

1 Peter 1:1

by John Gill

John Gill's sermon on 1 Peter 1 emphasizes the importance of grace, holiness, and steadfastness in faith for believers facing trials.

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:1

Topics: "Perseverance in Faith", "Grace"

Description

John Gill discusses the authorship and context of 1 Peter, affirming that it was written by the Apostle Peter to a diverse group of Christians, primarily Jews, scattered across various regions. He emphasizes the epistle's authenticity and its purpose of encouraging believers to remain steadfast in their faith amidst trials and persecutions. Gill highlights the themes of grace, hope, and the importance of living a holy life as a reflection of one's faith. The letter serves as a reminder of the believers' identity as elect and their call to obedience through the sanctification of the Spirit. Ultimately, it encourages a life adorned with grace and love, rooted in the redemptive work of Christ.

Transcript

INTRODUCTION TO FIRST PETER

That Simon, called Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, was the writer of this epistle, is not questioned by any; nor was the genuineness and authenticity of it ever made a doubt of. Eusebius says {a}, that it had been confessed by all, and received without controversy; and that the ancients, without any scruple, had made use of it in their writings. It is called his "general", or catholic epistle, because it was not written to any particular person, or to any particular church, but in general, to a number of Christians dispersed in several places.

The time when this epistle was written is not certain; some place it in the year of Christ 44 or 45, and so make it to be the most ancient of all the epistles, and which is the more commonly received opinion; but Dr. Lightfoot {b} places it in the year 65, because in it the apostle speaks of the end of all things being at hand, and of the fiery trial just coming on them, and of judgment beginning at the house of God, 1Pe 4:7 all which he applies to the destruction of Jerusalem; though others fix it to 61, in the seventh year of Nero {c}.

The place from whence it seems to be written was Babylon, 1Pe 5:13 which is to be understood not figuratively, either of Rome or Jerusalem, but properly of Babylon, the metropolis of Chaldea, or Assyria.

The persons to whom it is written were Jews, at least chiefly; for there might be some Gentiles among them, who may be taken notice of in some parts of the epistle; but the principal part were Jews, as appears from their being called the strangers of the dispersion, or, as James calls them, "the twelve tribes scattered abroad"; from the mention of the tradition of their fathers; from their having their conversation honest among the Gentiles, and their past life among them; from urging subjection to the civil magistrates among the Heathens, and the right use of their Christian liberty as to the ceremonies of the law; and from the near destruction of Jerusalem, which could only affect them; and from the use made of the writings of the Old Testament, and the authority of the prophets; see 1Pe 1:1 as well as from the second epistle, which was written to the same; see 2Pe 1:19 in which he seems to refer to the epistle to the Hebrews, written by Paul, as to these.

And besides, Peter was the minister of the circumcision, or of the circumcised Jews, as Paul was of the Gentiles; and even those passages in this epistle, which seem most likely to concern the Gentiles, may be understood of the Jews, as which speak of their ignorance, idolatry, and having not been a people, 1Pe 1:14 which were true of them before conversion, and as living among Gentiles. The occasion of writing it was this; Peter meeting with Sylvanus, a faithful brother, and who had been a companion of the Apostle Paul, he takes this opportunity of sending a letter by him to the converted Jews, dispersed among the Gentile countries, where he, with Paul, and others, travelled: the design of which is to testify of the true doctrine of grace, in which they were agreed; see 1Pe 5:12.

And accordingly in it he does treat of the doctrine of electing grace, of redeeming grace, of regenerating and sanctifying grace, and of persevering grace; and exhorts believers to the exercise of grace, of faith, hope, and love, and to the discharge of such duties becoming their several stations, whereby they might evidence to others the truth of grace in themselves, and adorn the doctrine of the grace of God, and recommend it to others: and particularly he exhorts them patiently to bear all afflictions and persecutions they should meet with, for their profession of the true grace of God, in which he encourages them to stand steadfast: and this is the general scope and design of the epistle.

{a} Eccl. Hist. l. 3. c. 3. {b} Harmony, &c. Vol. I. p. 335. {c} Fabricii Bibliothec. Graec. l. 4. c. 5. sect. 10. p. 164.

INTRODUCTION TO I PETER 1 In this chapter, after the inscription and salutation, the apostle gives thanks to God for various blessings of grace bestowed, or to be bestowed upon the persons he writes to; and then, with the best of arguments and motives, urges them to the performance of several duties of religion.

