

Lesson 9 – 1 Peter:

Author: The letter claims to be from the Apostle Peter and there is no evidence that his authorship was ever challenged in the early church. Silas, who accompanied Paul on his second missionary journey, was likely Peter's secretary in composing 1 Peter (5:12), which probably explains the polished Greek style of the letter. There are linguistic and literary parallels between 1 Peter and Peter's speeches as recorded in Acts. Peter's Pentecost address and 1 Peter have the following in common:

- Christ's sacrifice was foreordained (compare 1 Pet. 1:20 with Acts 2:23).
- Christ's resurrection and ascension glory are presented together (compare 1 Pet. 1:21 with Acts 2:32-35).
- The role of baptism is related to forgiveness of sins (compare 1 Pet. 3:2 with Acts 2:38).
- Peter's speech at the Jerusalem Council and 1 Peter yields the following:
 - God's choice in salvation (compare 1 Pet. 1:2; 2:9 with Acts 15:7).
 - Purity of heart with response to the Good News (compare 1 Pet. 1:22 with Acts 15:9).

Occasion & Date: Peter addresses Christians living in various parts of Asia Minor who are suffering rejection in the world because of their obedience to Christ (4:1-4, 12-16). He therefore reminds them that they have a heavenly inheritance (1:3-5). Peter has learned of their trials and thus addresses them as "chosen people who are living as foreigners" (1:1), a phrase reminiscent of exiled Israel in the Old Testament, but also appropriate for these Christians (see 1:17; 2:11). They are mostly converted Gentiles. At one time they had "no identity as a people" (2:10, hardly true of Jews). Their former life was one of lewdness, drunkenness, and idolatries (4:3), more descriptive of pagan Gentiles than of first-century Jews. Their compatriots are surprised that they now live differently (4:4). Although their sufferings are "fiery trials" (4:12), that suffering apparently does not entail martyrdom yet. Furthermore, persecution is often the exception (see 3:13, 14; 4:16).

Ancient tradition suggests that Peter was martyred in Rome in conjunction with Nero's severe persecution of Christians after the burning of Rome in AD 64. This letter was likely written toward the end of Peter's life, but while he could still say,

“Respect the king” (2:17). The early sixties are a good estimate for the composition of 1 Peter.

Theme: Suffering as a Christian

Key Words: Suffer, Suffering

Content: Accompanying the several exhortations for faithful living while in a society that is ungodly, the salvation promised in the Good News is also very much in view. The future salvation that awaits believers at the revelation of Christ is especially prominent at the outset of the letter (1:3-13). This is the “hope” of the Christian referred to in 1:3, 13, 21; 3:15. Even as Christ suffered and then was glorified, so Christians should anticipate the glory ahead, though they may be persecuted for their faith in this life (1:6, 7; 4:12, 13). “God is pleased” when His people display patience in the midst of unjust suffering (2:20).

Also addressed is the important goal of believer’s pointing others to God by their godly lifestyles. They thus proclaim the praises of God (2:9), influence pagans to glorify God (2:12), silence foolish people by doing good works (2:15), win spouses to Christ by their examples (3:1), shame their ungodly critics (3:15, 16), and puzzle former companions (4:4). Christians are to be a redeeming force in the world, though they suffer.

Personal Application: Since all true Christians experience hostility from an ungodly world, the call to patience and holiness amid suffering is applicable to all. However, the message is most pertinent where the opposition is severe. Persecution of Christians is as great in many areas of the world today as it was in the 1st century, and 1 Peter offers hope to those suffering for Christ’s sake.

Christ Revealed: In four passages, Peter links Christ’s sacrificial sufferings with His glory that followed death, (1:11; 3:18; 4:13; 5:1). The letter details the fruits of Christ’s suffering and victory, including provision for a new life now and hope for the future, (see 1:3, 18, 19; 3:18). Anticipation of Christ’s return in glory causes believers to rejoice, (1”4-7). In other ways also Christ now makes a profound difference in the lives of Christians:

- They love Him, 1:8.
- They come to Him, 2:4.
- They offer “spiritual sacrifices” through Him, 2:5.
- They are reproached because of Him, 4:14.
- They should expect to be rewarded when He returns, 5:4.

