fast in it!*

McKnight: Peter's intention in writing this letter has been to exhort, and the frequency of imperatives in 1 Peter proves he has been successful (e.g., 1:13-25; 2:11-3:12; 5:1). In addition,

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he contends that what he has written witnesses (cp. 5:1) ‘that this is the true grace of God.’ The apostle alludes here to the truthfulness of the gospel he has preached (1:10-12) and assumes that this is what his readers firmly believe. He only urges them to ‘stand fast in it.’ That is, they are to stand fast for the gospel and resist the temptation to cave in under the pressure of suffering.

Doriani: Peter also describes the letter itself, asserting that it exhorts and testifies that this is the true grace of God. ‘This is the true grace’ (5:12b) refers to the whole letter, which began with God’s election, moved to Jesus’ atoning death, resurrection, and ascension, and closed with God’s promise of ‘eternal glory in Christ’ (5:10). The gospel, Peter declares, is true, and trust in Jesus is trust in the living God. Jesus is no mere man, the gospel no mere story. It is the truth about the eternal and gracious God. None of this is in doubt, but humans are fickle, so Peter commands his people to ‘stand fast’ in this grace.

4. Message

McKnight: The essential message of Peter can be categorized into three separate features: 1) salvation; 2) church; and 3) the Christian life. Peter’s letter is an exhortation (5:12) to socially disenfranchised Christians to live steadfastly before God with faithfulness, holiness, and love. This steadfastness may lead to suffering, but a genuine understanding of persecution permits them to face it head-on and go forward faithfully. But the foundation of their faithfulness is an understanding of their salvation that Peter paints graphically at the beginning of his letter.

McKnight: In essence, then, Peter’s letter is an exhortation to holy endurance of suffering because these Christians have experienced the salvation of God and because that salvation is promised to them in all fullness when the final day arrives. Having received salvation and having been empowered by God with a new life, they must orient their lives toward the future revelation of Christ, love their fellow Christians, and maintain a holy life.

a) Salvation

McKnight: Peter uses a host of words to describe what has happened to those who enter the family of God. In particular, he draws deeply from the cultic imagery of the temple with its rituals and worship to express this matter. They have been sprinkled with blood (1:2), they have been ransomed (1:18-19), they have been purified (1:22), they have tasted God (2:3), they have been healed (2:24), and they have been presented before God (3:18). He draws on family imagery when he speaks of their new birth (1:3, 23; 2:2, 24; 3:7, 18), their inheritance (1:4-5), and their blessing (3:9). The two terms used most frequently are ‘salvation’ (1:5, 9, 19; 2:2; 3:20-21; 4:18) and ‘grace’ (1:10, 13; 3:7; 5:5, 10, 12).

Doriani: As Peter begins, he tells his people that they have been chosen by the Father, sanctified by the Spirit, and sprinkled by the blood of Jesus Christ (1:1-2). He give us grace; we owe Him obedience (1:2). We praise Him for His great mercy, for our new birth, and for the hope of an eternal inheritance, shared with Christ (1:3-4, 7). As Peter closes, he appeals to his readers, ‘exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it’ (5:12). The word *this* in the phrase ‘this is the true grace of God’ is crucial. Since it comes at the end of the epistle, ‘this...grace’ seems to refer to the whole letter, with its message of hope and salvation in the gospel. Throughout this epistle, Peter is a good steward ‘of God’s varied grace’ (4:10). That grace begins with Jesus’ atonement (1:2, 18-21) and continues with assurance that Jesus is our Shepherd and Overseer, even in suffering (2:25). Further, while Satan prowls and brothers through the world suffer, ‘the God of all grace’ pledges to restore, strengthen, and establish His

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people (5:8-11). ‘This grace’ then begins with Jesus’ substitutionary atonement for sins (1:17-21; 2:24; 3:18-22), includes God’s promise of protection in suffering in the presence, and promise glory with Christ in the future (1:6-9).

b) Church

McKnight: The church (a term Peter does not use) displaces/replaces Israel in the favor of God as the new, true people of God. Peter has raided the Old Testament for vocabulary about the new people of God. After describing them as the ‘elect’ (1:1), the apostle lays himself down in a bed of images in chapter 2: ‘living stones’ (2:5), ‘spiritual house’ (2:5), ‘royal priesthood’ (2:5); further, they are ‘a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belong to God...people of God...[those who] have received mercy’ (2:9-10)... The church is...the ‘family of God’ (4:17).

