



**THRU** the **BIBLE**

with *J. Vernon McFee*

# 1 PETER

BIBLE COMPANION



EPISTLES

# READ THIS FIRST

This Bible Companion is a summary of Dr. J. Vernon McGee's teaching of the book of 1 Peter heard on THRU the BIBLE. These summarized lessons get to the heart of Bible passages and are intended to stir your own thinking, prayer, and study.



**Begin with prayer.** Dr. McGee said, "We are living in the day of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the day of grace, when the Spirit of God takes the things of Christ and reveals them to us." Before you start each lesson, ask the Lord to use it to grow you up in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as He is revealed in that section. Dr. McGee said, "This is the secret of life and of Christian living."



**As you study, read the Bible passage first.** Invite God to open your eyes and deepen your understanding of His Word. That's a request God loves to answer!



**If you want to listen to Dr. McGee's complete teaching on any specific passage, go to [TTB.org/1Peter](http://TTB.org/1Peter)** (or any book of the Bible). The corresponding audio messages are listed at the top of the summaries. You can also use this Bible Companion to follow along and take notes while you listen to Dr. McGee teach a book of the Bible on the radio or online.



**After every lesson, several questions are listed for your personal consideration or, if you're reading this as a group, for your discussion.** Ask the Spirit to help you take to heart what He wants to show you.

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LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU  
RICHLY IN ALL WISDOM AND TEACHING...

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COLOSSIANS 3:16<sup>A</sup>

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## LESSON 1

# WHERE'S THE HOPE?



Begin with prayer



Read **1 Peter 1:1-6**



Listen at [TTB.org/1Peter](https://www.TTB.org/1Peter) to **1 Peter Intro—1:1**, **1 Peter 1:2**, and **1 Peter 1:3-6**

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Some people call Peter “the ignorant fisherman,” but no man who had spent three years in the school of Jesus could be called ignorant. The Epistles of Peter confirm this. In the first few verses of his letter he deals with the great doctrines of election, foreknowledge, sanctification, obedience, the blood of Christ, the Trinity, the grace of God, salvation, revelation, glory, faith, and hope. So much doctrine crowded into a few verses! The way in which he handles these great themes of the Bible reveals he was no ignorant fisherman. Peter writes very literally and practically. He gets down to where the rubber meets the road, right down on the asphalt of life.

We first met Peter in the Gospels, but a lot has changed. He was impetuous, but now he is patient. He was bungling, fumbling, and stumbling when he first met Jesus. Our Lord told him, in effect, “*You are a pretty weak man now, but I am going to make you a Petros, a rock-man, and you will be built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ who is the Rock.*” Peter clearly said the Lord Jesus is the Rock on which the church is built. Although Peter’s name means “rock,” he says all believers are little rocks, also—lively stones, built up as a “spiritual house” (2:5). In other words, every believer is a Peter. He knows what it is to stand for Christ. He has been arrested, jailed, threatened, and realizes he will be crucified on a cross someday. We can *believe* Peter—he knew what he was talking about.

Simon Peter never claims superiority. As he opens his letter, he calls himself *one* of the apostles. Although whenever the names of the apostles were listed, his was always first. And although the Lord chose him to preach the first sermon on the Day of Pentecost, Peter didn't feel he was exalted above the others. He was an apostle—that's all.

Peter wrote these two letters between A.D. 64 and 67, after bloody Nero had come to the throne and persecution was already spreading through the Roman Empire. According to tradition, Peter himself suffered and died as a martyr, "a witness."

Simon Peter likely never went to Rome. He wasn't the apostle who opened up that territory. Likely Paul founded the church at Rome, not Peter. Judging by the people they addressed in their letters, Peter went east while the apostle Paul went west. Peter's ministry was primarily to the diaspora, believing Jews living in Asia Minor, particularly in Babylon. Babylon was still a great city there on the Euphrates River, and many of the Jews had remained there after the end of the captivity. Only a very small group of Jews returned to their land—fewer than 60,000. When severe persecution of Jews and Christians began under Claudius in Rome, Jews escaped to Babylon. Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, and Simon Peter was the apostle to Israelites who had turned to Jesus Christ.

Peter wrote these two letters to people who were suffering. He may deal with a lot of weighty subjects, but the core message is Christian hope in the time of trial. As an eyewitness to Jesus' suffering, Peter has a lot to say about it. He also speaks to us out of his own suffering experiences, but he knew the sweetness of them, how they firmed his beliefs and strengthened his faith. When Peter writes about suffering, he emphasizes the joy and testifies to God's goodness.

Peter teaches that a partner to God's goodness is His sovereignty. This universe is *His*. He created it. He knows everything (omniscient), has all power (omnipotent), and can do anything He wants consistent with His character.

Apparently God did some planning, called "His decrees." That is to say, He made a plan for the future and chose to follow it. He decreed to permit the fall of man. He created us as free moral agents who would fall when given a free choice. Mankind chose to disobey God, but God had made arrangements for it. He decreed He would send a Savior into the world to save those who came to Him, the elect (see John 6:37 and Matthew 11:28). God made a legitimate invitation to everyone who would believe, but

it's our responsibility to respond in faith. God is good and gracious and longsuffering. He wants to save us, and He wants us to have happy lives. God is the one we can trust.

Peter deals with the tremendous doctrines of election, foreknowledge, foreordination, and predestination. All of these great concepts are on God's side of the fence, and none of us can come up with a final explanation. We are dealing with an infinite God who knows everything. His foreknowledge means He knows every plan imaginable, and He knows exactly what He is going to do (foreordination).

