

Note

1 Peter – Part 1 of 1

Summary

Peter wrote two letters to encourage Christians undergoing persecution in Turkey. 1 Peter is about suffering amidst persecution. We have a living hope in Christ and we rejoice in this hope.

Even under persecution, we should lead holy lives, do good works and encourage one another in submission and obedience, knowing that we have an eternal reward. Through this we will shine God's light in the world.

Transcript

1 Peter – Part 1 of 1

Peter wrote these epistles near the end of his life, before he was martyred.

The church had been growing at an amazing rate. It was alarming to the Roman authorities. They saw it as a competition. And so, the Roman authorities started to persecute them with greater and greater persecution. Who is king? Is it Caesar? Or is it Jesus? The Christians said, "Our King is Jesus, " though they were obedient to civil authority.

We all know who Peter is, he is the best known of all the apostles. (Paul was not one of the original twelve apostles.) Peter and his brother Andrew were the first apostles appointed by Jesus. He was a fisherman, living by the shores of Galilee. His original name was Simon. Later, when Jesus asked, "Who am I?" Peter said, "You are the Messiah." This is found in Matthew 16:18-19. Jesus changed his name, from Simon which means "reed" (a little reed, which is blown about by the wind) to Peter.

Actually, Jesus changed his name to the Aramaic word "Cephas" which means "stone, a rock". So, no more the "reed blown in the wind" but a "rock". In Greek, the word for stone, is not Cephas but Petros. That's why we call him Peter. But Jesus would have called him Cephas.

After Jesus resurrected, Peter became the lead apostle in Jerusalem. And then, later, as his ministry grew in Jerusalem, he went out to the Jews, and to other places, actually, even the Gentiles in the other parts of the world.

Here, he is writing, basically, to a group of churches in northwest Turkey. These were people who had been to Jerusalem during the Pentecost, when Peter preached, and they got saved. They went back with the Gospel message, and they started churches in northwest Turkey.

And then, later, Peter left Jerusalem and went to minister to them, for a period of time. But when this letter was written, Peter, in the last days of his

life, was in Rome, just as Paul was in Rome. Of course, Rome is a capital city and that's where the most influence is, so Peter went there.

When Peter was in Rome, there was a huge [persecution]. The Roman church was always persecuted, because it was the seat of Caesar. They were competing.

Persecution shot up when Nero became emperor. Nero had great ambitions. He was kind of a megalomaniac, he wanted to build a big name for himself. His dream was to make huge monuments to himself, in the city of Rome. Rome is a very old city. To build his monuments, he had to destroy old buildings, so that he could build new buildings.

At one stage, there was a huge fire in Rome. Of course, everybody said, "It was Nero who made that fire, to clear the old buildings, to build his new buildings." But Nero (being the smart politician who knows how to deflect, as most politicians do) deflected the blame on to the Christians. He persecuted them. The persecution became unbearable. Peter was feeling this persecution. So, he wrote this.

People began to hear [about] how Nero was persecuting the Christians. Of course, Nero was not just an emperor of Rome, he was [also] the Emperor of the Roman Empire. And so, the persecution started to spread. Peter was very concerned that the people he had ministered to, in northwest Turkey, would be troubled or fall away because of this persecution. That's why he wrote these two letters.

So, these letters were written, from Rome, when Peter was undergoing huge persecution and the ripples of persecution were going out.

Church history tells us Peter was martyred. He was crucified by the Roman authorities. But he said, "I don't deserve to die like my Lord Jesus, please crucify me upside down." And so, church history says, Peter was martyred upside down. Jesus had told Peter, actually, in John 21:18-19, "You will be martyred." And Peter was expecting that [to happen], sooner or later, but it was 40 years later.

So, let's get into this book. You will see that the two epistles are quite different.

1) The first epistle warns of persecution. You will find the word “suffering” in various forms, about 18 times.

2) The second epistle was written about 3 years later. Peter warns of a greater danger -heresy: how false teachers would go in. Not persecution from outside but false teachers from inside will go in and undermine the church. The key word here is “knowledge” in its various forms, found about 13 times.

The first book is about persecution. Persecution generally makes the church stronger, not weaker. For example, the church in China, the more you persecute [them] the stronger [they become]. In fact, for the Christian church, in the first 300 years under the Roman Empire, the persecution was horrendous. But that was the fastest growth of the Christian church. And then, after that, the devil knows that tactic doesn't work. So, he puts in false teachers. The devil uses these two ways. The first way is ineffective, the second way is very much more effective.

Have you noticed that there is very little persecution now to the churches in the Western world? But there's a lot of heresy in the Western world.

