

## Getting to know 1 Peter

### A. The Author:

- **1:1** – The letter is written by Peter – the Apostle of Jesus Christ.
- **5:1** – He is an elder and eyewitness of the sufferings of Jesus.
- **5:12-13** – At the time of writing he has Silas as a companion and he is in “Babylon”. This is probably a code name for the city of Rome.

### B. The Audience:

- **1:1** – It is a circular letter written to a group of churches in five provinces or districts of the Roman Empire.
- These churches were located in modern day Turkey and included places like Ephesus, Colossae and Laodicea.
- There were people from these places present at the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:8-10) and the region was evangelised by Paul (Acts 13-14).
- There may have been some Jewish Christians, but the majority were Gentiles who had been rescued from paganism (1:18; 4:3-4).

### C. The Occasion:

- They are facing extreme prejudice and pressure because of their allegiance to Christ (1:6; 2:18; 3:9,14; 4:3-4,14; 5:9-10).
- This pressure is felt in the world, the workplace and even the home.
- Peter is probably writing around 60 AD. At this time Christians were despised because they refused to conform to the prevailing culture. In particular they refused to worship the Roman gods – including the emperor Nero. Because of this they were branded as those who “*despised the human race*” and were treated with contempt.
- The pressure included social exclusion, harsh treatment by their bosses or spouses, being hauled before courts and verbal abuse.
- Worse was to come. After the fire of Rome 64 AD, Nero blamed the Christians and the systematic persecution of the church began. Many were martyred for their faith – including Peter.

### D. Structure

- Apart from the introduction (1:1-2) and conclusion (5:12-14), there are three sections in this letter:
- **1:3-2:10 – God's chosen people:** They must remember their privileges and rejoice in their hope as God's chosen people.
- **2:11-4:11 – Living in the world:** They must also make a difference in the world by bringing glory to God through their godly lives.
- **4:12-5:11 – Suffering like Christ:** They are to respond to suffering by following the example of Christ whose path led through pain to glory.

### E. Purpose

- 5:2 - “*I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.*”
- *It is a word of encouragement which fulfills four goals:*
  - ✓ To prepare them for suffering
  - ✓ To remind them of their identity
  - ✓ To establish them in the truth
  - ✓ To direct them in their living
- Many scholars think that it had the specific aim of preparing baptismal candidates for their baptism.