

1 Peter

Authorship: “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ...” (1 Peter 1:1a)

Date: The apostle Peter was martyred under Nero’s Persecution in A.D. 68. Because Peter makes a reference to Paul’s Prison Epistles in his second letter this would place the date of writing sometime around A.D. 64.

Background & Historical Situation: In the year A.D. 64, Emperor Nero decided to exterminate Christianity. News of those killed in the capital city of Rome spread quickly. Would the fires of suffering and persecution ignite the surrounding areas and spread onto Asia Minor? Many of these believers had already left their homes in Jerusalem when persecution broke out there. Now, in a foreign land, they were suffering difficult times, especially from unbelievers living around them. Things could only worsen. Peter did not write this letter to tell these Christians they were immune from further persecution. Instead, he encouraged them to stand true and endure the suffering for the sake of Christ and in His strength, no matter how intense it became. He seeks to change their focus from the difficulties at hand to the glory to come. The ideas of suffering and hope saturate this letter. Just thirty years later, when the apostle John wrote Revelation, it is clear that harsh persecution had indeed come to the Christians in Asia Minor.

Purpose: Peter’s first readers were being persecuted and were suffering simply because they were Christians. Peter reminds them that their real hope is in the life to come. He encourages them to endure hardship and live godly lives in the meantime, awaiting the return of Christ. The Christian life is never described as a bed of roses. In fact, Peter states, amid the sufferings that were then present, “For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps” (1 Peter 2:21). For what reasons are such things permitted by the Lord? They are meant to prove our faith that we may “be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:7). It is actually a privilege to “suffer for righteousness sake” (1 Peter 3:14); our Lord has suffered on this account (1 Peter 2:21; 4:1). Partaking Christ’s sufferings will result in rejoicing at His coming (1 Peter 4:13). There is suffering which is “according to the will of God” which is meant to bring a committal of our souls “in well-doing unto a faithful Creator (1 Peter 4:19). That is to say, God knows what He is doing. We are to continue to do well despite the circumstances. We have been called as God’s children to share His glory. He Himself shall “perfect, establish, strengthen you” (1 Peter 5:10). Countering this emphasis is the note of hope. What comfort this affords to the Christians. God has begotten us “unto a living hope” (1 Peter 1:3), and has reserved an inheritance for us in heaven (1 Peter 1:4), and is guarding us in view of that day (1 Peter 1:5). Our hope is on the grace of God, and on God Himself (1 Peter 1:13, 21; 3:5). Even as He raised Christ from the dead, so we also shall be caught up to glory. The hope within us, being laid hold of by faith, becomes so real that people around us inquire concerning it (1 Peter 3:15). Thus the very hardships we face become opportunities for witnessing for Christ.

Key Passage: “The end of all things is near. Therefore, be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. Above all, love each other deeply because love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:7-8).

Outline:

- I. Suffering as a Christian (1:1-2:10)**
 - A. The Hidden Inheritance, the Hidden Lord (1:1-9)
 - B. Preparation for Action (1:10-2:3)
 - C. The Hidden Spiritual House (2:4-10)

- II. At Home, But Not in This World (2:11-3:12)**
 - A. The Christian’s Inner Self (2:11-12)
 - B. A Life of Submission (2:13-3:7)
 - C. The Christian’s Corporate Self (3:8-12)

- III. Suffering – The Road to Glory (3:13-4:19)**
 - A. Suffering Doing Good (3:13-22)
 - B. Living for God (4:1-11)
 - C. Sharing the Sufferings of Christ (4:12-19)

- IV. Final Exhortations and Greetings (5:1-14)**

Sources:

Elwell, Walter A. and Robert W. Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1998).
Jensen, Irving L. *Simply Understanding the Bible*. (Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publications, 1990).
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