So, I hope you get to see it, at the end of the Bible... In the beginning, it's not much, but in James we see... James begins his book by saying, “Count it all joy, when you fall into various trials” or persecutions. See, James is the book just before this. Now, towards the end, you'll see that the Bible is telling us to expect these things.

1 Peter 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.

When you look at these names, they don't mean a thing to you. But if you go to the Book of Acts, on the Day of Pentecost, you'll find that lots of these people were in Jerusalem at that time. So, that's where they, probably, heard the Gospel. That's where they underwent the Holy Spirit revival, and brought the Good News back to Turkey, and built up their various “ecclesia” or “churches” in northern Turkey.

1 Peter 1:2, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood:

Peter's writings are very different from Paul's writings, but it tells us great truth in just this one line "the foreknowledge of God". God chooses who He wants to choose. Then He works through His Holy Spirit to sanctify us.

For what?

Not just [to] save us, [but to] sanctify us, for obedience to Christ Jesus. We are saved, to be obedient to Christ, saved for Christlikeness. So, that's what we are. Not saved from....the earlier parts of the Bible, the Lord was saving us "from". Now, in the later part of the Bible, you're not only saved "from", you're saved "to".

1 Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

So, the word "born again"... We are given this new life.

What kind of life? A life where we have "a living hope". Born again to a living hope.

What is "a living hope"? A hope that we will keep living.

How do you know you will keep living? In the second part of verse 3, "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

Everybody thinks that life will come to an end. But when we believe that Christ rose from the dead, we have a "living hope", a hope that we will keep living and living and living forever. While the world sees the only life is this world, we don't see this world as the only life. We see this world as a tiny part of our life. Because we have a "living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ".

So, this beginning is already very powerful.

1 Peter 1:4, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,

We are going to have "an inheritance that is imperishable, unfading, undefiled". We are talking about eternal life, in the New Heaven and the New Earth. Everything you have on this Earth is perishable. Everything in this world fades away, wears out. The best gadget, after a while, looks

boring, and becomes useless, and obsolete. That is this world, full of perishing things. But we are going to [have] an inheritance that is very different. It's very hard to imagine.

1 Peter 1:5, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

We are guarded by God's power. When they were all under persecution, they knew that they were going to get killed and die...
“Who is going to guard me? I'm going to be killed, who's watching over me?”
No, no. God's power will guard you, all the way through to your “salvation ready to be revealed in the last time”.

So, when we say “salvation”... We are now saved... At the beginning of our salvation, our penalty of sin has been paid when we receive Jesus as Savior. But we haven't seen the full fruit of our salvation. We haven't even caught a glimpse of it. The fruit will be “revealed in the last time”. One fine day, you will see what this salvation is all about.

1 Peter 1:6, In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials.

So, you rejoice in this hope, but now you will be under persecution, if God thinks that's good for us. If needs be. Purpose?

1 Peter 1:7, so that the tested genuineness of your faith —more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire— may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

What's the purpose of this persecution?
To test the genuineness of how real your faith is.

Everybody claims to believe in Jesus. Today, we have everybody make some profession of faith. They raised their hand, they walked down the aisle, they made a profession of faith.

How do you know if that's genuine?
You can see their fruit, [by] their works.

That's what we learned. “By their fruit, you will know them.” (Matthew 7:16)

“Show me your faith by your works,” that's what James said. (James 2:18)

A lot of people [say that they] have faith but [they show] no works. So, I don't believe they had faith.

But what's an even better test?

Persecution. When persecution comes, all those who made a profession of faith are going to disappear at the first sign of persecution. But those who are genuinely saved are going to be proven that they are truly [saved].

That's why persecution builds strong churches, because it refines the church from all the weight of false believers. Most churches spend 80% of their energy ministering to people, who are not even believers, who give endless problems, endless shame to the church by their behavior. What to do, but when persecution comes, you don't have to minister to those people guys anymore, they will leave. And then, you'll really have the right people guys, the genuine believers guys, who are left behind.

So, this is a very interesting start to this epistle. We move on to chapter one, verses fourteen to sixteen. Now, through all of this persecution, what are you supposed to do? Hunker down and...?

1 Peter 1:14-16

[14] As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance,

[15] but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,
[16] since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

So, through all these persecutions, what's your job?

Remember, just lead a holy life.

What is “holy”?

A separated life, different from how the world operates. The word “holy” is to be “apart”.

So, your life should be holy, different from other people. Other people will curse, will grumble, will run away, will blame God. No, no, you lead a holy life.

Does it make sense to the world? “How can you behave like that?” Just as God is holy, you be holy. God is unique, there is none like God. The exact opposite is human nature.

1 Peter 1:22, Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart.

What are you supposed to do in this persecution?

Practice brotherly love - Encourage one another, share with one another, help one another, agape one another...

