

The Book Of First Peter

Peter Explains that Trials

Refine Faith

Compiled By Dr. Harold Bollinger

1 Peter

OVERVIEW:

Many first-century followers of Christ were suffering and being abused and persecuted for believing in and obeying Jesus. Beginning in Jerusalem at the hands of their Jewish brothers, the pattern of persecution spread to the rest of the world—wherever Christians gathered—and climaxed when Rome determined to rid the empire of those who would not bow to Caesar. . . the “Christ-ones.”

Peter knew persecution firsthand. Beaten and jailed, Peter had been threatened often. He had seen fellow Christians die and the church scattered. But he knew Christ, and nothing could shake his confidence in his risen Lord. In this personal context, Peter wrote to the church scattered and suffering for the faith, giving comfort and hope, and urging continued loyalty to Christ.

Peter begins by thanking God for salvation (1 Peter 1:2-6). He explains to his readers that trials will refine their faith (1 Peter 1:7-9). They should believe in spite of their circumstances; for many in past ages believed in God’s plan of salvation, even the prophets of old who wrote about it but didn’t understand it. But now salvation has been revealed in Christ (1 Peter 1:10-13).

In response to such a great salvation, Peter commands them to live holy lives (1 Peter 1:14-16), to reverently fear and trust God (1 Peter 1:17-21), to be honest and loving (1 Peter 2:1-3), and to become like Christ (1 Peter 2:1-3).

Jesus Christ, as “a chosen and precious cornerstone” upon whom the church is to be built (1 Peter 2:4, 6), is also the stone that was rejected, causing those who **are** disobedient to stumble and fall (1 Peter 2:7-8). But the church, built upon this Stone, is to be God’s holy priesthood (1 Peter 2:9-10).

Next, Peter explains how believers should live during difficult times (1 Peter 2:11-4:11). Christians should be above reproach (1 Peter 2:12-17), imitating Christ in all their social roles—masters and servants, husbands and wives, church members and neighbors (1 Peter 2:18-3:17). Christ should be our model for obedience to God in the midst of great suffering (1 Peter 3:18-4:11).

Peter then outlines the right attitude to have about persecution: expect it (1 Peter 4:12), be thankful for the privilege of suffering for Christ (1 Peter 4:13-18), and trust God for deliverance (1 Peter 4:19).

Next, Peter gives some special instructions—elders should care for God’s flock (1 Peter 5:1-4), younger men should be submissive to those who are older (1 Peter 5:5-6), and everyone should trust God and resist Satan (1 Peter 5:7-11).

Peter concludes by introducing Silas and by giving personal greetings from himself, possibly from the church in Rome, and from Mark (1 Peter 5:12-14).

When you suffer for doing what is right, remember that following Christ is a costly commitment. When persecuted for your faith, rejoice that you have been counted worthy to suffer for Christ. He suffered for us; as his followers, we should expect nothing less. As you read 1 Peter, remember that trials will come to refine your faith. When they come, remain faithful to God.

THE BLUEPRINT

Peter wrote to Jewish Christians who were experiencing persecution for their faith. He wrote to comfort them with the hope of eternal life and to challenge them to continue living holy lives. Those who suffer for being Christians become partners with Christ in his suffering. As we suffer, we must remember that Christ is both our hope in the midst of suffering and our example of how to endure suffering faithfully.

1. God's great blessings to his people (1 Peter 1:1-2:10)

This letter is from Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ.

I am writing to God's chosen people who are living as foreigners in the lands of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, the province of Asia, and Bithynia. [2] God the Father chose you long ago, and the Spirit has made you holy. As a result, you have obeyed Jesus Christ and are cleansed by his blood.

May you have more and more of God's special favor and wonderful peace.

[3] All honor to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for it is by his boundless mercy that God has given us the privilege of being born again. Now we live with a wonderful expectation because Jesus Christ rose again from the dead.

[4] For God has reserved a priceless inheritance for his children. It is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. [5] And God, in his mighty power, will protect you until you receive this salvation, because you are trusting him. It will be revealed on the last day for all to see. [6] So be truly glad! There is wonderful joy ahead, even though it is necessary for you to endure many trials for a while.

