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1 PETER

*Hope in suffering*

WRITTEN

Approx. 64 AD

KEY VERSE

*"And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast."*

5:10

Last updated April 2, 2023

Encourage to endure opposition and suffering and share the faith

PURPOSE

**CONTENTS**

[INTRODUCTION 2](#_Toc125308843)

[STRUCTURE 2](#_Toc125308844)

[PETER'S READERS 3](#_Toc125308845)

[SCATTERED EXILES (1:1-2) 3](#_Toc125308846)

["HOPE" IN THE BIBLE 3](#_Toc125308847)

[WORSHIP (1:3-12) 4](#_Toc125308848)

[THEREFORE: (1:13) 4](#_Toc125308849)

[2:4-8 4](#_Toc125308850)

[2:9-10 "NOW YOU ARE THE PEOPLE OF GOD" 5](#_Toc125308851)

[JESUS' EXAMPLE IN SUFFERING (2:21-25) 6](#_Toc125308852)

[2:23b-24 A CHIASM? 6](#_Toc125308853)

[MARRIAGE (3:1-7) 6](#_Toc125308854)

[ALWAYS BE PREPARED TO GIVE AN ANSWER (3:14-16) 7](#_Toc125308855)

[PROCLAMATION TO THE IMPRISONED SPIRITS (3:18B-20) 7](#_Toc125308856)

[3:8 - 4:11 7](#_Toc125308857)

[COUNCIL FOR THE "END TIMES" (4:7-11) 7](#_Toc125308858)

[SUFFERING IN 1 PETER 8](#_Toc125308859)

## INTRODUCTION

Peter is written to Christians in several provinces in what is today Turkey (1:1), and the letter gives the impression that there were mostly Gentile Christians in these congregations, especially from 4:3-4, where he talks about how they no longer live in a typical pagan way. Consequently, people make fun of them and wonder what has happened.

1 Peter has been called a kind of commentary or explanation to Matthew 5:10: *"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* The letter encourages them to live righteously in a world that is hostile to them. He mentions that they have had to *"suffer grief in all kinds of trials"* (1:6) and that they suffer only because they are Christians (2:19-20, 4:14, 16). A key verse is 2:12, where Peter encourages them to *"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."* The lifestyle thus becomes a form of evangelism, but apologetics is also necessary. In 3:15, he writes *"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."*

Peter gives four aspects of suffering in this letter:

1. God allows suffering to test, purify and strengthen our faith so that it will last to the end.
2. It is a way of witnessing to the world.
3. We share in Christ's sufferings.
4. The devil is behind what evil people do to them.

Right from the opening (1:3), he holds up the hope of the resurrection from the dead as motivation to endure all forms of suffering that we encounter while here on earth.

Traditionally, the letter has been placed in the 60s, just before or early in the persecutions under Emperor Nero (AD 64-68).

### STRUCTURE

1:1-12 Opening: A living hope

1:13-2:10 Call to holy lives

2:11-3:12 Life in the world

3:13-4:11 Christ's sufferings as an example

4:12-5:14 Share in Christ's sufferings

### PETER'S READERS

Written around the year 64 AD to Christians in areas of present-day Turkey (1:1).

* Mainly Gentiles (1:14,18; 2:9-10; 4:3-4)
* Some slaves (2:18-20). Not so many slave owners since they are not mentioned?
* The readers experienced trials (1:6-7, 4:12), sufferings (2:19-20; 3:14, 17; 4:13, 16, 19; 5:9), and slander and mockery (3:16; 4: 4, 14).

## SCATTERED EXILES (1:1-2)

Abraham lived as a stranger in the land God had promised him. (Heb 11:9, Gen 23:4)

*"For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God."* (Heb 11:10)

*"All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them."* Heb 11:13-16

God's people are strangers because of what they believe (Phil 3:20).

*"Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, 'We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey. ' Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, 'This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.'"* Exodus 24:7-8

## "HOPE" IN THE BIBLE

In the Bible, hope is the joyful and secure expectation of eternal salvation (1 Peter 1:3).

*"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,"* 1 Peter 1:3

*"We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure."* Heb. 6:19

## WORSHIP (1:3-12)

* God has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus (v. 3)
* To an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade (v. 4)
* God will shield them by His power so that they reach salvation (vv. 5, 9)
* This gives them a reason to rejoice even though they are having a hard time (vv. 6, 8)
* God allows suffering to test their faith (vv. 6-7)
* This period, even with suffering, is the fulfillment and the very goal! They are privileged to be part of this. (vv. 10-12)
* God allows suffering to test, purify and strengthen our faith so that it will last to the end.

## THEREFORE: (1:13)

1. Fasten your seat belt! (Exodus 12:11 - Roll up your sleeves mentally) 2. Be awake! (alert and fully sober) 3. Set your hope on the grace that will be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at His coming.

*"…be holy, because I am holy."* Leviticus 11:44

## 2:4-8

Isaiah 28:16: *"So this is what the Sovereign Lord says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who relies on it will never be stricken with panic."*

Psalm 118:22: *"The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;"*

Isaiah 8:14: *"He will be a holy place; for both Israel and Judah he will be a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap and a snare."*

They are the new temple built on Jesus. They are God's dwelling place now. They are also the priests of this temple.