The Holy Spirit at Work: The Holy Spirit is active in the entire process of salvation:

- The “Spirit of Christ” in the Old Testament prophets “told them in advance” concerning the Cross and the subsequent glory, 11:11.
- Christ was raised from the dead “in the Spirit,” 3:18.
- Evangelists preached the Good News by the Spirit.
- Believers responded in obedience through “his Spirit,” 1:2.
- A foretaste of the coming glory is had through the Spirit, compare 4:14 with v. 13 and 5:1.

Outline of 1 Peter:

Introduction:	1:1,2
A. Salutation	1:1
B. Addressees	1:2
 I. Believers’ faith and hope in the world	1:3-2:10
A. Rejoicing in the hope of Christ’s return	1:3-12
B. Righteous living because of the hope	1:13-2:3
C. Renewal for God’s people	2:4-10
 II. Believers’ conduct in everyday circumstances	2:11-5:11
A. Submission and respect toward others	2:11-3:12
B. Suffering for Christ’s sake	3:13-4:19
C. Serving humbly while suffering	5:1-11
Conclusion	5:12-14
A. Silas, coauthor of this letter	5:12
B. Greetings	5:13
C. Final exhortation with benediction	5:14

Introduction thoughts: First Peter has the single focus of encouraging Christians to exhibit faithfulness under the pressure arising from persecution. The believers to whom Peter wrote were in the midst of such “fiery trial.” The culture in which they lived scorned their faith, criticized their morality, and mocked their hope. Peter calls on readers to respond to this pressure with a renewed commitment to live out the grace of God, both to please God and to bear witness to Him.

Setting of 1 Peter: Many people in the ancient world regarded Christians as strange, superstitious, and disloyal to Roman society. Christians gathered in secret,

practiced strange rituals (such as the Lord's supper, widely misunderstood as involving bloody sacrifices), and exhibited a countercultural lifestyle. They often refused to serve in the Roman army because they would not swear an oath to the emperor. Because of their refusal to go along with the prevailing culture, Christians were often discriminated against, accused of misbehavior, and brought into court on trumped-up charges. This is situation that 1 Peter addresses. Believers were undergoing very difficult trials, (1:6; 4:12), and other groups were saying evil things about them, (4:4; see 3:16). The followers of Christ were tempted to retaliate in kind and repay harsh words with harsh words. They were also tempted to compromise their godly lifestyle because of the grief it caused them. Peter was well aware of these temptations, so his letter encourages believers to view the accusations and unfair treatment as an opportunity to bear witness to Jesus Christ. By following the example of their own Lord, who lived an exemplary life before all and refused to revile those who reviled him, Christians can practice a lifestyle of true evangelism.

Meaning and Message: First Peter encourages Christians to maintain a life of holiness in the midst of the pressures created by the non-Christian, and often anti-Christian, atmosphere in which they live. Peter pursues three key ideas.

1. Believers must understand that we have experienced the salvation that God promised through his prophets and which the angels are "eagerly watching" (1:12; see 1:5, 10). We are God's own children (1:14), born again through God's powerful Word (1:23). We are the stones that God is using to construct a new, spiritual temple (2:5) and a chosen people called out of darkness into light (2:9-10). Because we enjoy all these privileges, we have become foreigners and aliens in this world (1:1, 17; 2:12). Christians live in the world but do not belong to the world.
2. The second key idea is that Christians, who are God's people, need to pursue a lifestyle that embodies the values of heaven, not the values of this world. As God's children, Christians need to imitate their Father and become holy, as he is holy (1:15-16). We need to love each other (1:22) and have respect for authorities. Peter sums all this up in his call to "do good," even and especially to those who abuse and cause difficulty (3:16-17; 4:19).
3. The third key is that believers have become a holy people because of Christ. Jesus' death and resurrection provide the foundation for our new identity (1:18-19; 3:18), and his victory over evil powers gives us hope and confidence (1:3-9; 3:19-22). Christ provided for our salvation and our holiness and has also given us an example to imitate. Christ did not retaliate when he was criticized, persecuted, and even executed (2:21-25). We are to

follow in his footsteps, refuse to retaliate, and use our trials as an occasion to testify about the grace and power of God.

Introduction: 1:1-2:

A. Salutation: 1:1 “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 provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.”

v. 1 – Peter identifies himself as the author and notes his position as an apostle of Jesus Christ. “Peter” – literally means ‘stone or rock’ and was Simon’s Christian name given to him by Jesus, John 1:42 – “Then Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus. Looking intently at Simon, Jesus said, ‘Your name is Simon, son of John, but you will be called Cephas’ (which means ‘Peter’).”