[7] These trials are only to test your faith, to show that it is strong and pure. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—and your faith is far more precious to God than mere gold. So if your faith remains strong after being tried by fiery trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.

[8] You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him, you trust him; and even now you are happy with a glorious, inexpressible joy. [9] Your reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls.

[10] This salvation was something the prophets wanted to know more about. They prophesied about this gracious salvation prepared for you, even though they had many questions as to what it all could mean. [11] They wondered what the Spirit of Christ within them was talking about when he told them in advance about Christ's suffering and his great glory afterward. They wondered when and to whom all this would happen.

[12] They were told that these things would not happen during their lifetime, but many years later, during yours. And now this Good News has been announced by those who preached to you in the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. It is all so wonderful that even the angels are eagerly watching these things happen.

[13] So think clearly and exercise self-control. Look forward to the special blessings that will come to you at the return of Jesus Christ. [14] Obey God because you are his children. Don't slip back into your old ways of doing evil; you didn't know any better then. [15] But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God—who chose you to be his children—is holy. [16] For he himself has said, "You must be holy because I am holy."

[17] And remember that the heavenly Father to whom you pray has no favorites when he judges. He will judge or reward you according to what you do. So you must live in reverent fear of him during your time as foreigners here on earth. [18] For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And the ransom he paid was not mere gold or silver. [19] He paid for you with the precious lifeblood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. [20] God chose him for this purpose long before the world began, but now in these final days, he was sent to the earth for all to see. And he did this for you.

[21] Through Christ you have come to trust in God. And because God raised Christ from the dead and gave him great glory, your faith and hope can be placed confidently in God. [22] Now you can have sincere love for each other as brothers and sisters because you were cleansed from your sins when you accepted the truth of the Good News. So see to it that you really do love each other intensely with all your hearts.

[23] For you have been born again. Your new life did not come from your earthly parents because the life they gave you will end in death. But this new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living word of God. [24] As the prophet says,

"People are like grass that dies away;
their beauty fades as quickly as the beauty of wildflowers.
The grass withers,
and the flowers fall away.
[25] But the word of the Lord will last forever."

And that word is the Good News that was preached to you.

[2:1] So get rid of all malicious behavior and deceit. Don't just pretend to be good! Be done with hypocrisy and jealousy and backstabbing. [2] You must crave pure spiritual milk so that you can grow into the fullness of your salvation. Cry out for this nourishment as a baby cries for milk, [3] now that you have had a taste of the Lord's kindness.

[4] Come to Christ, who is the living cornerstone of God's temple. He was rejected by the people, but he is precious to God who chose him.

[5] And now God is building you, as living stones, into his spiritual temple. What's more, you are God's holy priests, who offer the spiritual sacrifices that please him because of Jesus Christ. [6] As the Scriptures express it,

"I am placing a stone in Jerusalem,
a chosen cornerstone,
and anyone who believes in him
will never be disappointed."

[7] Yes, he is very precious to you who believe. But for those who reject him,

"The stone that was rejected by the builders
has now become the cornerstone."

[8] And the Scriptures also say,

"He is the stone that makes people stumble,
the rock that will make them fall."

They stumble because they do not listen to God's word or obey it, and so they meet the fate that has been planned for them.

[9] But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are a kingdom of priests, God's holy nation, his very own possession. This is so you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.

[10] "Once you were not a people;
now you are the people of God.
Once you received none of God's mercy;
now you have received his mercy."

2. The conduct of God's people in the midst of suffering (1 Peter 2:11-4:19)

Dear brothers and sisters, you are foreigners and aliens here. So I warn you to keep away from evil desires because they fight against your very souls. [12] Be careful how you live among your unbelieving neighbors. Even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will believe and give honor to God when he comes to judge the world.

[13] For the Lord's sake, accept all authority—the king as head of state, [14] and the officials he has appointed. For the king has sent them to punish all who do wrong and to honor those who do right.

[15] It is God's will that your good lives should silence those who make foolish accusations against you. [16] You are not slaves; you are free. But your freedom is not an excuse to do evil. You are free to live as God's slaves. [17] Show respect for everyone. Love your Christian brothers and sisters. Fear God. Show respect for the king.