Peter also teaches us about the work of the Holy Spirit. We are saved and will be obedient to Jesus Christ "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit." "Sanctification" means to be identified with Christ. *He* is our sanctification; we will never be any better, as far as our position is concerned, than we are at this moment because we are complete in Him and accepted in the Beloved. We can't add to that; it is our position in Christ.

However, when the word "sanctification" is identified with the Holy Spirit, it means something else. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is not only to convert us (He is the one responsible for our new birth), but He also begins a work in our lives to bring us to maturity as Christians.

Do you see the Trinity at work for your salvation? God the Father planned it and protects us through the "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ"—the personal application of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. The Holy Spirit sanctifies us on earth.

There is often a silence about the blood of Christ in our church circles. As long as the blood of the Lord coursed through His veins, it had no saving value for us; but when that precious blood was shed, Christ Jesus gave His life. He shed His blood so we might have life.

Peter is writing to Jews who had been brought up in Judaism. They knew the Old Testament and understood how the high priest on the Day of Atonement took blood with him into the Holy of Holies, and that he sprinkled the blood seven times on the mercy seat. When He died, the Lord Jesus Christ took His own blood to the throne of God (the throne at which we are judged as guilty sinners), and He sprinkled it there. He gave His life and paid the penalty for us. Now that throne of judgment is the throne of grace where we can come and receive salvation.

Until the meaning of the blood of Christ has been explained, the gospel has not been preached. Talking about blood may be aesthetically offensive, but the real offense of the Cross is that He shed His blood. Of course it is not pretty, but your sin isn't either. Our ugly sin is what made it necessary for Christ to die for us. Today we have a living hope because of the blood of Christ shed for us. He died so we might live; He paid our penalty.

Because of the work of the Trinity—God had you in mind, Christ died for you, and the Holy Spirit has come to indwell you to make you a new person—now God can save you by grace.

Simon Peter is not talking about something theoretical. This rugged fisherman knows grace and peace through the blood of Christ because Jesus Himself told him about it. He knows it because he watched Jesus die; he saw where He was buried, and he saw the resurrected Christ. The weak, fearful man has now become a rock-man. He could stand at the Day of Pentecost and preach about Christ's death and resurrection. He could go to jail, be persecuted, write an epistle like this, and finally be crucified for the gospel.

Even in this letter about suffering, Peter begins with gratefully praising and adoring God. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." This word "blessed" is similar to the word "eulogy." It's never used to refer to man, but always about praising God. We praise God because He's given us a *living* hope, a hope that rests upon the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And did you know it was the Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead?!

Whenever you study Peter's preaching, you'll see the resurrection of Christ. It was his great theme on the Day of Pentecost and in all of his letters. He said in effect, "*All you have seen here today is because Jesus, whom you crucified, has come back from the dead.*" And when he writes his epistles, he anchors us in Jesus' resurrection. He was a witness, and he never forgot it.

Peter has described to us what God has done for us in the past. Now he moves into the future.

Do you realize you have an inheritance reserved for you in heaven? The Trinity guards it for us. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are taking care of it for us. This treasure is incorruptible, indestructible, and undefiled. It can't be gotten illegally, no enemy can take it away from us, nor can it be damaged in any way—no rust, no moth, no germ, no fire can touch it. Its value will never fade away. We won't inherit it and then find it to be worthless.

Imagine how precious this promise was to the Jewish Christians who were suffering trial and persecution for their faith. They had been forced to leave their homelands and whatever inheritance would have been theirs. Now they can praise God as the Father of the incarnate Son, the Lord Jesus, the Author of the new creation and of a spiritual redemption. He's the one who gives them a living hope, a hope that will never die. He has begotten us and made us His sons through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. And He's the one who reserves this inheritance for us—not on earth but in heaven.

Peter reminds us of an amazing truth wrapped up in a wonderful word, *kept*. Our salvation is “kept by the power of God through faith.” Jesus Christ protects and shields our salvation through God's power until the day we are delivered to heaven.

The only way you can live the Christian life is by the power of the Holy Spirit and because you are *kept by the power of God*—right on through until the day when Jesus presents you to His Father. As we are going to see, the hope we have is completely based on the personal relationship we have with Jesus Christ.

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**NEXT: Incentives for the believer to endure trials.**

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7. Imagine you too were a personal witness of the resurrection. How might that change the way you live the Christian life today?

## LESSON 2

# IT WON'T BE LONG NOW



Begin with prayer



Read **1 Peter 1:6-25**



Listen at [TTB.org/1Peter](https://www.TTB.org/1Peter) to **1 Peter 1:6-11**, **1 Peter 1:10-16**, and **1 Peter 1:17-25**

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Some words feel like they're worlds apart: Darkness and light. Depth and height. Suffering and joy.

In our last lesson, we got a glimpse of how a Christian may experience joy, even when they're suffering. That's possible because of the work of the Trinity. God our Father, according to His mercy, has given us a new nature through His Spirit and a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And for the future, Jesus is keeping our marvelous inheritance safe for us in heaven.

This is reason to rejoice, even in our trials. Peter explains how those two words, rejoice and trials, can be said in the same sentence. "But for a moment ..." (2 Corinthians 4:17); compared to eternity, these trials won't last long. Too often we focus too much on this present life. We ought instead to be looking outward to the marvelous inheritance which God has ready for us to receive someday. Instead of trying to improve our old nature through the power of the flesh, look to God bringing us to maturity in our Christian life. One of the ways He does that is through trials.

We have nothing to offer to God until the Spirit of God begins to move in our hearts and lives. He has everything to offer to us.

There are no shortcuts to maturity. The only thing that brings us into true maturity is the trial of our faith God uses to test us. He puts us into the furnace, not to destroy or hurt or harm us, but to bring out pure gold.