c) Christian Life

McKnight: Grounded in the salvation that the believers find in Christ through their new birth (1:3), the Christian life is an inevitable manifestation of that salvation. The exhortations in 1 Peter are rooted in this experience. Thus, after detailing salvation and its privileges (1:3-12), Peter exhorts his readers to practice hope (1:13), holiness (1:14-16), fear before God (1:17-21), love (1:22-24), and growth (2:1-8). The key word at 1:13 is ‘therefore’; because of salvation, *therefore* pursue these Christian virtues. For Peter, ethics apart from a grounding in salvation is of no concern, because a moral life forms the reverse side of salvation.

McKnight: Peter’s perspective on the Christian life is that Christians are *to live for the salvation that is to come*.... God, who judges justly (1:7, 9, 17; 2:12, 23; 3:12; 4:5, 17-19), will reward those who faithfully endure suffering for His sake (1:7, 13; 4:13, 14). After all, they are only temporary residents in their social location (1:1); this provides a key for them to understand that they are to live for the future.... *Their primary social group* has become the church, the family of God, where they are to love one another (1:22; 2:17; 3:8-12; 4:8-9; 5:14), be humble (3:4, 15; 5:6), submit to one another (3:1-7; 5:1-4, 5), and serve one another (4:10-11). Above all, they are to be sensitive in their communication with one another (2:1; 4:7-11).

McKnight: A clear ethical orientation for Peter is that God’s family is to be *holy and pure*. They are to obey God (1:2, 13, 22), be holy because God is holy (1:14-16, 18, 22; 2:1-2, 5, 9, 11-12, 14, 20; 3:6, 15, 17; 4:1-6) and live righteous lives (2:24; 3:13; 4:18). Such holiness will serve as a convincing demonstration to outsiders of God’s salvation (2:11-12, 13-17, 18-25; 3:1-6); their lives, then, are a means of evangelism (2:12, 15; 3:1-6; 16), though such lives are to be accompanied by their verbal witness (1:12, 25; 2:9; 3:15; 4:6).

5. Theme

Gardner: The theme of suffering runs through the epistle, as Peter helps these Christians to understand how to live within the will and plan of God for His people in a pagan context. The church, as the people of God, is to be holy and must recognize that God is faithful and to be trusted throughout life, even when they are persecuted. The church’s members must ensure therefore, that their past lives of sin and idolatry have been far removed from them. They must long deeply for spiritual growth as they study God’s word. Whatever the position of the State with regard to Christians, they are to submit themselves ‘to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors...’. Peter even offers advice on how Christian wives may live with their non-Christian husbands. The letter therefore offers a

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fascinating pastoral blend of deep theology and practical advice on Christian living in difficult times.

McKnight: The message of 1 Peter concerns how Christians are to live in a hostile environment, and live in such a way that they not only endure but also have a lasting impact for good on that environment.

DSB: I have summarized the theme of 1 Peter as: *The Living Stone Is Our Living Hope*.

For next time: Read 1 Peter 1:3-12.

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Lesson Summary

I. Elect Exiles (1 Peter 1:1-2; 5:12-14)

Aim: To introduce the letter of 1 Peter, and to be encouraged by the work of the Trinity in securing our salvation.

A. Author (1:1a; 5:12a, 13)

1. Peter (1:1a) – short biography, name change
 - Apostle = messenger; authority of Jesus Christ
 - Internal evidence: witness (5:1); similarities to Acts speeches
 - External evidence: universal witness of early church
 - Quality of Greek (‘uneducated, common man’ – Acts 4:13)
 - Other: similar to Paul; later date for persecution (Trajan/Domitian/Diocletian)
2. Silvanus/Silas (5:12a; cp. Acts 15-18)
 - Amanuensis or messenger – Gk. *dia* = ‘through’ or ‘by’; likely the second
 - ‘Faithful brother’ – commendation for the messenger for additional explanation
3. Mark (5:13b)
 - Failed with Paul (Acts 13:13)/later useful to Paul (2 Tim. 4:11)
 - Writer of the gospel of Mark; spiritual ‘son’ of Peter
4. Babylon (5:13a) – Location
 - ‘Code’ for Rome (cp. Rev. 14:8; 17-18) – city of power, sensuality, sin
 - The church of Rome sends greetings to the churches of Asia
 - Babylon used to protect Roman church from Roman reprisals if discovered
5. Date
 - Nero died 68 AD; Peter martyred by Nero – crucified upside down c. 65-68 AD
 - Likely after Paul’s release from Rome (c. 62 AD), b/c Peter not mentioned
 - Likely before severe Neronian persecution (after Jul-64 AD) – Fire of Rome
 - Most likely date, therefore is in 62-64 AD

