

1 PETER

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1 Peter 1:1–5

1:1 *From Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ. To God's chosen people who are temporary residents in the world and are scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.*

Peter introduces himself as an apostle, identifying himself as one of the original twelve disciples specifically chosen by Jesus Christ for the purpose of learning from Him during His earthly ministry. Peter specifically addressed this letter to believers in Asia Minor, a large region north and northwest of Jerusalem. Pontus was a Roman province on the southern border of the Black Sea. Galatia, the central province, was populated mostly by Gauls and Greeks. Cappadocia, the largest province, was to the east in what is now central Turkey. Asia was a Roman province on the western side of Asia Minor, bordering the Aegean Sea. Bithynia was north of Galatia along the southern shore of the Black Sea. Significantly, many Jews from these places were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (*Acts 2:1, 5, 7–9*). Many Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, fled from Rome into these

outer regions to escape the hand of Nero, who falsely blamed them for the burning of Rome. Accordingly, Peter wrote to the pilgrims scattered throughout these regions of Asia Minor, encouraging them in the face of daunting opposition.

1:2 *God the Father knew you long ago and chose you to live holy lives with the Spirit's help so that you are obedient to Jesus Christ and are sprinkled with his blood. May good will and peace fill your lives!*

Believers are considered the elect of God because they have been chosen by God according to His perfect will, not according to any human goodness or works (*Ephesians 1:4–6*). Man's election by a holy God initiates a process of sanctification by the indwelling Spirit. Sanctification signifies the separation of oneself unto God, and it is the Holy Spirit's supernatural work, a lifelong process in every believer.¹ The Spirit of truth works within the soul of each believer, leading him to truth and obedience. Just as God the Father chose us to be His people, He also provided the sacrifice for our sin by the *sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ*. In the Old Testament, Aaron sprinkled the altar with the blood of animals as a picture of the blood of Jesus Christ, the only source of true redemption. As Christ's blood is applied to believers' hearts, they are pardoned and justified in the sight of Almighty God.

With that powerful foundation of God's work in our lives, Peter pronounces his blessing on those who read this letter. In this one short greeting, he delineates the operations of God's triune nature.² God the Father is the initiator of the redemptive work that takes place in the life of those chosen by Him (*John 6:44*). Mankind's redemption was accomplished by the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary (*Romans 5:10*). Finally, the Holy Spirit works to engender sanctification in the lives of believers (*2 Corinthians 3:3*).

1:3 *Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! God has given us a new birth because of his great mercy. We have been born into a new life that has a confidence which is alive because Jesus Christ has come back to life.*

Because of this undeserved love of the Father, Peter responds with an expression of praise, acknowledging that believers are God's children only by His abundant mercy. He alone initiates salvation by His providential mercy and grace. It is the work of God alone that brings life to His chosen ones. We are born again by the Holy Spirit, this second birth being unto a "new life," which is the gift of God Himself through the sacrifice of Christ Jesus (*Romans 5:1–5*).

1:4 *We have been born into a new life which has an inheritance that can't be destroyed or corrupted and can't fade away. That inheritance is kept in heaven for you,*

Through Christ, believers have an eternal inheritance in heaven. This inheritance is imperishable, bringing victory over death and corruption. ⁵³*This body that decays must be changed into a body that cannot decay. This mortal body must be changed into a body that will live forever.* ⁵⁴*When this body that decays is changed into a body that cannot decay, and this mortal body is changed into a body that will live forever, then the teaching of Scripture will come true: 'Death is turned into victory!'* (*1 Corinthians 15:53–54*) Whereas in this life everything is being altered and moving toward decay and death by virtue of sin, the believers' inheritance in heaven is undefiled—pure, perfect, unchanging.

1:5 *since you are guarded by God's power through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed at the end of time.*

The elect, God's own people, are "guarded by God's power," meaning that their salvation is preserved forever. God is almighty and all-powerful, the ultimate ruler over all forces, human or spiritual, and it is by His awesome power that believers are sustained. ²⁸*And I give them eternal life. They will never be lost, and no one will tear them away from*

me. ²⁹My Father, who gave them to me, is greater than everyone else, and no one can tear them away from my Father” (John 10:28–29). At the end of time, the heavens and earth will perish, and only those preserved in Christ will endure.

Look at the sky.

Look at the earth below.

The sky will vanish like smoke.

The earth will wear out like clothing,

and those who live there will die like flies.

But my salvation will last forever,

and my righteousness will never fail. (Isaiah 51:6)

Notes/Applications

This opening passage of Peter’s first letter overflows with the power of his faith in Jesus Christ. It is one of Scripture’s keynote passages, explaining the irrevocable grace that our Father has extended to us in the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ. Moving beyond this grace, Peter explains that the Holy Spirit is the one Who confirms the sprinkling of Christ’s blood on our lives and then leads us into obedient living according to His eternal precepts. As God’s work is revealed to us through the Scriptures, we are convinced beyond all doubt that we are the blessed recipients of God’s work of redemption in our lives, removing all vestiges of human effort from our salvation experience.

Believers have been given an abundance of God’s grace and mercy, and we should, therefore, be merciful and gracious to others, seeking to deal with them in the same compassionate way that our Lord has dealt with us (*Colossians 3:12–14*). As God’s elect, we must confess that there is still much correction that needs to take place in our lives that can only be accomplished by the Spirit. Thus, being kept by the power of God, we should show grace, mercy, and love to others as they, too, go through the same process that is steadily transforming all of us into Christ’s image.

Living in the light and joy of the salvation that has been imparted to us by our gracious Lord, let us give full reign of our hearts to the Holy Spirit, Who empowers us to show His love through us to this sinful world.