In the furnace of testing, the dross is drawn off and precious gold appears. That is God's method. Peter uses a wonderful word here. "Precious" is a woman's word, but notice Simon Peter, that great, big, rugged fisherman, uses it to describe the trial of our faith (seven times!).

After gold is mined, it's put into a red-hot furnace. The purpose is not to destroy the gold but to burn off the impurities. Later, Peter applies this picture to the suffering the Lord endured. He says we have been redeemed, not with gold or silver, but with something infinitely more precious than that—the blood of Christ.

Someday when we see Jesus Christ, we will thank God for our trials because we will see the value of them. Even Peter when he was writing this epistle knew that crucifixion was ahead of him. He says we will be glad for the trials which will bring out the gold when we see the Lord and stand in His presence.

Now the pastor, Peter, tells his new Jewish brothers and sisters that even though they've not seen the Lord, they love Him and believe and trust in Him, and this is bringing them great delight with inexpressible and glorious joy. This verse ought to mean a great deal to us, too. Peter had seen the Lord Jesus personally and traveled with Him for three years. But for us, the Holy Spirit makes Him real. This is the secret of the Christian life. When we love Him, everything else falls into place. If you do not love Him, no course in the world is going to help you.

If not seeing Him, you still believe, then you will experience a joy beyond words and full of glory. Does this set your heart to beating faster? Do you love Him? Simon Peter loved Him. Paul loved Him, and all of those who have genuinely served Him have loved Him. Loving Him solves a lot of your problems. Loving Christ draws believers together. It will help you in all your relationships if you love Him. Loving Christ brings your heart joy. Are you a rejoicing Christian? You should be. You are a child of the King, and you have an inheritance coming to you someday. How wonderful it is to be His child! This must have been a marvelous message to the believing Jews in that day of suffering—as it is for us today.

The fact that Jesus, the Messiah, would suffer was the topic of all the Old Testament prophets. They spoke both of “the sufferings of Christ” and the grace of God and the glory that would follow when Jesus Christ as King will establish His kingdom on the earth. (See Isaiah 53, Psalm 22, Isaiah 11, and Psalm 45.) This testimony of Jesus proves that the Old Testament prophets were inspired by the Holy Spirit. They wrote some things which they themselves did not grasp, including what it means to have grace and glory. For example, in Isaiah 53 Isaiah wrote of the sufferings of Christ; then in Isaiah 11, he wrote of the Messiah coming in power and glory to the earth to establish His kingdom. How could both be true? The prophets looked down the corridors of time at these two events as two great mountain peaks, but they couldn’t see the valley of time between them.

Peter then says in essence, *“We’re preaching the same thing the prophets did, but now we understand more.”* Peter said, we’re preaching things the angels wish they knew more about and would love to come and proclaim to the world. Today, God uses human instruments to get out His Word, because we are living in the day of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the day of grace, when the Spirit of God takes the things of Christ and reveals them to us. What are we to do in light of this?

Peter says to “gird up the loins of your mind ... and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Essentially, *“Get with it!”* Adopt a serious approach to your study of God’s Word. This is the great epistle of hope. Why should the child of God be willing to endure trials? Because we have a hope, and that hope rests on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

When the Lord Jesus comes to take the church out of the world, He will bring plenty of grace with Him. By His grace, He will take out every believer. And each believer’s works will be judged at Christ’s bema seat (see 2 Corinthians 5:10). At that time we will either suffer loss or receive a reward—and that certainly will be by His grace!

Another incentive to endure trials, still loving the Lord, is the reality of this life evaluation we will go through before the Lord’s bema seat. God will evaluate every Christian fairly. This has nothing to do with your salvation; it has everything to do with the kind of life you are living after you are saved. The truth that God will be evaluating our lives should make us sober-minded and give more attention to our present life.

Today believers are asked to yield to the Lord during trials and lead transformed lives, which only obedience to the Word of God can produce in us (see James 1:22). The Word of God not only brings us hope, but it also leads to obedience. We don't live the way we used to, before we knew better. We live transformed from the inside out. We yield to God so we will be genuinely changed.

The Lord wants you to be a fully integrated personality. He wants you to enjoy life and have fun. Holiness is to the spiritual life what health is to the physical life. You like to see a person who is physically fine, robust, and healthy. Well, holiness makes you spiritually healthy and robust.

The gospel transforms lives and brings with it a living hope that rests on the resurrection of Christ. Believers have life from the living Savior who is at God's right hand. While still on earth, our holiness can never be perfect like God, but we can grow in spiritual maturity. What can produce this kind of growth? Obedience to the Word of God.

Think about what your salvation cost. In order to redeem you from your sin, God had to pay a price for you. If He didn't, "the soul who sins shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4). God's requirements never changed. You couldn't be redeemed with silver or gold because even they corrupt in time. Neither could you be redeemed with the traditions of your fathers. Life is empty without the redemption of Christ. Nothing is quite so meaningless as life apart from Jesus. Everything else in this world serves a purpose, but man without God is meaningless. We have not been redeemed by corruptible things—not anything from this empty life could we offer God for our own redemption. What do we have that God needs?

Now again Peter, that rugged fisherman, says it's the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, that redeems us. Peter, who lived with Jesus Christ for three years, said Jesus was without blemish and without spot. He was absolutely sinless. Yet He gave Himself for you. His blood for your life. This has been God's plan since before the world was created.

To put it very simply, the Cross of Christ was not an ambulance sent to a wreck. Christ was the Lamb who was slain before the foundation of the world because God knew all the time you would need a Savior, and He loved you enough to provide that Savior. You only need a God with a great big heart of love who provided redemption by His grace. Now our hope rests on the resurrection of Christ and on the fact that we have a living Savior who will be returning someday.

