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1 Peter

How should believers respond when they suffer for following Jesus? That is the main question Peter wants to answer in this letter. He writes to help followers of Jesus in the areas of northern and western Asia Minor (modern Turkey). Peter encourages these believers to live good lives even when their neighbours mistreat them. He urges them to be faithful to God. He tells them to put their hope in God to save them from these hard times.

Peter says in this letter that he is in Babylon. Most people think that Babylon is a code name for Rome. Perhaps Peter avoids naming Rome because the Roman government was looking at both Jews and Christians more and more as enemies. Peter's readers were already suffering persecution from angry family members, old friends, neighbours and authorities. Peter is preparing the believers for difficult times to come. But he is also urging them to be strong and faithful in the present time.

This letter reminds the believers of everything that God has done for them through Jesus the Christ (God's Chosen King). God has given them new life. So they should be as hungry for spiritual food as babies are for their mother's milk. Peter wants them to grow up and grow strong. Changing to a different image, Peter says believers are like living stones that the Lord is using to build a temple. There they serve like priests, offering their lives as pleasing sacrifices to God.

Believers must be willing to suffer, but not for doing wrong. And if they suffer for doing good, they should be happy. By doing this, they will be following Jesus' example. But Peter also tells them that they do not have to suffer alone. They have the support of other followers of Jesus. And they should always help each other in the ways God has gifted them to serve. Also, suffering with Christ is an honour and can be a source of strength for believers. They can be sure that their suffering means that God's Spirit is with them.

Peter tells believers to live in a way that brings honour to God. They should serve quietly in their homes and in their communities. Men, women, children and slaves should do their normal duties. Believers should continue to follow the rules of society so that their message about Jesus will be well received.

Near the end of the letter, Peter writes that the leaders of God's people should continue to lead their churches even if they suffer. Peter knew that these leaders would have to suffer greatly. But he also knew that God would support them and keep them from failing.

The book of 1 Peter encourages believers to...

Live good lives even when they are being persecuted (1:1-21)

Follow Jesus' example in suffering (2:1-25)

Suffer for doing good, but not for doing wrong (3:1-22)

Be strong even when obeying Christ is difficult (4:1-6)

Help one another in the ways God has gifted them to serve (4:7-11)

Work together with the humble leaders of God's churches (5:1-13)

1 Greetings from Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ.

To God's chosen people who are viewed as foreigners in the places where you are scattered—Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. ² God the Father planned long ago to choose you and to make you his holy people, which is the Spirit's work. God wanted you to obey him and to become part of his people by the blood sacrifice* of Jesus Christ.

I pray that you will enjoy more and more of God's grace and peace.

A Living Hope

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God has great mercy, and because of his mercy he gave us a new life. This new life brings us a living hope through Jesus Christ's resurrection from death. ⁴ Now we wait to receive the blessings God has for his children. He is keeping these blessings for you in heaven. There they cannot be ruined or be destroyed or lose their beauty.

⁵ God's power protects you through your faith, and it keeps you safe until your salvation comes. That salvation is ready to be given to you at the end of time. ⁶ I know the thought of that is exciting, even if you must suffer through different kinds of troubles for a short time now. ⁷ These troubles test your faith and prove that it is real. This is like using fire to prove that gold is real. But even real gold can be destroyed. So faith is worth more than gold. When your faith is shown to be real, the result will be

praise and glory and honour from God when Jesus Christ comes.

⁸ You have not seen Christ, but still you love him. You can't see him now, but you believe in him. So you are filled with a wonderful and heavenly joy that cannot be described. ⁹ Your faith has a goal, and you are reaching that goal—your salvation.

¹⁰ The prophets studied carefully and tried to learn about this salvation. They spoke about the grace that was coming to you. ¹¹ The Spirit of Christ was in those prophets. And the Spirit was telling about the suffering that Christ would have and about the glory that would come after that suffering. The prophets tried to learn about what the Spirit was showing them—when it would happen and what the world would be like at that time.

¹² It was made clear to them that their service was not for themselves. They were serving you when they told people about the things you have now heard. You heard them from those who told you the Good News with the help of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even the angels would like very much to know more about these things you were told.