In the inscription, the person who is the writer of the epistle is described, both by his name, and by his office; and also the persons to whom it is sent, by their outward condition, strangers dispersed through several countries particularly mentioned, and by their spiritual estate, elect men; the source and spring of which election is the foreknowledge of God the Father; the means, the sanctification of the Spirit; and the end, obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Christ; and to these the apostle wishes a multiplication of grace and peace, 1Pe 1:1 and then he gives thanks to God for the regeneration of them; the efficient cause of which is God the Father; the moving cause, his abundant mercy; the means, the resurrection of Christ from the dead; the end, a lively hope of a glorious inheritance, 1Pe 1:3 and next follows a description of regenerate ones; they are such who are kept by the power of God through faith, unto salvation; who rejoice in hope of that salvation, though now for a little while are sorrowful, by reason of afflictions, which are for the trial of their faith; they are believers in Christ, lovers of him, and rejoice in him,

and shall at last receive the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls, 1Pe 1:5 the excellency of which salvation is set forth from the concern the prophets had in it, the scrutiny they made into it, and the revelation of it made to them; from the concern the apostles had in it, and their report of it, and from the desire of angels to look into it, 1Pe 1:10 upon which the apostle exhorts to the exercise of various graces and duties, to attention of mind, to sobriety, to a constant hope of eternal glory, and to holiness of life and conversation, 1Pe 1:13 the arguments engaging to which are taken from the nature of God, who had called them by his grace, 1Pe 1:15 from their concern with him, as a Father and a judge; from their state and condition, as sojourners in this world, and from their redemption by the blood of Christ from a vain conversation, 1Pe 1:17 and of Christ, the Redeemer of them, many things are said, as that he was ordained before the foundation of the world to be the Redeemer; was manifested in human nature in these last days, for the sake of such that believe; was raised from the dead, and glorified, that there might be a sufficient foundation for the exercise of faith and hope in God, 1Pe 1:20 and next the apostle exhorts to brotherly love, in purity, and with fervency; from the consideration of the internal purification of them by the Spirit, through obedience to the truth; and from their regeneration, the cause of which was not corruptible, but incorruptible seed; and the means, the living and abiding word of God, 1Pe 1:22 which is illustrated by a passage out of Isa 40:6 setting forth the frailty and mortality of men, and the transitoriness of all outward enjoyments; to which is opposed the duration of the everlasting Gospel, the means of regeneration, 1Pe 1:24.

Ver. 1. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,.... The writer of this epistle describes himself first by his name, Peter, the same with Cephas, which signifies a rock, or stone; a name given him by Christ at his first conversion, and which respected his after firmness, solidity, resolution, and constancy; for his former name was Simeon, or Simon, as sometimes called; see Mt 4:18 and he further describes himself by his office, as

an apostle of Jesus Christ; being one of the twelve apostles, and the first of that number; who saw Christ in the flesh, was conversant with him, had his call and commission immediately from him, and was qualified by him to preach the Gospel; and was sent out first into Judea, and then into all the world to publish it, with a power of working miracles to confirm it; and this his character he makes mention of, in order to give the greater weight and authority to his epistle; and it is to be observed, that he does not style himself, as his pretended successor does, the head of the church, and Christ's vicar on earth; nor does he call himself the prince of the apostles, but only an apostle, as he was upon an equal foot with the rest. The persons he writes to are

the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia: these Jews here intended are called strangers; not in a metaphorical sense, either because they were, as the wicked are, estranged from the womb, and alienated from the life of God, as all unconverted men are, and as they were before conversion; for now they were no more strangers in this sense: or because of their unsettled state and condition in this life; having no continuing city, and seeking one to come, an heavenly country; and living as pilgrims and strangers, in which respect they are indeed so styled, 1Pe 2:11 but in a civil sense, and not as the Gentiles were, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, for these were Jews; but on account of their not being in their own land, and in a foreign country, and therefore said to be "scattered", or "the strangers of the dispersion"; either on account of the persecution at the death of Stephen, when multitudes of the converted Jews were scattered abroad, not only throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, but as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch; see Ac 8:1 and so it may be afterwards throughout the places here mentioned; or else these were some

remains of the ten tribes carried captive by Shalmaneser, and of the two tribes by Nebuchadnezzar; or rather the dispersion of the Greeks, mentioned in Joh 7:35 under the Macedonians, by Ptolemy Lagus: however, there were Jews of Pontus, who inhabited that place, and of such we read in Ac 2:9 who came to worship at the feast of Pentecost, some of which were converted to the Christian faith, and being mentioned first, has occasioned this epistle to be called, both by Tertullian {a}, and Cyprian {b}, "the epistle to the Pontians".