Peter brings us back to the Word of God again. God's work through Jesus' death is a historical fact. You must take this by faith. If you are to become a child of God, you must be born again, born from above. Not by anything of this world, which like the grass withers and dies eventually, but by the Word of God, which is alive and everlasting.

If you want to base your life on something that is full of life and life-giving, put your arms around the Savior by believing Him, and a new birth will take place. The Word of God can penetrate your heart and make you a child of God.

We offer nothing of value to God. All the glory of mankind is like the fragile flower of grass—nice and green in the summertime, but brown and dead by winter. But God's Word endures forever. And this is the Word we are taking to heart now.

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**NEXT: What is it like to be called God's  
"own special children"?**

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7. Imagine you were able to go back in time and personally hear Peter describe the resurrection. Based on the book of 1 Peter, what do you think his description would be like?

*Let your life be*

**CHARACTERIZED BY THE**

*Word of God.*



**THRU** the **BIBLE**

## LESSON 3

# WHAT GOOD IS SUFFERING?



Begin with prayer



Read **1 Peter 2**



Listen at [TTB.org/1Peter](https://www.TTB.org/1Peter) to **1 Peter 2:1-5**, **1 Peter 2:5-12**, and **1 Peter 2:11–3:1**

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“Good” and “suffering”—how can they be used in the same sentence?

For the next several chapters in 1 Peter, we look at how God’s children and the Lord Jesus Himself suffered and what it accomplishes in our lives.

When you are saved and are given a new nature, you live in that new nature by the power of the Holy Spirit. To love the Lord, even though we haven’t seen Him, is made possible by the Holy Spirit who makes Him real to us. When you love Him, you want to please Him. We are saved, not just from judgment and the lake of fire, but saved from the present world, saved to love Jesus Christ now.

We are also saved to love others. To do this we must lay aside things that belong to this world. Like an unforgiving spirit or even cleverness in making a good impression. Of course, hypocrisy and evil speaking have got to go. Are you carrying bitterness in your heart and a chip on your shoulder? Do you speak slanderous things about others? These things don’t belong in the life of God’s people.

Instead, we are to hunger after God’s things. We want to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. You don’t always want to be a baby Christian, do you? You only will grow by studying God’s Word.

Since you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, you turn away from these worldly things. Like children who outgrow their clothes, when you mature in Christ, you outgrow malice, hypocrisy, envy, and evil speaking. We come to Jesus, not like the little baby in Bethlehem, but as the “living stone.”

On the living stone, Jesus Christ Himself, we are built up as a spiritual house.

Peter is perhaps recalling that scene in his past when He declared to Jesus, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,” and the Lord Jesus said to him, “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church” (Matthew 16:16, 18). Peter’s name means “rock,” and the Lord Jesus was saying to him, in effect, *“You are going to be a little stone, a pebble, but on this foundation stone [Christ] I am going to build My church.”* The Lord Jesus is the foundation stone, and now Peter says to us in this letter, “You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house.” As children of God in Christ, we together form this building of God, of which Jesus Christ is the cornerstone. When Jesus came into the world He was rejected by His own people. Even today, He is either a steppingstone or a stumbling stone to those who reject Him. To those who believe, He is a sure foundation.

Peter also says we are a holy priesthood—later he says “a royal priesthood”—offering up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God in Jesus Christ. When we praise God, financially give to God, and serve Him with our gifts, these are spiritual sacrifices.

When we live as God intended in proportion to our position in Christ, we experience four wonderful designations, including what it’s like to be called God’s “own special people.”

1. We are “a chosen generation,” that is, an elect race. When God chose Israel as His people, He called them “an elect nation.” The church is also called an elect people. In essence he is saying, *“Because you have come to Christ, you are a chosen generation, you are an elect nation, just as the children of Israel were elect.”* The keys of the kingdom have been given to the church; we are God’s chosen instrument in this generation.

Although we say we come to Christ, *He* says that He chooses us. When we say, “I choose Jesus,” we find that He has already chosen us (see John 15:16). Since He has chosen you, He is responsible for you because you belong to Him. How wonderful it is that He has chosen us!

2. We are “a royal priesthood.” God first chose the entire nation of Israel to be His priests. However, they sinned, and so God chose one tribe from which came the priests. Today, God only recognizes one priesthood—His church. Every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is a priest. Israel had a priesthood; today the church is a priesthood. Since we belong to Christ, we all have access to God, we all can come into His presence, into the very holy of holies. Simon Peter tells us here that we as believers are members of a royal priesthood. We are children of the King.
3. We are “a holy nation.” The nation Israel—and the church—was never holy in conduct. Israel’s failure is glaring; the church’s failure is appalling. Yet we are holy in our relationship with Him because Christ is our righteousness. We stand complete in Him.
4. We are “His own special people.” We belong to Him. Jesus Christ is calling to you to be His own. He wants you to join a chosen generation and a royal priesthood. He is not inviting you to wear robes or to recite rituals, but to join a priesthood that has access to God. He is asking you to belong to a new nation.

Remember Peter is writing specifically to the diaspora, God’s people who were scattered abroad and had rejected Christ as their Messiah, so God had rejected them. “But are now the people of God.” God was (and is) doing a new thing in calling out a people and extending His mercy to them.

Peter now calls us out as “sojourners and pilgrims,” to live like God’s people—to stop feeding “fleshly lusts which war against the soul.” Instead, we are to publish His praises! How? By singing? Yes, but even more so by not manifesting the works of the flesh. Let your life be characterized by the Word of God.