A Call to Holy Living

¹³ So prepare your minds for service. With complete self-control put all your hope in the grace that will be yours when Jesus Christ comes. ¹⁴ In the past you did not have the understanding you have now, so you did the evil things you wanted to do. But now you are children of God, so you should obey him and not

* **1:2 to become ... sacrifice** Or "to be sprinkled with the blood", which seems to refer to the ceremony to seal God's agreement with his people (see Exod. 24:7-8, where the phrases "to obey" and "sprinkle with blood" also appear together). But it may also include other ideas. In the Old Testament the sprinkling of the blood of animals was also used for ritual cleansing (Lev. 14:6-7; 16:14-16) and the dedication of priests (Exod. 29:21), another important idea in 1 Pet. (2:5,9).

live the way you did before. ¹⁵ Be holy in everything you do, just as God is holy. He is the one who chose you. ¹⁶ In the Scriptures God says, “Be holy, because I am holy.”[†]

¹⁷ You pray to God and call him Father, but he will judge everyone the same way—by what they do. So while you are visiting here on earth, you should live with respect for God. ¹⁸ You know that in the past the way you were living was useless. It was a way of life you learned from those who lived before you. But you were freed from that way of living. You were bought, but not with things that ruin like gold or silver. ¹⁹ You were bought with the precious blood of Christ’s death. He was a pure and perfect sacrificial Lamb. ²⁰ Christ was chosen before the world was made, but he was shown to the world in these last times for you. ²¹ You believe in God through Christ. God is the one who raised him from death and gave honour to him. So your faith and your hope are in God.

²² You have made yourselves pure by obeying the truth. Now you can have true love for your brothers and sisters. So love each other deeply—with all your heart. ²³ You have been born again. This new life did not come from something that dies. It came from something that cannot die. You were born again through God’s life-giving message that lasts forever. ²⁴ The Scriptures say, “Our lives are like the grass of spring, and any glory we enjoy is like the beauty of a wild flower.

The grass dries up and dies, and the flower falls to the ground.

²⁵ But the word of the Lord lasts forever.”[‡]

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

The Living Stone and the Holy Nation

2 So then, stop doing anything to hurt others. Don’t lie any more, and stop trying to fool people. Don’t be jealous or say bad things about others. ² Like newborn babies hungry for milk, you should want the pure teaching that feeds your spirit. With it you can grow up and be saved. ³ You have already tasted the goodness of the Lord.

⁴ The Lord Jesus is the living stone.[¶] People decided that they did not want this stone. But he is the one God chose and honoured, so come to him. ⁵ You also are like living stones, and God is using you to build a spiritual temple.[§] You are to serve God in this temple as holy priests, offering him spiritual sacrifices that he will accept because of Jesus Christ. ⁶ The Scriptures say, “Look, I am putting a cornerstone in Zion that I have chosen and honoured.

Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.”^{**}

⁷ So, that stone brings honour to you who believe. But for those who don’t believe he is

“the stone that the builders refused to accept, which became the most important stone.”^{††}

⁸ For them he is

[†]1:16 Quote from Lev. 11:44,45; 19:2; 20:7.

[‡]1:25 Quote from Isa. 40:6-8.

[¶]2:4 **stone** The most important stone in God’s spiritual temple or house (his people).

[§]2:5 **temple** Literally, “house”, meaning God’s house—the place where God’s people worship him. Here, it means that believers are the spiritual temple where God lives.

^{**}2:6 Quote from Isa. 28:16.

^{††}2:7 Quote from Ps. 118:22.

“a stone that makes people stumble, a rock that makes people fall.”^{‡‡} They refused to accept God’s message, and so they stumbled. This is what God planned for them.

⁹But you are his chosen people, the King’s priests. You are a holy nation, people who belong to God. He chose you to tell about the wonderful things he has done. He brought you out of the darkness of sin into his wonderful light.

¹⁰In the past you were not a special people, but now you are God’s people. Once you had not received mercy, but now God has given you his mercy.^{¶¶}

Live for God

¹¹Dear friends, you are like foreigners and strangers in this world. So I beg you to keep your lives free from the evil things you want to do, those desires that fight against your true selves. ¹²People who don’t believe are living all around you. They may say that you are doing wrong. So live such good lives that they will see the good you do, and they will give glory to God on the day he comes.

Obey Every Human Authority

¹³Be willing to serve the people who have authority^{§§} in this world. Do this for the Lord. Obey the king, the highest authority. ¹⁴And obey the leaders who are sent by the king. They are sent to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do good. ¹⁵When you do good, you stop ignorant people from saying foolish things about you. This is

what God wants. ¹⁶Live like free people, but don’t use your freedom as an excuse to do evil. Live as those who are serving God. ¹⁷Show respect for all people. Love your brothers and sisters in God’s family. Respect God, and honour the king.