B. Audience (1:1b-2a)

1. Who They Are (1:1b)
 - Geography – much of modern Turkey, clockwise circuit from Rome
 - Could churches have been founded by Peter? Paul? Pentecost?
 - Elect = chosen by God (Dt. 7:6-8); encouragement/comfort
 - Exiles (*parepidemos*, strangers, sojourners, pilgrims) = temporary residents
 - Aliens (*paroikos*, aliens, non-citizen residents)
 - Dispersion (*diaspora*), ‘scattered’; based on scattering of OT Israel
 - But these people are not scattered because of sin; elect exiles of the Dispersion is the normative state for Christians
 - Writing mainly to Gentile believers, but using OT terms – church displaces/replaces Israel; this motif is repeated often in 1 Peter, esp. 2:4-10
2. How They Are (1:2a)
 - Trinitarian formula focuses on their initial salvation
 - God the Father chooses those He foreknows (*prognōsis* = foreknowledge); election, predestination; sovereignty

1 Peter – Lesson 1

- The Spirit ‘sanctifies’ (i.e., sets apart, makes holy) and applies salvation to the elect; sanctification here focuses on initial salvation, but continues on through life
- The Son secures redemption through His blood
- We are saved by God’s plan, through the Son’s blood, applied by the Spirit, for obedience (cp. Rom. 1:5)
- Sprinkled blood of Christ (OT: Ex. 24:3-8; also Day of Atonement)

C. Address (1:2b; 5:14)

1. Opening Greeting (1:2b)

- Grace (cp. *hesed*); Peter was restored and recipient of God’s grace
- Peace (cp. *shalom*); grace & peace multiplied

2. Closing Farewell (5:14)

- Kiss of love; cheek to cheek, men/men, women/women; handshake/hug; family
- Peace – gift of Jesus (Jn. 14:27); starts and ends with grace & peace (see 5:12)

D. Additional Information (5:12b)

1. Background/Situation

- Persecution of Nero (July, 64 AD) coming; local persecutions presents

2. Purpose (5:12b)

- Peter’s letter contains ‘the true grace of God’
- Encourage: How to live holy and Christian lives in the midst of suffering (cp. 4:19)

3. Message

- Salvation; church; Christian life

2. Theme

- The Living Stone Is Our Living Hope

The Apostle Peter wrote the epistle of 1 Peter from Rome in about 62-64 AD to Gentile Christians in churches scattered throughout the Roman province of Asia (modern-day Turkey). He was accompanied by Mark and Silvanus (Silas); the latter likely delivered the letter to the churches of Asia. Peter wrote the churches to encourage them how to live holy and Christian lives in the midst of suffering. Key messages center on the wonder of salvation, the nature of the church, and the practice of Christian living as we sojourn temporarily in this world, waiting for the glory of our salvation to be fully revealed in heaven. The theme of the book can be summarized as: ‘The Living Stone Is Our Living Hope.’

As Christians, we are *elect exiles of the Dispersion*, chosen by God, redeemed by the blood of Christ, and made holy by the Spirit for obedience. Our salvation is entirely in the hands of the Triune God, and He calls us to lives of faithfulness, despite our circumstances, because of His great salvation. The covenant community of the Church is the heir to all of God’s OT promises, and He will accomplish them in our lives. Although heaven is our true home, while we are on earth we must live in holiness, even in the midst of an unholy world. To do so, He has given us His grace and peace in abundance. What is our response to this gospel? We are to *stand firm* in it! And we can do so, because Jesus Christ, the living Stone, is our living hope.