Perhaps these Jews converted on the day of Pentecost, on their return hither, laid the first foundation of a Gospel church state in this country: it is a tradition of the ancients, mentioned by Eusebius {c}, that Peter himself preached here, and so, very likely, formed the Christians he found, and those that were converted by him, into Gospel churches; and it appears by a letter of Dionysius, bishop of Corinth {d}, that there were churches in Poutus in the "second" century, particularly at Amastris, the bishop of which was one Palma, whom he commends, and Focas is said to be bishop of Syncope, in the same age; and in the "third" century, Gregory and Athenodorus, disciples of Origen, were bishops in this country {e}; the former was a very famous man, called Gregory Thaumaturgus, the wonder worker, and was bishop of Neocaesarea: in the "fourth" century there was a church in the same place, of which Longinus was bishop, as appears from the Nicene council, at which he and other bishops in Pontus were present; and in this age, in the times of Dioclesian, many in this country endured most shocking sufferings, related by Eusebius {f}; and in the same century Helladius is said to govern the churches of Pontus; and in the "fifth" century we read of churches in Pontus, reformed by Chrysostom; in this age Theodorus was bishop of Heraclea, and Themistius of Amastris, both in this province, and both these bishops were in the Chalcedon council; and in the "sixth" century there were churches in Pontus, whose bishops were in the fifth synod held at Rome and Constantinople; and so there were in the "seventh" and "eighth" centuries {g}

Galatia, next mentioned, is that part of the lesser Asia, called Gallo Graecia, in which were several churches, to whom the Apostle Paul wrote his epistle, called the epistle to the Galatians; See Gill on "Ac 16:6" see Gill on "Ga 1:2".

Cappadocia, according to Ptolomy {h}, was bounded on the west by Galatia, on the south by Cilicia, on the east by Armenia the great, on the north by part of the Euxine Pontus; it had many famous cities in it, as Solinus {i} says; as Archelais, Neocaesarea, Melita, and Mazaca. The Jews oftentimes talk {k} of going from Cappadocia to Lud, or Lydda; so that, according to them, it seems to be near to that place, or, at least, that there was a place near Lydda so called; of this

See Gill on "Ac 2:9". From this country also there were Jews at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, some of whom were converted; and here likewise the Apostle Peter is said to preach, as before observed of Pontus, and who probably founded a church or churches here in the "first" century; and in the "second" century, according to Tertullian {l}, there were believers in Christ dwelling in this country; and in the "third" century, Eusebius {m} makes mention of Neon, bishop of Larandis, and Celsus, bishop of Iconium, both in Cappadocia; there was also Phedimus of Amasea, in the same country, in this age, and at Caesarea, in Cappadocia, several martyrs suffered under Decius; and in this century, Stephen, bishop of Rome, threatened to excommunicate some bishops in Cappadocia, because they had rebaptized some that had been heretics: in the "fourth" century there were churches in Cappadocia, of one of which, namely, at Sasimi, the famous Gregory Nazianzen was first bishop, and afterwards of Nazianzum, as was also the famous Basil of Caesarea, in the same country; hither the persecution under Dioclesian reached, and many had their thighs broken, as Eusebius relates {n}; from hence were sent several bishops, who assisted at the council of Nice, under Constantine, and at another held at Jerusalem: in the "fifth" century

there were churches in Cappadocia, in several places, the names of whose bishops are on record; as Firmus, Thalassius, Theodosius, Daniel, Aristomachus, Patricius, and others: in the "sixth" century there were many famous churches in this country, whose bishops were in the fifth synod held at Rome and Constantinople; and in the "seventh" century there were several of them in the sixth synod of Constantinople; and in the "eighth" century mention is made of bishops of several churches in Cappadocia, in the second Nicene synod; and even in the "ninth" century there were Christians in these parts {o}.

