

1 Peter

The Job of the New Testament	Last week, we saw that James is reminiscent of Proverbs in terms of the comparisons that makes one wise or a fool (faith vs works; rich vs poor, etc). 1 Peter is, likewise, reminiscent of another book in the OT: The Book of Job. For in it, Peter offers encouragement to primarily, but not exclusively, non-Jewish believers who were being persecuted for their faith by, in Peter's terms, "Babylon," meaning Rome.
The Context	If anyone understood persecution, it was Peter. He was beaten, threatened, punished, and jailed for preaching and teaching the Word of the Lord. He did it victoriously, never losing hope, with joy, not bitterness. Such a commitment is only possible by walking in the knowledge that Jesus is our living hope. This experience was the impetus for Peter writing these Christians who were experiencing similar sufferings.
The Audience	Determining the audience of 1 Peter is a tricky endeavor. In 1:1, he writes "to God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia" (i.e., Asia Minor/Modern Turkey). At first glance, one might conclude that he has Jewish Christians in mind. These provinces, however, were part of the Roman Empire. As a result, the audience would have been mostly Gentile Christians. He uses Jewish terminology to let them see that they too have "been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood (1:2).
Which Persecution?	Peter was martyred in 66-68 AD via the persecution of Nero while Peter was in Rome. The most likely explanation for the circumstances of 1 Peter is that Peter saw his martyrdom and the persecution of Christians throughout the Roman Empire coming. And he wrote 1 Peter with that in mind before his death.
The Big Idea	Even though this time of persecution was difficult for these Christians, Peter calls them to rejoice. Peter informs them that it is a privilege to suffer for Jesus because He suffered for them. That's a difficult message to swallow. One you don't want to hear in the midst of suffering. But it was the right one.
Key Verses	<i>Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings (1 Peter 5:8-9).</i>
Outline	1 Peter all flows around the general theme of suffering. After a greeting, it starts with Peter breaking out in a song of praise (1:3-12). Then three sections, all of which were designed to inspire hope in the midst of suffering, form the major segments of the book: (1) A New Family Identity (1:13-2:10); (2) Suffering as a Witness to Jesus (2:11-4:11); and Suffering and Future Hope (4:12-5:14).

A Song of Praise (1:3-12)

During a time of intense persecution, 1 Peter opens with one of the most positive and encouraging introductions in all of the New Testament.

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls (1:3-9).

Here this idea of "living hope" dominates the song of praise. "Living" implies something that is now. "Hope" is something that involves the future. Peter calls them to "live" now in the "hope" that is to come. Hope for Peter isn't a wish. It's something that is certain.

A New Family Identity (1:13-2:10)

Peter begins his challenging quest to give hope to the persecuted Christians with a section devoted to their new identity. His audience, again, was mostly Gentile. So Peter weaves this section around what they can rejoice in: the fact that they are now part of God's people and plan.

Holy Children

¹⁴ As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. ¹⁵ But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; ¹⁶ for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." (1:14-16)

Redeemed	<i>¹⁸ For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed 1:from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. ²⁰ He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. ²¹ Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God. (1:18-21)</i>
Born Again	<i>²³ For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. (1:23)</i>
Royal Priesthood and Holy Nation	<i>⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (2:9-10)</i>

Suffering as a Witness to Jesus (2:11-4:11)

This is the most practical section in the book and concerns how to behave as Christians during a time of intense trial and suffering. This section is dominated by imperatives/commands that are reminiscent of the Ten Commandments in terms of how Peter presents them.	
<i>¹¹ Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. (2:11)</i>	
<i>¹³ Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority (2:13)</i>	
<i>¹⁸ Slaves, in reverent fear of God submit yourselves to your masters, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh.¹⁹ For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God. (2:18-19)</i>	
<i>¹ Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives (3:1)</i>	
<i>⁷ Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. (3:7)</i>	
<i>⁸ Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. ⁹ Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. (3:8-9)</i>	
<i>⁷ The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. ⁸ Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. (4:7-8)</i>	

Suffering and Future Hope (4:12-5:9)

In this section, Peter moves from commands to encouragement. He ties their present sufferings to what is to come as a way to inspire them to rejoice, persevere, and be faithful.	
Don't Be Surprised	<i>¹² Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. (4:12-14)</i>
Continue Being Good Shepherds, Shepherds	<i>To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed:² Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve;³ not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. (5:1-4)</i>
Be Humble or the Devil Will Get You (Peter Would Know)	<i>⁵ In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. ⁷ Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. ⁸ Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. (5:5-9)</i>
Peace in Babylon	<i>¹² With the help of Silas,^[b] whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it. ¹³ She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark. ¹⁴ Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ. (5:12-14)</i>