

# First Peter

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In the first 40 years after Jesus died and rose again, the Good News spread across the Roman empire. Many people chose to follow Jesus in the Asia Minor region, and the Church was growing. However, as the Church grew, these new disciples of Jesus faced many difficulties. Peter writes this letter to churches to encourage them in their faith. He reminds them of what Jesus Christ did for them, saying, “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.” (1:18–20).

**Writer:** The Apostle Peter

**Date of writing:** Between 60-68 AD

**Original Audience:** Followers of Jesus in the five provinces of Asia Minor called “Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia” (1:1).

**The Reason for the Letter:** Peter has heard that the believers in Asia Minor are enduring suffering. It seems the believers are being called evildoers (2:12; 3:16) and criticized because of the name of Christ (4:14-16). As an encouragement, Peter testifies to “the true grace of God” and calls the believers to stand fast in that grace (5:12).



*A Statue of Peter in Rome*

**The Main Message of the Letter:** The main message of the letter can be understood in two topics: the grace of God and living holy lives by God’s grace. Peter teaches that God’s grace begins with God choosing us (1:1–2). God’s grace was predicted through the prophets and brought into the world through the sufferings, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus (1:10–12). Next, God’s grace is proclaimed in the gospel (1:12) and will be completed when Christ comes again (1:13). Finally, believers can stand firm in suffering because of God’s grace (5:10). Peter moves to the second topic and calls the believers to live holy lives (1:14–16). Additionally, he calls them to live good lives among non-believers (2:11–12), to meet evil with good and not retaliate (3:9), and to resist the devil by standing firm in the faith (5:8–9). Peter’s message also shows them how to change their status in the community. They must do good deeds to silence the opposition (2:12-15) and live in such a way that their enemies will be ashamed (3:16). Good conduct will serve as a witness to the gospel and win over the opposition, which may be a woman’s unbelieving husband (3:1–2) or anyone opposed to the believers (2:12). Peter concludes by saying that he and Silas wrote, “encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.” (5:12).

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## Outline of 1 Peter:

1. New Life in Christ (1:1–12)
2. The Call to Be Holy (1:13–2:3)
3. The Holy People of God (2:4–10)
4. Holy Living in Society (2:11–3:7)
5. Suffering for Doing Good (3:8–4:6)
6. Suffering for Being a Believer (4:7–19)
7. Instructions for Elders and Final Greetings (5:1–14)

## Who Was Peter?

Simon, son of Jonah was one of Jesus's disciples and one of the leaders in the early church. Jesus nicknamed him 'rock' which in the Aramaic language is "Kepa" or "Cephas." In the Greek language, it is translated *Petros*, from which we get the name 'Peter' (John 1:42). Simon Peter was a fisherman from Bethsaida and became one of Jesus' 12 disciples. Peter was the one that answered Jesus' question and first proclaimed Jesus was the Messiah (Mark 8:29). It was also Peter who denied Jesus three times while Jesus was arrested (Mark 14:66-72). However, he became a key witness to Jesus' resurrection, and later stood up on the day of Pentecost and proclaimed the Good News by the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2).

## Peter's Teaching on Suffering

- Jesus predicted His followers would face suffering. Believers should not be surprised by suffering; they should not think they have done anything wrong to bring it upon themselves (4:12; 5:9).
- Suffering is allowed by God, but it does not come from God; it is caused by unrighteous people and by the devil (3:17; 5:8).
- God cares for those who suffer and protects them (1:4–5; 5:7).
- The time of suffering will be short, for the end of all things is near (1:5-6; 4:7; 5:10).
- Those who have caused suffering will be defeated and punished (4:5, 17–18).
- Those who have endured unjust suffering will be blessed and rewarded (1:7, 11-13; 2:19–20; 3:9, 14; 4:14; 5:4, 10).

## Images for the Church

Peter uses different images to describe the church. Here are the different names Peter uses:

- the Dispersion: exiles on earth, separated from the true home in heaven (1:1, 17; 2:11)
- the new Israel: a chosen race and a holy nation and God's own people (2:9)
- a priesthood: a holy priesthood and a royal priesthood (2:5, 9)
- a living temple: a spiritual house made of living stones where spiritual sacrifices are offered (2:5)
- a flock of sheep: with Jesus as the chief shepherd (2:25; 5:3–4)

Read through the whole letter one time. Then, go back and read each section in the outline above at least two more times and discuss the following questions:

1. What do we learn about God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit?
2. What do we learn about people?
3. What do we need to do?
4. Who can I share this with?