A life that is set apart as belonging to God includes living and speaking honestly. All believers in any kind of business show the praises of God by their honesty. This is our witness to the world. We’re also to live humbly, to submit ourselves to the government over us. To the original audience, mad Nero was just coming to the throne in Rome as the new emperor. Since they were under Roman law, they were to obey it. Although Rome intended that their laws should be just, they were not. Even so, are we to rebel against the government? No. We are to obey the laws of the land.

When the Christian submits to government and to those who are in authority over his life, he is again revealing the praises of God through his

life. We obey the law because we are honoring Christ and what He asks of us. Believers have a marvelous liberty in Christ Jesus; although we are free, we are the servants of God.

Our testimony before other people is a witness that speaks louder than the message from the pulpit. A Christian should respect other people and love the brotherhood, meaning other believers, and reveal by our lives that we fear the Lord. We owe an honor to the office of the person who rules over us. And be subject to our bosses, as long as what they ask of us is honorable and honest. You do this freely, not necessarily because they are a great boss, but because of your testimony for Christ. Christians also reveal the praise of God by their attitudes and actions in work relationships. If you suffer because you were acting foolishly, then were disciplined for it, take it patiently—you deserve this lashing. But when you do well and suffer for it and take the discipline patiently, God is pleased. Our natural reaction is to strike back when we have been unjustly treated. But if we learn to let God take care of the injustice, He will do a much better job making it right. (See also Romans 12:19, and Matthew 5:11-12.)

Peter doesn't get far without telling us that this is what the Lord Jesus did. He suffered in two different ways. First He suffered for the sins of the world—which resulted in our redemption. It is something we believe and accept, but we can't imitate. But He also suffered as a human being when He became a man, as Psalm 69 makes clear. During His first 30 years in Nazareth, He suffered ridicule and misunderstanding. Then, when He moved out in a public ministry, the Gospel records tell us how He suffered for righteousness' sake. He leaves this as an example for us. When we suffer for our faith, we remember His example of committing Himself to His Father who judges the situation righteously. He let His Father settle the account. And He *will* handle them.

Jesus suffered for the sins of the world, for your sin—and being dead to sin like He was, we should live righteous lives. This isn't an example to follow, this was just our condition. We can't suffer to wash away our own sins, much less suffer for the sins of the world. But the Great Healer's "stripes" of suffering heal our sins. He died in our place. No human physician can handle that problem.

We were like sheep wandering on a path headed over a cliff, but now we are returned, safe to the care of the Shepherd of our souls.

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**NEXT: How suffering impacts our conduct in the home and in the church.**

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7. What would it have been like for a first-century Israelite, who had always needed a priest to intermediate between them and God, to be told by Peter that because of Jesus they were now a priest on their own?

## LESSON 4

# MAKING IT WORK AT HOME AND AT CHURCH



Begin with prayer



Read **1 Peter 3**



Listen at [TTB.org/1Peter](https://www.TTB.org/1Peter) to **1 Peter 3:1-9** and **1 Peter 3:8-22**

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Bitter or better? Suffering will take us one way or the other. In 1 Peter 3, we look specifically at how our suffering impacts our conduct in the home and in the church.

### CONDUCT IN THE HOME

First up, Peter addresses women who are wives of men who don't know the Lord. In Ephesians 5, the apostle Paul dealt with the relationship between a Christian wife and a Christian husband who were both Spirit-filled believers, and the relationship is one in which the man loves his wife and is willing to die for her. In this passage, Peter addresses the unfortunate relationship in which there is a saved wife and an unsaved husband. The wife is to continue on in this relationship of voluntarily submitting to her husband—though unsaved—and invite him to be the head of the house. As a Christian, she must live very carefully in front of him because her preaching won't do a bit of good. Instead, she should preach wordless sermons, illustrated by her pure life. This has nothing in the world to do with submission to him.

Submission is not like the obedience of a child. To our shame, some men think of their wife as a sort of first child who should obey him like a child

should obey. That is not what the Bible teaches at all. A wife's submission is voluntary to a man who loves her. Rather than submit, the better word is she should *respond* to her husband.

When a Christian woman is married to an unbelieving husband, her husband should recognize that she wants to please God above everything else and that includes loving and responding to him, her husband. It doesn't mean she is preoccupied with her own appearance and dress but focuses instead on the inside, a gentle and quiet spirit. Sure, you want to dress in a way that's becoming, but don't try to use that as the means of winning someone to the Lord.

Plenty of women in the Old Testament were beautiful, but it was always a woman's spirit that made her attractive to her husband and what pleased the Lord.

Peter also had words for husbands. They are to treat their wives as the weaker vessel, treating her with honor. He is to give first place to his wife, to treat her as someone special. Open the car door for her. Allow her preference in entering a room. Walk on the outside of the sidewalk for her protection. You get it—put her first. When a husband honors his wife like this, they can pray together and their prayers won't be hindered.

Genesis 2:23 says that a woman was taken out of man to be a helper that is fit for him. She is to be the other half of him. With that in mind, it's clear to see that the marriage relationship is not to be one of a man treating his wife like a little child who must jump at his every command. She is there to help him. She is there to be a part of him. She is there to love him. And he is there to love and protect her. That is the ideal relationship in marriage.

## CONDUCT IN THE CHURCH

How should believers act towards each other? They are to be likeminded, sympathetic, tenderhearted, and courteous, which means they are to be humble, not trying to lord control over one another. This humility should characterize believers' attitudes and actions toward other believers. They are to turn the other cheek. If another believer says something evil about you, something that is not true, are you to strike back? No. Commit him to the Lord—the Lord will take care of him. If we take this position, it will break down all the little cliques and stop all the fighting within the church. Remember we represent the Lord.

