

# Introduction to 1 Peter

## 1 Peter

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, St. Peter wrote this letter to instruct and encourage the Lord's people as they endure suffering for the sake of righteousness.

Written before A.D. 67.



The people who received Peter's Letters often faced persecution for their faith. They could not worship the community false idols or the national gods. They had to refuse participation in the local feasts and parties, often dedicated to one of the many gods or goddesses in the region. They couldn't even perform the patriotic act of burning incense to Caesar because it was a form of prayer. Idolatry was woven into the daily life of the individual and the community. As a result, their friends and neighbors turned against them. Persecution became a daily fact of life for people who trusted Jesus for their salvation. Was their faith in Jesus Christ worth the suffering, persecution, and isolation they had to endure?

Amazingly, St. Peter tells them that persecution actually benefits God's people. Perhaps we can illustrate this benefit by turning to human relationships. Difficult times often make or break relationships. Tragedy, terrible personal crises, and loss force us to come together and become stronger. Many of us have stories of critical times when our life and trust in someone was put to the test. These critical times forge the bonds of our relationships. Those that survive the test are stronger than before.

In his first Letter, St. Peter encourages elders in Asia Minor to watch over their congregations with patient care and nurture them in the new life God gives. These new Gentile congregations were enduring significant suffering due to persecution and alienation from the corrupt culture in which they lived. Peter describes them as God's people – chosen, holy, and supremely precious to the chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus.

## Luther's Preface to 1 Peter

*This epistle St. Peter wrote to the converted heathen; he exhorts them to be steadfast in faith and to increase through all kinds of suffering and good works.*

*In chapter one, he strengthens their faith through the divine promise and power of the salvation to come. He shows that this salvation has not been merited by us but was first proclaimed by the prophets. Therefore, they ought now to live new and holy lives, and forget the old life, as those who have been born anew through the living and eternal Word of God.*

*In chapter two, he teaches them to know Christ as the Head and the Cornerstone, and like true priests to sacrifice themselves to God as Christ sacrificed Himself. And he sets about giving instructions to the various estates. First, he teaches in general subjection to temporal rulership; afterward he teaches in particular that servants are to be subordinate to their masters and even to suffer wrong for them, for the sake of Christ who also suffered wrong for us.*

*In chapter three, he teaches wives to be obedient, even to unbelieving husbands, and to adorn themselves with holiness. Likewise, husbands are to be patient with their wives and bear with them. And finally, all in general are to be humble and patient and kind to one another, as Christ was because of our sins.*

*In chapter four, he teaches us to subdue the flesh with sobriety, watchfulness, temperance, prayer, and to find comfort and strength through the sufferings of Christ. He instructs the spiritual rulers to inculcate the words and works of God alone, and each to serve the other with His gifts; and not to be surprised but to rejoice, if we have to suffer for the name of Christ.*

*In chapter five, he exhorts the bishops and priests as to how they are to live and to tend the people. He warns us against the devil, who without ceasing pursues us everywhere.*

*As we read 1 Peter, pray for your brothers and sisters in Christ who face suffering. Count it all joy that your Lord Jesus Christ suffered all pain and shame in order to redeem you (3:18) and all who call upon Him. As He gives you strength, rejoice in your sufferings, knowing that you share in the sufferings of Christ (4:13). As with Jesus, the sufferings you face must give way to the subsequent glories God will reveal to you (1:11; 5:10).*

### Something to Think About

- *The devil is not afraid of the Bible that has dust on it. (Anonymous)*
- *Nobody ever outgrows Scripture; the Book widens and deepens with our years. (Charles Haddon Spurgeon)*

**Sources:** God's Word for Today: 1 Peter (CPH: 1994), LifeLight: 1 And 2 Peter (CPH: 2002), Luther's Works (CPH, Fortress), Concordia Commentary: 1 Corinthians (CPH: 2000), The Lutheran Study Bible (CPH: 2009).