Slaves, Follow the Example of Christ

¹⁸Slaves, be willing to serve your masters. Do this with all respect. You should obey the masters who are good and kind, and you should obey the masters who are bad. ¹⁹One of you might have to suffer even when you have done nothing wrong. If you think of God and endure the pain, this pleases God. ²⁰But if you are punished for doing wrong, you deserve no special praise for accepting it. But if you suffer for doing good and you are patient, this pleases God. ²¹This is what you were chosen to do. Christ gave you an example to follow. He suffered for you. So you should do the same as he did:

²²“He never sinned, and he never told a lie.”^{*}

²³People insulted him, but he did not insult them back. He suffered, but he did not threaten anyone. No, he let God take care of him. God is the one who judges rightly. ²⁴Christ took our sins in his body to the cross to put an end to them. He did this so that we would stop living for sin and live for what is right. By his wounds you were healed. ²⁵You were like sheep that went the wrong way. But now you have come back to the Shepherd and Protector of your lives.

^{‡‡}2:8 Quote from Isa. 8:14.

^{¶¶}2:10 See Hos. 2:23.

^{§§}2:13 *people ... authority* Literally, “every human creation”, meaning rulers, governors, presidents or other government leaders.

^{*}2:22 Quote from Isa. 53:9.

Wives and Husbands

3 In the same way, you wives should be willing to serve your husbands. Then, even those who have refused to accept God's teaching will be persuaded to believe because of the way you live. You will not need to say anything. ²Your husbands will see the pure lives that you live with respect for God. ³It is not fancy hair, gold jewellery or fine clothes that should make you beautiful. ⁴No, your beauty should come from inside you—the beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit. That beauty will never disappear. It is worth very much to God.

⁵It was the same with the holy women who lived long ago and followed God. They made themselves beautiful in that same way. They were willing to serve their husbands. ⁶I am talking about women like Sarah. She was willing to obey Abraham, her husband, and spoke to him with respect. And you women are true children of Sarah if you always do what is right and are not afraid.

⁷In the same way, you husbands should live with your wives in an understanding way, since they are weaker than you. But they deserve your respect because God gives them the same blessing he gives you—the grace of true life. Do this so that nothing will stop your prayers from being heard.

Suffering for Doing Right

⁸So all of you should live together in peace. Try to understand each other. Love each other like brothers and sisters. Be kind and humble. ⁹Don't do wrong to anyone to pay them back for doing wrong to you. And don't insult anyone to pay them back for insulting you. But

ask God to bless them. Do this because you yourselves were chosen to receive a blessing. ¹⁰The Scriptures say, "If you want to enjoy true life and have many good days, avoid saying anything hurtful, and never let a lie come out of your mouth.

¹¹Turn away from evil and do good. And do all you can to live at peace with others.

¹²The Lord watches over those who do what is right, and he listens to their prayers. But he is against those who do evil."[†]

¹³If you are trying your best to do what is good, who will want to harm you? ¹⁴But even if you suffer for doing what is right, you have God's blessing. "Don't be afraid of the people who make you suffer; don't be worried."[‡] ¹⁵But be completely devoted to Christ as your only Lord. And always be ready to answer anyone who asks you to explain about the hope you have. ¹⁶But answer them in a gentle way with respect. Keep your conscience clear. Then people will see the good way you live as followers of Christ, and those who say bad things about you will be ashamed of what they said.

¹⁷It is better to suffer for doing good than for doing wrong. Yes, it is better if that is what God wants.

¹⁸Christ himself suffered when he died for you, and with that one death he removed your sins.

He was not guilty, but he died for people who are guilty. He did this to bring all of you to God. As a human, he was killed,

[†]3:12 Quote from Ps. 34:12-16.

[‡]3:14 Quote from Isa. 8:12.

but he was made alive by the Spirit.[¶]

¹⁹And by the Spirit he went and preached to the spirits in prison. ²⁰Those were the spirits who refused to obey God long ago in the time of Noah. God was patient and waited while Noah was building the big boat. And only a few—eight in all—were saved in the boat through the floodwater. ²¹And that water is like baptism, which now saves you. Baptism is not the washing of dirt from the body. It is a pledge of sincere devotion to God. And it saves you because Jesus Christ was raised from death.[§] ²²Now he is in heaven at God's right side, and he rules over angels, authorities and powers.

Changed Lives

4 Christ suffered while he was in his body. So you should strengthen yourselves with the same kind of thinking Christ had. The one who accepts suffering in this life has clearly decided to stop sinning. ²Strengthen yourselves so that you will live your lives here on earth doing what God wants, not the evil things that people want to do. ³In the past you wasted too much time doing what those who don't know God like to do. You were living immoral lives, doing the evil things you wanted to do. You were always getting drunk, having wild drinking parties and doing shameful things in your worship of idols.

⁴Now those "friends" think it is strange that you no longer join them in all the wild and wasteful things they do. And so they say bad things about you. ⁵But they will have to face God

to explain what they have done. He is the one who will soon judge everyone—those who are living now and those who have already died. ⁶Some were told the Good News before they died. They were criticized by others in their life here on earth. But it was God's plan that they hear the Good News so that they could have a new life through the Spirit.**

Be Good Managers of God's Gifts

⁷The time is near when all things will end. So keep your minds clear, and control yourselves. This will help you in your prayers. ⁸Most important of all, love each other deeply, because love makes you willing to forgive many sins. ⁹Open your homes to each other and share your food without complaining. ¹⁰God has shown you his grace in many different ways. So be good servants and use whatever gift he has given you in a way that will best serve each other. ¹¹If your gift is speaking, your words should be like words from God. If your gift is serving, you should serve with the strength that God gives. Then it is God who will be praised in everything through Jesus Christ. Power and glory belong to him for ever and ever. Amen.

Suffering as a Follower of Christ

¹²My friends, don't be surprised at the painful things that you are now suffering, which are testing your faith. Don't think that something strange is happening to you. ¹³But you should be happy that you are sharing in the sufferings of Christ. You will be happy and full of joy when his great power is shown to the

[¶]**3:18 by the Spirit** Or "in the spirit". Also in verse 19.

[§]**3:21 It is ... death** Or "It is asking God for a clean conscience. It saves you because Jesus Christ was raised from death." Or "It is a pledge to God from a clear conscience. It saves you by the power of Jesus Christ in rising from death."

^{**}**4:6 through the Spirit** Or "in the spirit", meaning in the spiritual or heavenly realm.

world. ¹⁴When people say bad things to you because you follow Christ, consider it a blessing. When that happens, it shows that God's Spirit, the Spirit of glory, is with you. ¹⁵You may suffer, but don't let it be because you murder, steal, make trouble or try to control other people's lives. ¹⁶But if you suffer for being a "Christian", don't be ashamed. You should praise God for that name. ¹⁷It is time for judging to begin. That judging will begin with God's family. If it begins with us, then what will happen to those who don't accept the Good News of God? ¹⁸"If it is hard for even a good person to be saved, what will happen to the one who is against God and full of sin?"^{††} ¹⁹So if you suffer because you are doing what God wants, you should trust your lives to him. He is the one who made you, and you can trust him. So continue to do good.

The Flock of God

5 Now I have something to say to the elders in your group. I am also an elder. I myself have seen Christ's sufferings. And I will share in the glory that will be shown to us. I beg you to ²take care of the group of people you are responsible for. They are God's flock.^{‡‡} Watch over that flock because you want to, not because you are forced to do it. That is how God wants it. Do it because you are happy to serve, not because you want money. ³Don't be like a ruler over those you are responsible for. But be good examples to them. ⁴Then when Christ the Ruling Shepherd comes,

you will get a crown—one that will be glorious and never lose its beauty.

⁵Young people, I have something to say to you too. You should accept the authority of the elders. And all of you should have a humble attitude in dealing with each other.

"God is against the proud, but he is kind to the humble."^{¶¶}

⁶So be humble under God's powerful hand. Then, when the right time comes, he will reward you with honour. ⁷Give all your worries to him, because he cares about you.

⁸Control yourselves and be careful! The devil is your enemy, and he goes around like a roaring lion looking for someone to attack and eat. ⁹Refuse to follow the devil. Stand strong in your faith. You know that your brothers and sisters all over the world are having the same sufferings that you have.

¹⁰Yes, you will suffer for a short time. But after that, God will make everything right. He will make you strong. He will support you and keep you from falling. He is the God who gives all grace. He chose you to share in his glory through Christ. That glory will last forever. ¹¹All power is his forever. Amen.

Final Greetings

¹²Silas will bring this letter to you. I know that he is a faithful brother in God's family. I wrote this short letter to encourage you. I wanted to tell you that this is the true grace of God. Stand strong in that grace.

¹³The church in Babylon^{§§} sends you greetings. They were chosen just as you

^{††}4:18 Quote from Prov. 11:31 (Greek version).

^{‡‡}5:2 *God's flock* God's people. They are like a flock of sheep that need to be cared for.

^{¶¶}5:5 Quote from Prov. 3:34.

^{§§}5:13 *The church in Babylon* Literally, "She in Babylon".

were. Mark, who is like a son to me, also sends his greetings. ¹⁴Give each other our special greeting* of love when you meet.

Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

*5:14 *special greeting* Literally, “kiss”.