If you want a good formula for life, here it is: Refrain from speaking evil of others. Don't be deceptive, either. Don't indulge in gossip or evil or sit back and act piously. Live it up by pursuing what brings peace and service. Let's live for God today.

Why should we live like this? Peter says the Lord's eyes are on those who live upright lives. He looks favorably on them. He listens to their prayers and is eager to answer them. As for those who practice evil—the Lord turns His face away from them (see Psalm 34:15-16). God guarantees to hear the prayers of those who are His own. He has not guaranteed to hear the prayers of those who aren't His own. The only prayer an unsaved sinner can pray is, "Lord, I admit I am a sinner and accept Jesus Christ as my Savior, and I ask that You accept me in Him." God will hear and answer *that* prayer every time.

Does that mean a child of God will escape the problems of this world? No, it simply means that when you suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed in it. Don't be afraid of intimidating threats by the opposition; you have God, and He will give you favor.

Suffering for the right brings joy to the child of God. Don't be obnoxious in your witness to others, but quietly take your stand for the Lord. And if you suffer for that, rejoice in it. Suffering is inevitable for the child of God, but your choices determine your joy.

In your heart, give Jesus Christ first place as your Lord. Always be ready to tell anyone who asks you about why you put your hope and confidence in Jesus Christ. Let your faith fire up your confidence and share the Lord with others with gentleness and respect.

Today, do you have a little sanctuary in your own heart? When you are driving about town or walking down the street or are in the shop or office or classroom, is there a little chapel in your heart where you can withdraw and fellowship with the Lord God? If there is, people will recognize that you belong to God. Sure, some may speak evil against you—but just be sure they speak that in error. You can rejoice if you suffer for Jesus Christ's sake, but if you suffer because you've gotten into trouble and sin, then that's a different story.

Jesus Himself suffered, but because of others' sins. He became a human being, and in His humanity He suffered, was put to death on the cross, and the Holy Spirit raised Him from the dead, back to life. Jesus, the Righteous One, suffered for us—the unrighteous. He did all of this to bring us to God.

Back in the Old Testament, God waited patiently to bring people to Himself. All while Noah built his boat, God waited. But in the end, only eight were saved *from* the water *by* the water. Many misunderstand what Peter says here, that Jesus preached to the spirits in prison. What does that mean? The key word to this entire passage is the little word “when” in verse 1 Peter 3:20—“When once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.” When did Christ preach to the spirits in prison? He preached through Noah. In Christ’s day, the spirits of those men to whom Noah had preached were in prison, for they had rejected Noah’s invitation. They perished in the flood and went to *sheol*. They waited there for judgment. For 120 years Noah had preached the Word of God to them through the Spirit of Christ. He invited anyone to come to God and be rescued from the flood (but only his family was saved and no one else). In Christ’s day, those who rejected Noah’s message were in prison. Jesus Christ’s death meant nothing to them just as it means nothing to a people today who, as a result, will also come into judgment. Without the baptism of the Holy Spirit (not to be confused with water baptism, which puts you into the body of believers), you are lost. Only through a faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which brought the work of the Holy Spirit into your life and regenerated you, will you be saved.

Eight souls were saved in the ark and the others went through the waters of judgment outside the ark. Obviously, the word “baptism” has nothing to do with water in this verse; rather, it means identification. The eight were identified with the ark; they had believed God and went into the ark. God saved that ark as it floated on the water. Today, God doesn’t see you except if you’re in Christ. He is our ark today. He went down into the waters of death, we went with Him, and we are raised with Him. We are joined to Him. This is one of the greatest truths of the Christian life.

When we come to Jesus Christ by faith through His grace, even though we’re sinners, we come to Him, receive Him, and join the great company of the redeemed. We are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ because He is raised from the dead and is today at God’s right hand. And we are with Him.

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**NEXT: Do you belong to Him?**

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7. Imagine you were alive in the time of Noah, listening to him proclaim God's impending judgment. Why do you think you would have remained unconvinced of the truth he was proclaiming?

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**Cast your care upon Him.**

**Take it to the Lord in prayer,  
and leave it there—  
don't pick it up again.**

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**THRU** the **BIBLE**

## LESSON 5

# WE BELONG TO HIM NOW



Begin with prayer



Read **1 Peter 4**



Listen at [TTB.org/1Peter](http://TTB.org/1Peter) to **1 Peter 4:1-4**, **1 Peter 4:1-12**, and **1 Peter 4:12-19**

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When life is easy you risk the danger of drifting, thinking every blessing in life is owed you. We don't prize or value life as we should. But suffering gives life a new direction.

As a Christian, how do you look at life? At times, God allows His children to suffer in order to keep us from sin and to give us a proper perspective. God puts us through the test that it might draw us to Himself and give us a new direction and drive for life. Such is the purpose of suffering. (See also Psalm 66:10.)

God allowed Jesus to go through the test of suffering. He not only endured pain when He suffered for our sins, He also was put to death in the flesh in order to bring us to God. In His human body He took on at Bethlehem, He was "in all points tempted as we are" (Hebrews 4:15). He knew what it was like to feel hurt. He knew what it was to bleed. He knew what it was to shed tears. He knew what it was to be brokenhearted. He was perfectly human, and He died in that human body.

Jesus bore the penalty for our sin in that body. Peter mentions three times (1 Peter 2:24; 3:18; 4:1) that it was in His body Christ paid the penalty for mankind's sin. To be clear, Christ didn't die *in* sin, nor did He die *under* sin, but He died *to* sin. He took your place and paid the price. And when He rose

from the dead, He no longer had any relationship to sin Himself. He came back from the dead in a glorified body, completely devoted to serving His Father, in full and free access to God and to all creation.