[18] You who are slaves must accept the authority of your masters. Do whatever they tell you—not only if they are kind and reasonable, but even if they are harsh. [19] For God is pleased with you when, for the sake of your conscience, you patiently endure unfair treatment. [20] Of course, you get no credit for being patient if you are beaten for doing wrong. But if you suffer for doing right and are patient beneath the blows, God is pleased with you.

[21] This suffering is all part of what God has called you to. Christ, who suffered for you, is your example. Follow in his steps. [22] He never sinned, and he never deceived anyone. [23] He did not retaliate when he was insulted. When he suffered, he did not threaten to get even. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly. [24] He personally carried away our sins in his own body on the cross so we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. You have been healed by his wounds! [25] Once you were wandering like lost sheep. But now you have turned to your Shepherd, the Guardian of your souls.

[3:1] In the same way, you wives must accept the authority of your husbands, even those who refuse to accept the Good News. Your godly lives will speak to them better than any words. They will be won over [2] by watching your pure, godly behavior.

[3] Don't be concerned about the outward beauty that depends on fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes. [4] You should be known for the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God. [5] That is the way the holy women of old made themselves beautiful. They trusted God and accepted the authority of their husbands. [6] For instance, Sarah obeyed her husband, Abraham, when she called him her master. You are her daughters when you do what is right without fear of what your husbands might do.

[7] In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat her with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. If you don't treat her as you should, your prayers will not be heard.

[8] Finally, all of you should be of one mind, full of sympathy toward each other, loving one another with tender hearts and humble minds. [9] Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate when people say unkind things about you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God wants you to do, and he will bless you for it. [10] For the Scriptures say,

"If you want a happy life and good days,
keep your tongue from speaking evil,
and keep your lips from telling lies.

[11] Turn away from evil and do good.

Work hard at living in peace with others.

[12] The eyes of the Lord watch over those who do right,
and his ears are open to their prayers.

But the Lord turns his face
against those who do evil."

[13] Now, who will want to harm you if you are eager to do good? [14] But even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it. So don't be afraid and don't worry. [15] Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if you are asked about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it. [16] But you must do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak evil against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ. [17] Remember, it is better to suffer for doing good, if that is what God wants, than to suffer for doing wrong!

[18] Christ also suffered when he died for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners that he might bring us safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit.

[19] So he went and preached to the spirits in prison— [20] those who disobeyed God long ago when God waited patiently while Noah was building his boat. Only eight people were saved from drowning in that terrible flood. [21] And this is a picture of baptism, which now saves you by the power of Jesus Christ's resurrection. Baptism is not a removal of dirt from your body; it is an appeal to God from a clean conscience.

[22] Now Christ has gone to heaven. He is seated in the place of honor next to God, and all the angels and authorities and powers are bowing before him.

[4:1] So then, since Christ suffered physical pain, you must arm yourselves with the same attitude he had, and be ready to suffer, too. For if you are willing to suffer for Christ, you have decided to stop sinning. [2] And you won't spend the rest of your life chasing after evil desires, but you will be anxious to do the will of God. [3] You have had enough in the past of the evil things that godless people enjoy—their immorality and lust, their feasting and drunkenness and wild parties, and their terrible worship of idols.

[4] Of course, your former friends are very surprised when you no longer join them in the wicked things they do, and they say evil things about you. [5] But just remember that they will have to face God, who will judge everyone, both the living and the dead. [6] That is why the Good News was preached even to those who have died—so that although their bodies were punished with death, they could still live in the spirit as God does.

[7] The end of the world is coming soon. Therefore, be earnest and disciplined in your prayers. [8] Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins. [9] Cheerfully share your home with those who need a meal or a place to stay.

[10] God has given gifts to each of you from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Manage them well so that God's generosity can flow through you. [11] Are you called to be a speaker? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Are you called to help others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then God will be given glory in everything through Jesus Christ. All glory and power belong to him forever and ever. Amen.

[12] Dear friends, don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you. [13] Instead, be very glad—because these trials will make you partners with Christ in his suffering, and afterward you will have the wonderful joy of sharing his glory when it is displayed to all the world.