## 2:9-10 "NOW YOU ARE THE PEOPLE OF GOD"

Exodus 19:5-6: *"Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."*

Deuteronomy 14:2b: *"Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the Lord has chosen you to be his treasured possession."*

* The church is a chosen people (1:1-2)
* The Church is a royal priesthood
* The Church is a holy nation
* The church is God’s special possession
* The Church (believing Jews and believing Gentiles) is God's people

2:11-3:17 How to live as God's people in society

2:11-12 General introduction to the topic

2:13-17 The relationship with the authorities

2:18-20 The slaves' relationships to their masters

2:21-25 Extended theological motivation

3:1-7 Relationships in marriage

3:8-17 General call to all Christians

## JESUS' EXAMPLE IN SUFFERING (2:21-25)

*"Call"* for salvation in 1:15, 2:9, 3:9 and 5:10.

v. 21: Called to follow Jesus in suffering

v. 22: Called to live holy lives like Jesus, even in suffering (Is 53:9)

v. 23: Jesus did not repay anyone evil for evil (→ 3:15-16)

v. 24: *"anyone who is hung on a pole is under God’s curse"* Deuteronomy 21:23.

➡ Jesus fulfilled the law and took the curse upon himself to break it and make all righteous. The "pole" gives a deeper meaning than a crucifixion due to the Mosaic Law.

## 2:23b-24 A CHIASM?

A. he suffered

B. him who judges justly

C. bore our sins

D. in his body on the cross (so that)

C. we might die to sins

B. and live for righteousness

A. by his wounds

## MARRIAGE (3:1-7)

The reason for the subordination of the wives is the salvation of the men.

Roman families followed the religion of the father/husband.

Context (2:11-3:17): Live "well" in society's eyes

*"do not give way to fear"* (v. 6):

* A specific situation where a Christian wife experiences difficulties in Roman culture because she chooses a different religion than her husband.
* They shall do good, even if they are threatened (2:23).

## ALWAYS BE PREPARED TO GIVE AN ANSWER (3:14-16)

The hope: 1:3 and 1:21. The eternal life we have in Jesus.

Answer *"with gentleness and respect [awe]"* (v. 15).

Especially in suffering and persecution, the question will come: "Why do you hold to this religion?" Then the hope we have can become even more visible. Suffering opens opportunities for witnessing.

## PROCLAMATION TO THE IMPRISONED SPIRITS (3:18B-20)

1. Jesus announced his victory and judgment for the fallen angels in Genesis 6 (2 Pet 2:4). Purpose: Jesus is above all powers, and they need not fear the evil powers that inspire those who persecute them (3:22).
2. Jesus made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits, especially to Noah's contemporaries, who were seen as the worst sinners. Perhaps as a symbol of all generations? They now get a second chance. Connects with 4:6. Purpose: The gospel can save everyone; God's grace gives new chances.
3. Jesus preached by the Spirit in the time of Noah, through Noah, to the evil generation of that time (1:11, 2 Pet 2:5). Purpose: Preach the gospel without fear (3:14).

## 3:8 - 4:11

* Reminding them of their future restoration. Jesus was persecuted and killed, but He actually died for their sins and was exalted.
* Baptism points to the exaltation of his followers.
* In baptism, we have been buried with Christ, and we will rise again with him and be exalted as he was.

## COUNCIL FOR THE "END TIMES" (4:7-11)

**GOALS**

1. Pray
2. Love each other
3. Be hospitable to each other
4. Serve one another with the spiritual gifts

*"Part of the mystery of evil is that it cannot simply be removed, but only overcome by the suffering love of God incarnate in Christ. God's will for us is suffering because there is no other way to overcome evil."* I. Howard Marshall (the quote has been translated)

In our sufferings, we share in the sufferings of Christ. The devil is behind what evil people do to us.

*"It is not as a human attitude that faith overcomes evil, but thanks to its content... Therefore Peter does not conclude with this imperative [resist him], but with the promise in verse 10."* L. Goppelt (the quote has been translated)

*"Peter is not talking about putting strength in our faith, but getting strength from what we believe."* I. Howard Marshall (the quote has been translated)

*"The great and saintly Hudson Taylor always said that that should be translated not so much "Have faith in God" as "Hold on to the faithfulness of God". It became the motto of his life and work."* Martyn Lloyd-Jones (the quote has been translated)

## SUFFERING IN 1 PETER

1. God allows it to purify our faith (1:7)
2. A way to witness in the world (2:12, 3:16)
3. Sharing in Christ's sufferings (4:13)
4. The devil is behind the suffering (5:8-9)

* The letter was written in a culture that was not yet Christian and is therefore relevant for living in a culture that is no longer Christian. A godly lifestyle has a missionary effect.
* Difficulties and adversity make us grow and mature in faith. It will be our faith that endures through everything and transform into eternal life in glory when Jesus returns.
* We will not repay anyone evil for evil. The Christian response is to overcome evil with good (Rom 12:21).
* What kind of suffering can we face? Are we willing to suffer? E.g., lose status, be ridiculed, or be discriminated against?
* How can such suffering be a test of faith or a testimony to the world?
* Have we somehow lost sight of the hope of the resurrection? Do we let this hope shape our lives, as Peter encourages?