Because, in persecution, there's two things you can do:

- 1) Be very selfish, which is the world's way; protect what you have, preserve what you have, which is natural for sinful men.
- 2) But for born again men, with a new nature, with agape love; you love one another, it's a sacrificial love. This is tough.

Then, we go on to 1 Peter 2:4-5,

[4] As you come to Him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious,

[5] you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

He's telling them “you are not just loose people hanging around, you are coming to the chief living stone.” Christ is the foundation. You are a living stone built on this foundation to be a spiritual house, the temple of God.

We are the temple. “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God,” that's in 1 Corinthians 3:16. You will be a holy temple, and also, you will be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices. So, we are not just laymen, which everybody thinks we are. We are not just nobodies. We are a temple of God, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices, praises, prayers for those being persecuted.

Let's go on to 1 Peter 2:9, But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.

In their mind, “We are persecuted. We are nobodies. We are minorities. We are junk. We are the scum of the world.” That’s how you feel when the whole world persecutes you and takes advantage of you. But he says, “No, you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a people of His own possession.”

What's your job?

To “proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you”.

Through the sufferings, when you live the right life...

You shine so bright.

You proclaim “something has happened to you”.

You proclaim “you belong to a different nation”.

Not a nation of cursers, people who curse;

Not a nation of people who are selfish...

You belong to a different tribe.

You have a new citizenship, a new nature.

That's how you proclaim.

It’s very hard to proclaim the excellencies of God, when everything is fine. It’s very hard to be different, when everything's normal. In the brightness of a good life, it is very hard to shine. In a life where there is no light, it's very easy to proclaim, with even a little light.

1 Peter 2:12, Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

You are supposed to do good deeds in the time of persecution, so that you can shine.

1 Peter 2:13, Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, [14a] or to governors... etc

If the emperor is the one who persecutes you, what are you supposed to do? Rebel! That's a natural thing to do. No, no! Be subject to him. Only a Christlike spirit can do that.

Let's go on to 1 Peter 2:18, Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust.

Many of the servants (slaves) trusted Christ. They heard the Gospel, they trusted Christ. But their masters didn't. And their masters would persecute them even more.

What were they supposed to do, even if they were unfairly treated? Submit. Christianity is not about rebellion and riot. Christianity is about submission with grace, knowing we have a better reward.

Now, if I have only one life to live, and that's on this Earth, I better fight for my rights here. I better, otherwise I've got nothing left. But I'm going to have an eternal Heaven, a New Heaven and a New Earth. What is this fight for? How long am I going to have it anyway?

Then we go on to 1 Peter 3:1-2

[1] Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the Word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives,

[2] when they see your respectful and pure conduct.

Even the wives who got saved, their unsaved husbands would persecute them.

What do you normally do?

You rebel. You tell your husband, "I'll pray for you, I pray you'll get saved. The sermon was perfect for you - you should have come to church." That's the worst way to win your husband. Your husband will say, "Do you know what happened? Jesus stole my wife. Now, she has a new husband: Jesus, not me." No, the way to win your husband is... "Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the Word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives..." All of you wives with unsaved husbands: stop your words, start your works of being a good wife, that will draw your husband [near]. Words will drive him away. Nobody likes to have his wife stolen by someone else, or the wife's loyalty belonging to someone else. So, 1 Peter 3:1 is about wives being subject [to their husbands.]

And then, 1 Peter 3:7, Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

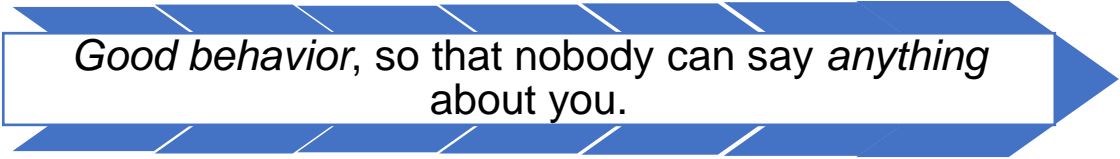
This is talking about saved husbands. As a husband who has been saved, love your wife. Knowing that she's a weaker vessel, take good care of her. Many times, when your prayers are not answered, just look at this verse, and think about it. Men, your prayers may not be answered because you are not treating your wife right. If you don't treat your wife right, God will not answer your prayers.

And then, we have 1 Peter 3:9, Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.

Natural instinct is to take revenge. Never do that when you are persecuted. God will take care of that. Your job? Obey. Submit.

1 Peter 3:16 having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

So, what's our job?



Good behavior, so that nobody can say anything about you.

You don't obey Caesar as your king. What's wrong with you? What kind of citizen are you?" They cannot say that. I obey, as long as the laws of the land are not directly contrary to the laws of God. I obey, I pay my taxes. I'm a good citizen, I help in whatever way to make society a better place.

