

All the Difference
a Bible study note from Wayne Braudrick

Transformers

1 Peter is concerned greatly with who we are as people transformed by God's grace and how we live differently as a result. His thesis statement exposes the drive of the whole letter:

"This is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!" (1 Peter 5:12 NASB)

As we launch into a study of 1 Peter on Sundays at FBC, I am once again passing on to you some of the materials I wrote on my recent study leave for this series. I am so pleased that these offerings help you deepen in the scripture with me, and greatly appreciate all who write to share your learning. Thank you, and may the Lord encourage you in this study of 1 Peter.

God bless,
Wayne

Transformers
a study of 1 Peter

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Objective (what we hope to see God accomplish in us through the study): That we live by the grace of God – persevering today in light of the glory of tomorrow.

Statements of the objective: "I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it! (1 Peter 5:12 NASB)

"The dominant note of this epistle is one of confidence and hope (1:3, 21). God's people have set before them the prospect of the full vindication and open glorification of the Christ whom they know as their Shepherd...This prospect should inspire His people to endure earthly trial with joy, as partakers of Christ's sufferings, that their joy, and indeed their personal share with Christ in His glory, may thus be all the greater on the day when His glory is revealed (4:12-13; Romans 8:18-20)." – Alan M. Stibbs, *The First General Epistle of Peter*, 192

Premise (why we are studying this): Ours is a remarkably complex world, where divergent voices claim to tell us how we should live. In such a situation, the Christian needs to understand the simple truth of God's grace and live by it alone. Christians should dwell on earth as people who are: bound for a future grander than anything temporal, transformed by God's gracious election, and operating according to a greater purpose. Sadly, that is rarely our experience, necessitating engagement with

God's word from Peter. When we so engage, the Lord changes not only us, but the world.

Statements of the premise: "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation." (1 Peter 2:11-12 NASB)

"First Peter has a distinctively pastoral tone with a strong emphasis on godly behavior in suffering. It is of great value for Christians today, who are still in a hostile world and many of whom in certain lands are suffering for Christ. A faithful witness for him can be costly, not only under repressive regimes but also in our more open society." - Edwin Blum, *1 Peter*, 215

"The millions who are born each year need to hear about Christ and his salvation. More and more the world interprets redemption only in political and economic terms, a misunderstanding sadly encouraged primarily by Western influences. Our own nation faces an acute crisis of soul in material and moral and spiritual matters.

We parry detailed questions about the possible end of the world while millions around us are dying morally and spiritually. Beleaguered by indelicacy and indecency, by tastelessness and vulgarity, our sophisticated society is given on one hand to a hatred of ultimate truth and on the other to irrational passion...The only way to change one's mind, it would seem, is to see a psychiatrist. Skepticism, caricature, and ridicule of the gospel abound. Secularism is no less hard-core than pornography. From the decadence of our times there is no place to go but hell, unless repentant man takes hold of God's [grace] and clings fast." - Carl F. H. Henry, *The Christian Mindset in a Secular Society*, 48

Theme of the study (what the study is about): Peter's first general letter is one of those rare books where a clear purpose statement is delivered. As with John's gospel, this purpose statement comes near the end (1 Peter 5:12; John's is found in 20:31.) That declaration to stand in God's grace obviously sets the tone for the entire epistle and undergirds Peter's argument.

Sub themes: There are as well 3 sub-themes which flesh out the transformed life of grace:

- 1) The Christian is a pilgrim, passing through this world.
- 2) The Christian has a higher purpose. Avoidance of pain, amassing of wealth, and other foci of this world are not comparable to the purposeful living for eternity.
- 3) The Christian is transformed and this expected to live differently.

Statements of the theme: “[You] who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure. (1 Peter 1:1-2 NASB)

“When scientific achievement, the welfare state, and dialectical materialism combine to make our century too worldly-minded, 1 Peter recalls us to the heavenly and eternal outlook, and reminds Christians that they are but strangers and pilgrims here. Similarly, when relief from physical disease, and the provision of physical comfort tend to be treated by some as the primary Christian objective, we need the reminder of 1 Peter that holiness matters more, and that all who would follow Christ must, in a selfish and sinful world, be prepared to suffer for righteousness’ sake, and to recognize that God uses suffering for the highest good. Also, when moral standards...tend to seriously decline, and when genuine young converts to Christ are tempted to spend their enthusiasm more in words than in deeds, we need the challenge of 1 Peter to express our response to Christ and the gospel in transformed behavior in relation to our fellow-men.” – Alan M. Stibbs, *The First General Epistle of Peter*, 11

Textual background:

1. Date of composition. There are three schools with rational arguments for dating. The most likely appears to be sometime between 62 and 64 AD. The great 20th c. British scholar E.G. Selwyn postulates that final rejection of Christianity by the Sanhedrin which resulted in the murder of James (sometime before 63) may have prompted this letter. (Selwyn, 56) Possibly, this epistle was spurred by the murder of Paul, which tidily explains Mark and Silas’ presence with Peter. However, this still begs the question why Paul’s demise goes unmentioned. Regardless of the motive, the letter likely is sent on its circuit sometime before Nero’s 64 AD Roman persecution.
2. Authorship. Peter is without doubt the author, as the earliest witnesses attest (see below.) There are those who hold that Peter must have been written by someone after the 1st century, using Peter as a pseudonym. However, such speculation has little merit and bring up so many questions that it becomes laughable. Moreover, the style of thought is remarkably equivalent with that of Peter’s speeches in Acts.
3. Destination & place of writing. Peter clearly names the area of his intended original audience. Fascinatingly, it covers the large portion of Asia Minor not visited by Paul nor addressed by his letters. One excellent question concerns the order of listing – the provinces are listed neither alphabetically nor in an order of Roman significance. However, W. M. Ramsay ingeniously hit on the most likely answer: the order of territories matches the precise route one would take

in visiting them on foot from Rome. By the way, Ramsay backed his theory with action, walking the remains of those very Roman roads in the late 19th century.

The place of writing is less certain, as Peter refers to it with the cryptic “Babylon.” Most probably this is Rome, as the Christians in the latter half of the 1st century appear to have used this as a euphemism for Rome (see John’s Revelation). Roman origin also explains Mark and Silas’ presence; however, the capital’s designation must be held lightly.

4. Literary style and language. The Greek of this epistle is elegant, though there are clear Hebraisms consistent with a Semitic author. In addition to specific references and clear OT allusions, the Exodus and Abraham’s sacrifice operate as motifs throughout (see Hillyer, 6-7.) The excellence of the Greek (62 of the 578 Greek words in the text appear only here in the NT) causes problems for some scholars, as it seems inconsistent with Peter’s description in Acts 4:13 as “uneducated.” However, any problem is overstated, for two reasons:
 - a. The Sanhedrin’s slur, calling Peter *agrammatos* (uneducated), does not mean he was considered backwards (despite his clearly Galilean accent). It does mean that the doctors of the Council were astounded that Peter could speak so confidently and brilliantly on points of the Law. Peter was not poor (he owned his own company and a home) and he may have been better educated than most. As Hillyer says, “Running a fishing consortium (Luke 5:3) in Bethsaida meant that Peter would need to be bilingual, even if his accent remained thick (Matt. 26:73). While he was not a graduate of Tarsus University like Paul, thirty and more years of preaching to Greek-speaking audiences would have honed his grasp of the language in a means similar to the historian Josephus.” (2)
 - b. Peter declares in 5:12 that Silvanus is the channel of his communication. This Silvanus is the same respected church leader paired with Paul on journeys (Silvanus was the Romanized form of his name Silas.) Silas/Silvanus was another of those well-educated men like Paul and Mark who held Roman citizenship and name. It is possible that Silvanus took dictation and “cleaned up” the Greek in consultation with Peter after the writing process was complete; such editing was a regular practice in that day. It is also feasible that Silas wrote much of the form, generally following Peter’s stated desire for the communication. In the classical world, this process was widely practiced and resembled modern speech-writers for Presidents. Of course, then as now the process includes the President’s editing and final approval. Wherever Silvanus falls on that scale – from secretary to amanuensis – it is almost certain that he influenced the literary style.

Theological background:

1. Original acceptance of the letter. Over a century ago the Scottish scholar Charles Bigg wrote of 1 Peter, "There is no book in the New Testament which has earlier, better or stronger attestation." Even the German higher critics acknowledged that the earliest churches clearly considered 1 Peter to be canonical. This clear and complete acceptance came despite the many other letters (written later) that claimed Petrine authorship - letters which were rejected as apocryphal. Such testimony should be taken very seriously. As Stibbs reminds us, "There were men in those days not deficient in critical acumen or theological discrimination, nor insensible of the problems presented by the existence of so many writings claiming Petrine authority...the Christians of the early centuries were intensely - and necessarily - concerned with questions of authorship and apostolicity." - Stibbs, 18, 15
2. Modern acceptance of 1 Peter. Nonetheless, modern scholars began to chip away at the solidity of Peter as canonical. Some of these understandably questioned Peter as author due to the fine Greek. Others' motives were more outspokenly sinister, including a rejection of all scripture and a condescending attitude toward any past reasoning. Yet, despite almost 200 years of German arguments against 1 Peter and 100 years of English ones, most modern scholars accept 1 Peter as genuine. Interestingly, this acceptance is not limited to conservatives.
3. Christology. Peter is not without reference to the Spirit, and he includes powerful theology regarding the Father. However, his main focus concerns the Son. Jesus, in Peter's words, is the embodiment of Isaiah's Suffering Servant. This is very similar to Mark's depiction in his gospel, an understandable occurrence given that Peter discipled Mark in the faith. Both emphasize Christ's death as ransom and His sufferings as exemplary and vicarious. Peter's speeches recorded by Luke in Acts accent the same points. The suffering of Jesus is very vibrant and real to Peter, which seems understandable given Peter's role in the early church.

Historical background:

1. Peter in the early church. At Caesarea Philippi, it was Peter who speaks with such understanding that Jesus first introduces His *ekklesia* (church) in response. It was also Peter who is repulsed by Jesus' concept of a Suffering Servant Messiah, prompting Jesus to rebuke him. Later, Peter denies His Lord publicly. Yet, he becomes the first to witness to the resurrection and the first to speak boldly of Jesus as the clear fulfillment of the promised Suffering Servant.

Further, Peter was the foremost of the Twelve, at least in some capacity, and it was Peter whom God used to bring each people group into the *ekkllesia*. It was through Peter that the Holy Spirit indwelt Jew, then Samaritan, then Gentile of the gate, and finally Cornelius the pure Gentile. Thus, Peter could address Gentiles in the same language as James much earlier had used for Jewish believers. By the way, Peter's mistake and rebuke by Paul (see Galatians) does not in any way erode Peter's acceptance of Gentiles in this later letter. The whole problem Paul confronted was that Peter's actions didn't match his theology. Peter never rejected the Gentile Christians, he had just momentarily cowed to legalistic big shots from Jerusalem.

While I desire to be respectful toward those who believe in apostolic succession in the sense of the Roman Catholic Church, such a concept is simply insupportable from 1 Peter. Peter obviously claims no papacy, his letter is "affectionate, loving, lowly, humble" in the words of Izaak Walton (quoted in Moffat) and bears no resemblance to a papal bull or encyclical. In fact, his theology is so aligned with Paul's that many scholars see Peter's thought as subservient. (I disagree, thinking it rather compatible, an understandable reality if God genuinely breathed His word through human authors.) The theology, humble tone, and lack of claims to supreme or singular authority mean that Petrine papacy must be read back into the text; it cannot be induced from it.

2. Commonality. The commonality of doctrine with other texts is worthy of a further word. It is rather popular to reflexively assume that the presence of parallel verbiage presumes de facto borrowing of one text from another. While this is possible, it fails to consider the reality of human endeavor in a common cause. A modern Democrat in Texas (yes, there are some), writing on the glories of the Kennedy administration will use very similar language to a Seattle Democrat discussing the same topic. They needn't have seen each others' writing as they have a common worldview and store of information. A Republican might look at those years very differently, of course, but those with the same understanding will post amazingly similar blogs.
3. Persecutions. Persecutions are referenced four times in the letter, and they appear to discuss broad realities true in all times and places. There needn't be visible harm coming to Christians for *purosisis* to be a part of this life. As Selwyn summarized, "The general ordeal (*purosisis*) lay in the complete lack of security which exposed Christians at any moment, and in any part of the empire, to slander, defamation of character, boycott, mob-violence, and even death: they were, or at any time or place might be, hated of all men for Christ's sake: society was inhospitable and the world unjust." – Selwyn, 54. Nothing has changed today, as God's economy and human nature remain the same. For example, the 2010 post-earthquake events involving missionaries in Haiti led to many hundreds of blog postings stating variations on the theme that Christians