The phrase “an apostle of Jesus Christ” conveys a two-fold meaning:

- 1) Sent by Jesus Christ,
- 2) Sent to serve and proclaim Jesus Christ

This is the commission which gives Peter authority to write such a letter to Christians.

The phrase “to God’s chosen people” notes that Peter opens his letter to suffering Christians by reminding them of the status they enjoy because of God’s act on their behalf. “Living as foreigners” – literally means exiles of the dispersion. An exile had been uprooted from his or her homeland and taken to live in a foreign country. Peter uses the concept metaphorically to remind Christians that they are living in a world dominated by anti-Christian values and ways of life. “Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” were Roman provinces in what is now Turkey. They might be listed in the order of the route that a messenger would have followed while carrying the letter to the various churches.

V. 2 – “God the Father knew you and chose you long ago, and his Spirit has made you holy. As a result, you have obeyed him and have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. May God give you more and more grace and peace.” Peter uses three phrases in this verse to highlight the names of the three persons of the Trinity and indicates that They all cooperate to bring about men’s participation in a heavenly destiny. “God the Father” chooses us in His eternal will and purpose and His foreknowledge includes the thought of His foreordaining or choosing us before the foundations of the world were formed. Look at 1:20 – “God chose Him as your ransom long before the world began, but now in these last days he has been revealed for your sake.”

This choice and purpose of God take effect through the activity of the “Spirit,” who deals with us in sanctification to set us apart and make us fit for this heavenly calling. The desired goal is our obedience – that we should serve His will and purpose for our lives. For us to participate in this destiny, will and purpose, we must be “cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ.” The KJV of this verse reads – “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.” We see Old Testament vocabulary and phraseology in this verse. The following references can be made:

- 1) The benefits of the atoning and cleansing virtue of Christ’s death for the “elect.” (Num. 19:9 and Heb. 9:13).

Numbers 19:9 – “Then someone who is ceremonially clean will gather up the ashes of the heifer and deposit them in a purified place outside the camp. They will be kept there for the community of Israel to use in the water for the purification ceremony. This ceremony is performed for the removal of sin.”

Hebrews 9:13 – “Under the old system, the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer could cleanse people’s bodies from ceremonial impurity.”

- 2) It can refer to the sealing of the new covenant and to participation in its benefits and obligations. (Ex. 29:3-8)

Ex. 29:3-8 – “Then Moses went down to the people and repeated all the instructions and regulations the Lord had given him. All the people answered with one voice, “We will do everything the Lord has commanded.” Then Moses carefully wrote down all the Lord’s instructions. Early the next morning Moses got up and built an altar at the foot of the mountain. He also set up twelve pillars, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he sent some of the young Israelite men to present burnt offerings and to sacrifice bulls as peace offerings to the Lord. Moses drained half the blood from these animals into basins. The other half he splattered against the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it aloud to the people. Again they all responded, “We will do everything the Lord has commanded. We will obey.” Then Moses took the blood from the basins and splattered it over the people, declaring, “Look, this blood confirms the covenant the Lord has made with you in giving you these instructions.”

3) It can refer to consecration to priestly service, including full access to God's presence. (Ex. 29:21, Lv. 8:30 and Heb. 10:19-22.

Ex. 29:21 – “Then take some of the blood from the altar and some of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it on Aaron and his sons and on their garments. In this way, they and their garments will be set apart as holy.”

Lev. 8:30 – “Next Moses took some of the anointing oil and some of the blood that was on the altar, and he sprinkled them on Aaron and his garments and on his sons and their garments. In this way, he made Aaron and his sons and their garments holy.”

Heb. 10:19-22 – And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place. And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God's house, let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.”

It is important to note that the “Cleansed by the blood” NLT or “the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” is mentioned last. This suggests that the cleansing virtue of Christ's death is available and will be needed until our life on earth ends, see 1 John 1:7 – “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” We are to obey but when we fail the atoning blood can still be sprinkled (applied).

“Grace to you and peace by multiplied” – Here Peter concludes his salutation with the prayer that his readers may increase in personal experience of the character and benefit of God's dealings with men in Christ and by the Spirit.