If they say, "You cannot pray," then, that's a limit. Why should I not be able to pray privately?

They say, "You cannot evangelize."

I evangelize gently, privately, not purposely in their face, to rebel. But I will share, I will disciple people, by my life.

So, we find ways of obeying [the laws of the land], at the same time [while] obeying God, without stopping.

1 Peter 3:18-22 is a difficult passage. Everybody seems to have a different interpretation of it. Please understand, this is not the time for a book study of every line in every verse, that will take us a long time. My goal is to help

you to see the connection of the books, the beauty of each book fitting with every book, and to see that beauty from a helicopter view.

Let's go to 1 Peter 4:1, Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh, no longer for human passions, but for the will of God.

What does this teach us?

This teaches us that Christ suffered. And if we suffer like Christ...

Do you know what happens, when we go through suffering?

All those frivolous passions we had, for little things, here and there, like beautiful food, beautiful dresses, parties... All those things, very soon, have no more meaning. Life is much more serious than that. You will cease from those kinds of sins, which actually grip our life a lot.

Very few of us are in —what I call— horrendous sins. But the sins of materialism, the sins of just indulging ourselves, all those sins grip us. I don't think a lot of you are into drugs, into raping, into kidnapping, into murdering, but we are still in sin.

What kind of sin?

The kind of sins that when you suffer for Christ, suddenly, all those things, you put aside. Frivolous sins.

1 Peter 4:8-10

[4] Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

[9] Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.

[10] As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:

Have you noticed how much he's talking about agape love?

Again, I don't want to be anti-studying. But here, Peter, Paul keeps saying, "Love, Love, Love."

How much of our Christianity is about loving one another, exercising our gifts [to serve] one another? Not a lot.

1 Peter 4:12-13

[12] Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.

[13] But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed.

You know, when Christians are persecuted, many Christians are shocked. Because our type of Christianity is —what I would call— a Western brand Christianity. It's not very Biblical. It has almost no persecution. Our number one job is to escape persecution: Aim for the comfortable life, not aim for the Christlike life. Most people would do anything to stay comfortable and yet soothe their conscience. Going to church, that's okay. We're in a Bible study, that's okay. Going out and witnessing, you might get scolded, you might get persecuted, better avoid that. So, don't be surprised if you are persecuted, it's normal Christianity.

When I was in Egypt, I was shocked by the kind of Christianity they had. They have been persecuted for 700 years. The Christians there are shocked that you think persecution is shocking. They think, "Why? Isn't that normal?" Now, if you go to China, they would be shocked if you think that they're persecuted, and that you feel sorry for them. This is normal, it's part of life. It's part of Christianity. "Don't you read the Bible?" they'll ask you. "The Bible is full of sufferings."

And then, 1 Peter 4:15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler.

In other words, please don't be persecuted for your own crimes. Be persecuted for the Gospel's sake, for Christ's sake. A lot of people are persecuted because they say the wrong things, because they're selfish, because they are tactless.

1 Peter 5:1-2

[1] So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed:

[2] shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly.

Do you realize that... pastoring has always been a temptation for “shameful gain”. You have authority over your people, they look up to you. Most of them don't know the Word of God well so you can manipulate them very easily. From the very beginning of time, wicked men have used religion to manipulate people. Almost every religion is to keep the priestly people in the highest authority. Castes are formed. So, every one of their children is born as a priest. All these things keep the advantage. And then, when we come to the New Testament church, people still think being a pastor, you can get 'shameful gain.'

So, our job as elders (and Peter said, “I'm an elder.”) is to serve the flock; “shepherd the flock”, [exercise] oversight over them, supervise them, guide them, but not for shameful gain.

1 Peter 5:8-9

[8] Be sober minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

[9] Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

Who's behind all this persecution?

The devil. Seeking whom he may devour. Looking for the weak ones, to make them fall, to make them give up.

So, the devil is a roaring lion. Like any lion, who attacks people, he targets his attacks at spiritually weak people. They look for lame antelopes, lame deer, so it's easy to catch them. Why would Satan choose the strong one? You can't catch the strong, fast one.

And then, finally, he ends this book by saying, in 1 Peter 5:13, She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son.

“Why Babylon? Pastor, I thought, you said, he was in Rome?”

He was in Rome. But he calls Rome, “Babylon”. Because in the Bible, Babylon is always the mark of people who want to make a name for themselves, who want to be the big guys, who want to — in a sense— usurp God's position. So, he calls Rome, “Babylon”. That's the spiritual name for Rome.

So, what have we seen in 1 Peter?

It's quite simple. It is, basically, about persecution, suffering...

But in the *midst* of persecution:

