

*Putting On
a Gentle &
Quiet Spirit*

*Elizabeth
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Lesson 1

Counting on God's Grace and Peace

1 Peter 1:1-2

Congratulations, dear friend. Because you have picked up and begun a Bible study entitled *Putting on a Gentle and Quiet Spirit*, you're certainly some kind of special woman! For when God lives within us, His Spirit causes you and me to yearn for these two precious qualities to be evident in our lives, as well as the many other godly qualities and behaviors the apostle Peter puts before us in the book of 1 Peter. For our purposes in this study, it will help us to know that...

As eighteenth-century theologian and teacher J. A. Bengel puts it,

Gentle (or meek) has to do with the condition of the mind and the heart, and
Quiet has to do with a tranquility arising from within, causing no disturbance to others.²

Gentle (or meek) means not creating disturbances.
Quiet means bearing with tranquility the disturbances caused by others.

Gentle (or meek) has to do with affections and feelings.
Quiet applies to words, countenance, and actions.³

But before we step into the meat of Peter's writings, it's good to note a few facts about the powerful book of 1 Peter. Many Bible teachers think Peter wrote these words around 65 A.D., around the time the persecution of Christians by Nero began. Christianity was beginning to be considered a separate religious entity apart from Judaism. Consequently, Christians no longer enjoyed protection from the government; on the contrary, they were coming under persecution from it. So prepare yourself to learn a lot about successfully handling suffering and trials and persecution, about holy conduct, about God's gentle and quiet spirit, and also about the amazing glory God promises to us afterward!

And now, to learn who this letter was written to and something about these special people, read on.

I *Peter* I:1-2

¹ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,

² elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

God's Input...

1. First of all, who is writing this letter, and how does he refer to himself (verse 1)?

And what words does he use to address his readers (verse 1)?

Note also where they lived (verse 1).

2. In verse 2, Peter uses yet another term to describe his readers. Jot it here.
3. Note the function of each of the members of the God-head (verse 2):

God the Father _____ us according to His _____

The Spirit _____ us that we may _____

Jesus Christ _____ us with His _____

4. How does Peter greet his readers (verse 2)?
5. What do you learn about God in these verses?

Here are a few thoughts that will help us as we begin studying this always-timely letter by Peter:

The Author: A fisherman by trade, Peter was called by Jesus to learn to fish for men instead of fish (Matthew 4:19). From that moment on, Simon Peter, or Peter, was one of the Lord's twelve disciples, along with his brother Andrew.

The Addressees: Most believe this letter was written to Jewish and Gentile Christians. The term "Dispersion" (verse 1) or *Diaspora* refers to these Christians, who lived outside Jerusalem in the five Roman provinces mentioned: Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. Peter meant for his letter to be circulated among these brethren. These believers were also referred to as *pilgrims* or *sojourners*, which emphasizes their relationship with the world—they were strangers to it. And they were *elect*—literally "picked out" and "chosen," a privilege that began in God's original plan and purpose.

...*And Your Heart's Answer*

- Beloved, are you enduring any kind of persecution? Or are you suffering in any way? If so, how does Peter's prayerful greeting minister to you?
- And how do you think it ministered to Peter's persecuted friends?
- And how do you think the two virtues Peter mentions in verse 2 could equip them (and you!) to face persecution?

It's wonderful to think about God's grace and peace. They are two of the loveliest words God speaks to us, words that move our souls. But let's look a little deeper!

Grace is active and means “favor.” So whatever your situation, whatever the occasion, you have God's favor. You have whatever it is going to take for you to endure, cope, have the victory, and be triumphant in it. And Peter prays that God's grace would be multiplied, in ever-increasing measure; that you will experience more and more of it, over and over again, time after time, in its fullest measure!

Peace, on the other hand, is passive and refers to rest. And so, dear one, whatever your situation, whatever the occasion or need, you have God's peace, God's rest *in* your suffering. Whatever the trial or test, *in* it you have not only God's power but God's rest.

From the Heart

We'll talk more later about what it means to have a “gentle and quiet spirit” and how to nurture this precious attitude. But for now, I want to share with you a common reaction women have when they contemplate a gentle and quiet spirit. Many times, the first words spoken are, “But I can't be like that! I can't remain calm when there's trouble!” True—if we're relying on our own strength.

But when we appropriate God's great enablers—His grace and His peace—we can achieve a gentle and quiet spirit. Thank God, who has graced us with these gifts, ensuring that we can do it. So, as we head into this study, let's try to remember three things with each lesson:

- We must count on God's grace. It's there. It's given. It's available.

- We must pray for God's grace. Just like a can of cola expands when we shake it, our awareness of God's grace expands when we "shake it up" through prayer.
- We must go right on with life...regardless of suffering. It's possible—and important—to have something positive to show for our suffering times.

Priscilla was a woman just like you and me, but she was an exile, a stranger, a foreigner, a pilgrim who was put out of her own country and sent away (Acts 18:2). Yet her pilgrim path led her straight into the path of the apostle Paul, to the establishment of a church in her home, and to an incredible ministry alongside her husband (Romans 16:4-5).

Jesus' disciple John, too, (the one whom Jesus loved—John 13:23) was sent into exile to the island of Patmos (Revelation 1:9). There, aged and alone, in essence a prisoner because he loved and followed Jesus, John experienced one of the most incredible worship experiences recorded in the Bible: He was granted a vision of God, which he then recorded in the book of Revelation.

Yes, my beautiful suffering friend, *as* we suffer for doing what's right and are enabled by the power of God's grace and enjoying His peace, *as* we put on God's gentle and quiet spirit and rely on the Lord instead of our human efforts and emotions, *as* we wait on Him to make sense and use of our suffering times, *then* indeed we have much to show in the end. Every time we endure hard times, we prove that the glory of the Lord is truly revealed in the end. As the psalmist declared, "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man [or woman] who trusts in Him!" (Psalm 34:8).