should be eradicated. This despite the exoneration of the missionaries. Such incipient persecution is part of the Christian sojourn, and Peter would no doubt agree that anyone who says otherwise is selling something.

Further, the four mentions of purosos may be referring to differing specific expressions of that general rule. Though they were generally disrespected because of “the name”, some of the passages may be pointing to more specific types of rejection. We’ll examine that in the lessons.

4. General epistle. Letter-writing was robust under the empire, and though we possess only a small percentage of the Christian epistles, we have record of many more. The letters addressed from Christian leaders to specific churches were dear to those churches and treasured by them. For example, Clement of Rome’s famous letter to Corinth was very respected by them. However, no one at Corinth or elsewhere consider Clement to be scripture. Those few letters immediately recognized as God’s word by *all* the churches were dubbed general or catholic epistles. 1 Peter was such a letter.

Teacher: Wayne Braudrick

Dates: 7 March – 6 June (14 Sundays; 12 messages on 1 Peter)

Preaching schedule:

<u>Main Passage</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Message</u>
1 Peter 1:1-2	March 7	Transformed by grace
1 Peter 1:3-7	March 14	Transformed for glory
1 Peter 1:8-12	March 21	Transformation beyond sight
1 Peter 1:13-21	March 28	Transformed through family
<i>Easter Break</i>	<i>April 4</i>	<i>WB preach G Fri., Sunrise, Resurrection</i>
1 Peter 1:22-2:3	April 11	Transformed in brotherly love
1 Peter 2:4-10	April 18	Transformed into God’s church
1 Peter 2:11-21	April 25	Transforming honor
1 Peter 2:21-3:12	May 02	Transformation in Christ-likeness
1 Peter 3:13-22	May 09	Transforming perspective
1 Peter 4:1-11	May 16	Transformed everyday (and forever?)
<i>Guest – Ben Graham</i>	<i>May 23</i>	<i>Stand alone message</i>
1 Peter 4:12-5:5	May 30	Transformed hardships
1 Peter 5:5-14	June 6	Transformed by humility

Bibliography:

General: Barclay, *Letters of James and Peter*; Blum, *1 Peter (EBC)*; Hillyer, *1 and 2 Peter, Jude (NIBC)*; Leighton, *Commentary on First Peter*; McKnight, *1 Peter (NIV Application)*; Robertson, *Word Study 1 Peter*; Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*; Swindoll, *Hope in Hurtful Times*; Walls, *The First Epistle General of Peter (Tyndale)* Wiersbe, *Be Hopeful*

Living successfully through this fallen world: Allen, *You Are Never Alone*; Boice, *Two Cities, Two Loves*; Bridges, *Respectable Sins*; Godhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*; Henry, *The Christian Mindset in a Secular Society*; McCarthy, *The Good Life*; Smedes, *The Art of Forgiving*; Tozer, *The Divine Conquest* (last ch.)

Unequal marriage: Berry, *Beloved Unbeliever*; Eggerichs, *Love and Respect*; Heald, *Loving Your Husband*; Lewis & Hendricks, *Rocking the Roles*; Thomas, *Sacred Marriage*

Spiritual warfare: Brooks, *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*; Bubeck, *The Adversary*; Chafer, *Satan*; Steadman, *Spiritual Warfare*

Persecution/perseverance: Baldwin, *Bruised but not Broken*; MacDonald, *The Life God Blesses*; Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire*; Schaeffer, *The God Who is There & A Time for Anger*; Wimmer, *No Pain, No Gain*

Eldership: FBC Elder Handbook; Sanders, *Biblical Leadership*; Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*

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"The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith." I Timothy 1:5
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