Asia here intends neither the lesser nor the greater Asia, but Asia, properly so called; and which, according to Solinus {p}, Lycia and Phrygia bounded on the east, the Aegean shores on the west, the Egyptian sea on the south, and Paphlagonia on the north; the chief city in it was Ephesus, and so it is distinguished from Phrygia, Galatia, Mysia, and Bithynia, in Ac 16:6 as here from Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, and Bithynia, and from Pontus and Cappadocia, in Ac 2:9 though they were all in lesser Asia. Here also were Jews converted on the day of Pentecost; and here likewise Peter is said to preach; and by him, and by the Apostle John, who also lived and died in this country, churches were planted; and churches there were here, even in the "seventh" century, as distinct from the other Asia, greater or less; for out of it bishops were sent to, and were present at, the sixth council at Constantinople, whose names are recorded; yea, in the "eighth" century there were churches and bishops, one of which persuaded Leo to remove images from places of worship; and another was in the Nicene synod {q}. The last place mentioned is

Bithynia, of which See Gill on "Ac 16:7". And though the Apostle Paul, and his companions, were not suffered at a certain time to go into Bithynia, and preach the Gospel there, yet it is certain that it was afterwards carried thither; and as Peter is said to preach in Pontus, Asia, and Capadocia, so likewise in Bithynia; here, according to the Roman martyrology, Luke, the evangelist, died; and, according to tradition, Prochorus, one of the seven deacons in Ac 6:5 was bishop of Nicomedia, in this country; and Tychicus, of whom the Apostle Paul makes frequent mention, was bishop of Chalcedon, another city in it; and who are both said to be of the seventy disciples;

See Gill on "Lu 10:1", and it is certain, from the testimony of Pliny {r}, an Heathen writer, in a letter of his to Trajan the emperor, written about the year 104, that there were then great numbers of Christians in Bithynia; not only the cities, but the towns and villages were full of them; and in the "third" century, the persecution under Dioclesian raged, particularly at Nicomedia, where Anthimus, the pastor of the church in that place, had his head cut off as Eusebius {s} relates: in the beginning of the "fourth" century, Nice, in Bithynia, became famous for the council held there under Constantine, against Arius; and in this century, bishops from Bithynia assisted at a synod held at Tyre, in Phoenicia; and in the "fifth" century was held a synod at Chalcedon, a city in this country, against the Nestorinn heresy; and the names of several bishops of Chalcedon, Nicomedia, and Nice, who lived, in this age, are on record; and in the "sixth" century there were bishops from these several places, and others, who were present in the fifth synod at Constantinople; as there were also in the "seventh" century, at the sixth synod held at the same place, whose names are particularly mentioned; and in the "eighth" century bishops from hence were in the Nicene synod; and even in the ninth century there were some that bore the Christian name in Bithynia {t}. In these places however, it seems, dwelt many Jews, who were converted to Christ, to whom the apostle inscribes this epistle, and whom he further describes in the following verse.

{a} Scorpiace, c. 12. {b} Testimon. ad Quirin. l. 3. c. 36, 37, 39. {c} Eccl. Hist. l. 3. c. 1. {d} Apud Euseb. ib. l. 4. c. 23. {e} Ib. l. 7. c. 14. Hieron. Script. Eccles. Catalog. sect. 75. {f} Ib. l. 8. c. 12. {g} Hist. Eccl.

Magdeburg. cent. 2. c. 2. p. 3. cent. 4. c. 2. p. 3. c. 7. p. 289. cent. 5. c. 2. p. 4. c. 10. p. 602. cent. 6. c. 2. p. 4. cent. 7. c. 2. p. 3. cent. 8. c. 2. p. 5. {h} Geograph. l. 5. c. 6. {i} Polyhist. c. 57. {k} Zohar in Gen. fol. 51. 3. & in Exod. fol. 33. 2. & 35. 4. {l} Adv. Judaeos, c. 7. ad Scapulam, c. 3. {m} Eccl. Hist. l. 6. c. 19. {n} lb. l. 8. 12. {o} Eccl. Hist. Magdeburg. cent. 3. c. 2. p. 2. c. 3. p. 11. c. 7. p. 117. cent. 4. c. 2. p. 4. c. 9. p. 350, 390. cent. 5. c. 2. p. 4. c. 10. p. 605, 859. cent. 6. c. 2. p. 5. cent. 7. c. 2. p. 3. c. 10. p. 254. cent. 8. c. 2. p. 5. cent. 9. c. 2. p. 3. {p} C. 53. {q} lb. cent. 7. c. 2. p. 3. c. 10. p. 254. cent. 8. c. 2. p. 5. {r} Epist. l. 10. ep. 97. {s} Eccl. Hist. l. 8. c. 5, 6. {t} Hist. Eccl. Magdeburg. cent. 4. c. 2. p. 3. c. 9. p. 390. cent. 5. c. 2. p. 4. c. 10. p. 601, 602. cent. 6. c. 2. p. 4. cent. 7. c. 2. p. 3. c. 10. p. 254. cent. 8. c. 2. p. 5. cent. 9. c. 2. p. 3.

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