[14] Be happy if you are insulted for being a Christian, for then the glorious Spirit of God will come upon you. [15] If you suffer, however, it must not be for murder, stealing, making trouble, or prying into other people's affairs. [16] But it is no shame to suffer for being a Christian. Praise God for the privilege of being called by his wonderful name! [17] For the time has come for judgment, and it must begin first among God's own children. And if even we Christians must be judged, what terrible fate awaits those who have never believed God's Good News? [18] And

"If the righteous are barely saved,
what chance will the godless and sinners have?"

[19] So if you are suffering according to God's will, keep on doing what is right, and trust yourself to the God who made you, for he will never fail you.

3. The shepherding of God's people in the midst of suffering (1 Peter 5:1-14)

And now, a word to you who are elders in the churches. I, too, am an elder and a witness to the sufferings of Christ. And I, too, will share his glory and his honor when he returns. As a fellow elder, this is my appeal to you: [2] Care for the flock of God entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly—not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. [3] Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your good example. [4] And when the head Shepherd comes, your reward will be a never-ending share in his glory and honor.

[5] You younger men, accept the authority of the elders. And all of you, serve each other in humility, for

"God sets himself against the proud,
but he shows favor to the humble."

[6] So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and in his good time he will honor you. [7] Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about what happens to you.

[8] Be careful! Watch out for attacks from the Devil, your great enemy. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for some victim to devour. [9] Take a firm stand against him, and be strong in your faith. Remember that your Christian brothers and sisters all over the world are going through the same kind of suffering you are.

[10] In his kindness God called you to his eternal glory by means of Jesus Christ. After you have suffered a little while, he will restore, support, and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation. [11] All power is his forever and ever. Amen.

[12] I have written this short letter to you with the help of Silas, whom I consider a faithful brother. My purpose in writing is to encourage you and assure you that the grace of God is with you no matter what happens.

[13] Your sister church here in Rome sends you greetings, and so does my son Mark. [14] Greet each other in Christian love.

Peace be to all of you who are in Christ.

MEGATHEMES

THEME: Salvation

EXPLANATION:

Our salvation is a gracious gift from God. God chose us out of his love for us, Jesus died to pay the penalty for our sin, and the Holy Spirit cleansed us from sin when we believed. Eternal life is a wonderful privilege for those who trust in Christ.

IMPORTANCE:

Our safety and security are in God. If we experience joy in relationship with Christ now, how much greater will our joy be when he returns and we see him face to face. Such a hope should motivate us to serve Christ with greater commitment.

THEME: Persecution

EXPLANATION:

Peter offers faithful believers comfort and hope. We should expect ridicule, rejection, and suffering because we are Christians. Persecution makes us stronger because it refines our faith. We can face persecution victoriously as Christ did, if we rely on him.

IMPORTANCE:

Christians still suffer for what they believe. We should expect persecution, but we don't have to be terrified by it. The fact that we will live eternally with Christ should give us the confidence, patience, and hope to stand firm even when we are persecuted.

THEME: God's Family

EXPLANATION:

We are privileged to belong to God's family, a community with Christ as the Founder and Foundation. Everyone in this community is related—we are all brothers and sisters, loved equally by God.

IMPORTANCE:

Because Christ is the foundation of our family, we must be devoted, loyal, and faithful to him. By obeying him, we show that we are his children. We must accept the challenge to live differently from the society around us.

THEME: Family Life

EXPLANATION:

Peter encouraged the wives of unbelievers to submit to their husbands' authority as a means to winning them to Christ. He urged all family members to treat others with sympathy, love, compassion, and humility.

IMPORTANCE:

We must treat our families lovingly. Though it's never easy, willing service is the best way to influence loved ones. To gain the strength we need for self-discipline and submission, we need to pray for God's help.

THEME: Judgment

EXPLANATION:

God will judge everyone with perfect justice. We all will face God. He will punish evildoers and those who persecute God's people. Those who love him will be rewarded with life forever in his presence.

IMPORTANCE:

Because all are accountable to God, we can leave judgment of others to him. We must not hate or resent those who persecute us. We should realize that we will be held responsible for how we live each day.

An invitation is given to open your heart's door.

Rev. 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: Living Bible Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*.

Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print

