



Week 51

1 and 2 Peter

## Background

The letters of Peter are generally held to have been written by Peter, the apostle and in 2 Peter we read "but we were eye-witnesses of his majesty". Any slight discrepancies in writing style are attributed to the fact that Silas assisted with the writing of the first letter but that Peter wrote the second on his own. There are some who would challenge these assumptions and look to a later penmanship than the time of Peter. However, there can be no doubt that the purpose of the letters was to strengthen Christians in their time of need: they give context to individual lives within the history of God; they reinforce the understanding of the atoning sacrifice of Christ; encourage love amongst Christians and patience with those who are enemies. The letters were written to stimulate wholesome thinking. The first letter addresses the dangers found outside the body of faith and the second, written a few years later, the those dangers found within the church.

## Written for who?

**1:1-2** "To God's elect, *strangers in the world, scattered* throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood."

This is a letter written generally for the wider church - for individuals and churches that are at odds with the surrounding society. Christians are misfits who no longer belong in the world because they belong in Christ.

**Peter reminds us that the difference between Christians and non-Christians is not that we see different things but that we see the same things differently. What makes the difference between the two ways of seeing is faith.**

*New Interpreter's Bible*



## Themes

### Salvation

We are saved as an individual through Christ and saved into the family of the church through fellowship. It is through being together that we will be able to stand firm in our faith when we feel most alienated from the world. We have a living hope for an inheritance that is being kept in heaven for us (1:4) so knowing that, we are able to endure whatever suffering we face along the way.

As a body of believers we are being built into (2:5)

- A spiritual house – with Christ as the cornerstone we are God’s temple so people who come into contact with us come into contact with God’s holy temple
- a holy priesthood – we can each one of us intercede for the world and those who persecute us

### Suffering

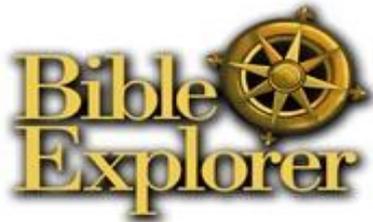
Suffering is an inevitable consequence of salvation but we need to be sure that when we suffer it is because of the gospel and not because we have done wrong. We are not to take revenge and we are not to let suffering weigh us down.

2:12 “Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”

### Submission

We should have a submissive spirit that recalls that when we suffer for being a Christian we are doing nothing more than following in Christ’s footsteps.

- As citizens – to be honest (true within the laws of God)
- As slaves –not rebellious but demonstrating God’s love by being a good slave. (This could translate to the workplace?)
- As wives – developing an inner beauty that shines out God’s love



The second letter sets out how we are to build on our first steps of faith – the need to mature. It warns against false teaching and advises us to wait patiently for a new heaven and a new earth.

- We are to mature (1:5-7)  
make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.
- We are to guard against false teaching that leads to people falling away – when we corrupt our understanding of who Christ is our behaviour deteriorates as we ignore God’s commandments; we lose our moral code and our conversations focus on discontentment.
- The new heaven and new earth will come in God’s time (3:8) With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. What seems like delay to us is good as it down to God’s patience with us that this occurs.
- We are to look forward that time when righteousness will prevail and in the meantime we are to start living in that hope by growing (3:18) in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.