Now Christ is able to pass this benefit to us. Peter tells us, "Arm yourselves also with the same mind." If you have suffered in the flesh (like Jesus), you've got release from sin, meaning God has made it possible for you to live the Christian life. We have been born again by the Word of God. The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to produce a son of God who has a new nature that's not going to live in sin.

We belong to Him now. We're identified with Christ. He has made every arrangement for you not to live in sin today. Let *that* mind, *that* thought, be in you which is in Christ Jesus and live a holy life for God today (see Philippians 2:5).

If you are living comfortably in sin today, something is wrong. A child of God's new nature longs to please Jesus Christ. You can live the Christian life only by having the mind of Christ, when His Spirit moves in you to please God and to refrain from doing the things which bring Him disgrace.

You *can't* live in sin and have fellowship with God (see 1 John 1:6). There is no shortcut to pleasing Him. Rules don't work and sin will keep you at arm's length from Jesus. Sometimes the only thing that will cause you to draw near to God and keep you far from sin is to allow suffering in your life. Suffering makes you take a hard look at life. You don't take it for granted so easily.

After we come to Jesus Christ in faith, we'd be foolish to spend our lives as we did before. We are now joined to Christ and must live for God. Life is short; time is fleeting, and we have such a short time to serve Him and love Him before we stand before Him and have our lives evaluated. There's no time for worldly living.

Simon Peter spells out the sins we are to avoid in bold, neon lights. "Lewdness," living in sexual sin; "lusts," living after the things of the flesh; drunkenness; carousing; idolatries (loving money or what money can buy) that will take you away from God. If you take God's Word seriously, there's no way to miss what he's talking about. Either you will please God or you'll please men. You can't do both (see John 15:18).

You can't go on in sin if you are God's child. You are joined to Christ. His Spirit indwells those who are His own and He promises to help you live for Him. He will fill you with His power and His strength.

Someday, the whole world will be judged by the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who don't know Him as Savior will take responsibility for their own sin and take their chosen route to an eternity without God. The unbeliever had better beware. He is warned that he will come up someday for judgment.

If you know Jesus as Savior, He has paid for your salvation, so your eternal destiny has already been determined. At the judgment seat of Christ, the life you have lived for God will be evaluated for the purpose of rewards. He will not let a believer get by with sin; God chastens His children.

God wants the gospel preached to everyone. When the gospel is preached, two things happen. Some people accept it, and will live for God throughout eternity. Others reject the gospel and are dead in their sins and dead to God throughout eternity; that is, they have no relation to Him whatsoever.

This has been true since the day the Lord Jesus went back to heaven. (See also Titus 2:13.) God will bring this world to a standstill on the day He judges it. Let this compel you to live pure lives before the Lord. Peter urges us several times to be "sober-minded"—it means be an intelligent Christian, someone who knows all they can about the Bible (see Matthew 10:16). We should also pray with anticipation, with that expectation of Jesus Christ's coming. We should talk to Him now. Later, at the judgment, He's going to talk to us.

In thinking about this time we have before the judgment, Peter also encourages us as believers to love each other. Hatred in a church will stir up strife, but love covers up all that. Show hospitality to each other in creative and thoughtful ways and do it with real warmth.

If you are a child of God, you have some gifts, and you are to use them to serve one another. (See 1 Corinthians 12 for a list.) If you have the ability to speak, then teach the Word of God. And don't say you teach the Bible if you're not really teaching it. Some will prefer one teacher and some another; don't let that bother you. We should let each one minister with the ability God supplies, so that God will get the glory through Jesus Christ no matter what.

*"Hard times are ahead,"* Peter warns. The people to whom Peter was writing were moving into a hurricane of persecution. Emperor Nero had already begun the persecution of the Christians in Rome, and it was spreading through the empire. *"You are now moving into the path of persecution. Many of you will give your life for Jesus Christ."* He just wanted to warn them. "Do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you." Already

these believers were being tested by suffering. It wasn't accidental but part of the normal Christian experience. Peter, in fact, would one day die a martyr's death by crucifixion.

“But rejoice,” he writes. In suffering? Yes, because God has a purpose in it. Suffering prepares us for Jesus Christ's coming (see Romans 8:17). We have no shortcut to living the Christian life. The greatest proof that you are a child of God is that you can endure suffering. The Christian life is a banquet because He has invited us to the table of salvation—but it isn't a picnic. We are to suffer for Him and with Him and someday when we stand in His presence, we will know the reason. You can glorify God here and now, whatever comes.

But suffering ought not to be because of our own sins. God never tests us with evil, whether as big as murder or as common as gossip and criticism. You can't glorify God for the fact that you're in prison for your own sin, but you can glorify the Lord and witness for Him in the midst of it.

Let's be honest—as believers, we just barely make it into heaven. We are saved and called righteous only by Jesus' death and our faith in Him. We will try to live a life that brings God glory, and our lives will be evaluated. Just imagine if God is going to judge His own, what about the lost world which rejected hearing or obeying the gospel? How will they stand before Him?

Those who have really suffered know what it is to commit themselves to God and God alone. Nothing else is trustworthy except Christ (see 2 Timothy 1:12 and Philippians 3:1-8).

In the end, given that we as believers will suffer in God's will, Peter says, commit your souls to your faithful Creator, and go on doing all the good you can.

Do you really trust Him? When you go to sleep at night, do you worry about your soul? If you know Him as Savior, you can sleep in peace. Even when trouble comes to you, even when you are called to go down through the valley, you can go, knowing He will take care of you.

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**NEXT: A wonderful day is coming.**

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## LESSON 5



## FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. In what ways can suffering bring about a change in your perspective on life?
2. What does it tell us about God that, no matter the suffering we are going through, He has a purpose for it?
3. If we are truly to have the same mind as Christ, it means we are going to have to make major changes in how we think. How does your thinking need to change to make it more like Christ's?





7. If you could go back to the suffering believers who received this letter from Peter and ask them if their suffering had been worth it, what do you think they would say?

## LESSON 6

# THE BATTLE IS NOT FOREVER



Begin with prayer



Read **1 Peter 5**



Listen at [TTB.org/1Peter](https://www.TTB.org/1Peter) to **1 Peter 5**

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The Christian life began for each of us with the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross where He bore the penalty of our sins. Suffering is used by God again as a tool in the life of believers, to sharpen and develop our characters.

When we look at our lives, and especially our futures, we need to consider Jesus Christ's promise of His return to take us out of the world and then return with us to reign on the earth. Jesus' second coming and His program for the future is our future. Rather than some ethereal, ephemeral idea, this is doctrine and relevant for our lives today.

Nothing buoys you up in time of trouble and suffering like the reality that Jesus Christ is returning for His own. You will see Him someday; you will stand in His presence. That will be such a beautiful time of blessing, and Peter tells us to remember this during our present suffering.

Peter writes to the dispersed, young church as one of their elders. He never claimed a superior place above his brethren, but as a fellow elder he teaches and encourages them. Peter's unique position was that he walked with the Lord. He witnessed His suffering on the cross and he also saw His glory on the Mount of Transfiguration. However, the glory that is coming in the future will be greater than that—"the glory that will be revealed."

Also as an elder, Peter was shepherding the flock; he was providing for them and protecting them. He provided supervision and discipline, instruction and direction. The ministry of an elder is to be performed in a very positive way, but Peter also challenges elders to minister for the right reason, in the right spirit, not because they *must* do it but because they freely choose to. “*Do it willingly*,” he said. There’s no value in serving the Lord in any capacity if you’re doing it under constraint or for the wrong motive. Serve the Lord for the sheer delight of pleasing Him.

We should also operate our ministry in the right way, not driving but leading, not domineering but by setting an example. An elder especially should be an example to the flock, making a practice of the things that we preach and not demanding of people what we are not doing ourselves. After all, we serve the Chief Shepherd to whom we are accountable and who will Himself reward our service with eternal rewards. (We’re not working for nothing.) We look to the Lord who will reward us someday for our service. We don’t look for a crown of authority, lording over people now; instead, we look forward to the “crown of glory” that the Lord will reward us someday, a crown that never will fade.

Peter calls the Lord “the chief Shepherd” here. The *Good* Shepherd gives His life for the sheep—that is seen in Psalm 22. The *Great* Shepherd watches over the sheep—that is seen in Psalm 23. In Psalm 24 He is the *Chief* Shepherd who is coming again. Someday our Chief Shepherd is going to appear, and He will still have with Him His flock, and we will be members of that flock. Isn’t that a beautiful scene?!

When we live and serve and endure suffering as Peter directs, we live in humility before the Lord and each other. We respect our elders and learn from them. We don’t insist on having our way over others. We are to “be clothed with humility”—actually armed with it.

Why is humility so important? A proud person is not able to experience God’s grace. Only when we come in humility are we able to grow in the grace of God. It’s under God’s mighty hand that we humble ourselves; He’ll be the judge over our lives. We know He’s coming someday to rule the earth. By humbling ourselves under His hand now, we’re living like He’s ruling the earth today. He will establish justice and make things right when He comes.

Our Great Shepherd also cares for us today; He understands the things that cause us anxiety. The Lord tells us to come to Him with these burdens (see Matthew 11:28). Bring your burden of sins to Him, too, and He will save

you. Come to Him as your Savior and He will help you with your problems. Cast your care upon Him. Worry about nothing; pray about everything. Take it to the Lord in prayer, and leave it there—don't pick it up again.

As a shepherd, Jesus is aware of the predator who wants to devour us. "Your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Resist the devil on the loose today with the power God gives you. You can't resist the devil by yourself. You not only need the armor of God, but you will also need other believers to stand with you.

The battle is not forever. Someday our gracious God will call us into His glory through Jesus Christ. We will have no glory in ourselves but simply will reflect His glory. The church is sort of like the moon which reflects the light of the sun. Our glory will be only reflected glory, but we in Christ will share in that glory.

After you have carried this suffering in this life, God Himself will make you whole and secure and strong. He will bring you to completion and restore you. What a wonderful day that will be.

As a word of benediction, Peter concludes, "To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen." Then he adds a little P.S., sending a personal word from himself and those with him to further encourage the church. "*The reason I'm writing,*" Peter says in effect, "*is to call you to courage.*" Stand firm in the faith, since suffering for the Savior is part of being a recipient of God's grace (v. 9). And be confident that His grace will be enough to help you in this season of suffering before He comes for us.

## LESSON 6



## FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. Why would remembering the second coming be Peter's direction for someone enduring suffering?
2. We are to serve God, but we are to do it for the right reasons. What are some wrong motives people have for serving God?
3. The imagery of a shepherd who cares for and sacrifices for his sheep was more familiar to the original readers of 1 Peter than it is for most of us. If Peter was writing this letter today, what analogy for Christ might he have used instead of shepherd?




7. After all the talk about suffering, Peter closes his letter by telling the Jewish Christians scattered abroad to have courage. Is there anything you are facing which requires courage?



A photograph of two men, one Black and one white, smiling and talking to each other outdoors. They are gesturing with their hands as if in conversation. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people in a park-like setting.

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