

# Studies in 1 Peter-01 1 Peter Intro

by Dwight Pentecost

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*The sermon explores the theme of suffering and persecution in the context of 1 Peter, emphasizing God's sovereignty and plan to conform believers to Jesus Christ.*

**Duration:** 40:52

**Scripture:** John 15:18, John 16:1-3, John 16:33, John 17:14-15, John 17:20-21, 1 Peter 1:11, 1 Peter 4:12

**Topics:** "Christian Obedience", "Salvation Faith"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of obedience in order for believers to be found unto honor and glory and praise at the coming of Christ. The provision of salvation through the death of Jesus Christ is highlighted, with the mention of the song 'There is a fountain filled with blood' symbolizing the forgiveness of sins. The preacher emphasizes that this provision of salvation is only effective if the individual responds with faith and obedience to the gospel. The sermon also mentions the early believers in Acts 2 who shared their possessions and lived out of a common treasury to meet each other's needs, highlighting the importance of unity and caring for one another in the Christian community.

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## Transcript

The complexities of the hour in which we live lead us to believe that men have never lived under such shadows before, that we are the first generation to have to cope with the problems of lawlessness, of riots, of crime, rebellion, that seems to occupy our attention so much today. We have forgotten that the situations and the conditions that we observe in the social world, the economic and political world, are only an extension of what man is in himself. Society is lawless because men are lawless.

Society sees rebellion because man is a rebel against God. Society witnesses crime because men, by nature, are sinners. That which is so prevalent on every hand today has been evident and visible in every generation from the time of Adam's sin to the present day.

While the Word of God does make it clear that as we approach the end of the age, iniquity shall wax worse and worse, and that lawlessness and anarchy will prevail to an unprecedented degree, we need to remind ourselves that we are not the only generation, nor the first generation, that has had to live in such a society and surrounded by such circumstances. The Word of God, and those who preach the truth of God in the Scriptures, made no effort whatsoever to change society in which they lived. The Apostle Paul lived under one of the cruelest, most dictatorial governments that the world has ever seen, but Paul did not speak a word against the political situations of his day.

The Apostles lived in the midst of a society that recognized slavery as an acceptable manner of life, and the Apostles had not a word to say about that great social issue. Crime, unbelief, rebellion and lawlessness was rampant, but the Apostles had no word directed to society as a whole, for the Word of God and those who were the Apostles of Jesus Christ made no effort whatsoever to change the course of society in which they lived, for they recognized that society was not to be redeemed. Society was under divine judgment, and that God in his own time would bring judgment upon the godlessness of the day.

But what the Apostles did do was to equip the faith of God to live in a corrupt society, in the midst of the social, economic and political evils in which their lives would have to be lived. There are great portions of the Word of God that are devoted exclusively to giving help to the saints of God to live the life of Jesus Christ in the day and in the age in which they found themselves, and it seems that the message of Peter contained in his epistle is particularly relevant for us today. For Peter, the Apostle by divine appointment, is writing to those whom he in 1 Peter 1 calls the strangers who are scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.

These geographical locations mentioned in the introduction to Peter's epistle were areas found across what we know today as Turkey, known then as Asia or Asia Minor, and the Apostle is writing not to a geographical group, to the saints who find themselves in that one particular area of the earth's surface. He is writing to a group who are in their geographical location because of the political, religious and economic pressures which were exerted upon them in the land from which they had come. I believe that if we were to think through the epistle of Peter to get the Apostle's message to suffering saints in his own day, and to the provision which God has made to live a Christian life in the midst of those trying circumstances, we will have for ourselves that which will sustain and equip us to do that which God requires of us to be life in the midst of the present darkness.

To that end, I would like to begin with you a series of studies in the epistles of Peter in order that we, through Peter's instruction, might be prepared, that we might be equipped through a knowledge of these portions of the word of God to stand fast in the adversity which must come upon believers in such days as those in which we live. Peter had been called from fishing for fish and had been commissioned to be a fisher of men. He had undergone a period of instruction as throughout his life he had sat at the feet of Lord Jesus.

The words that Christ spoke and the life that Christ lived were both in the face of adversity and affliction. For when Christ walked among men, he walked in the face of the opposition of the Roman government who condemned him to death as one guilty of treason because he made himself a kid. Jesus Christ also lived in the face of adversity that arose from the nation in which he was born, to which he had come to offer himself as a kid.

For religious Judaism rejected him, his offer of salvation and his offer of deliverance. The Lord Jesus lived a life under the shadow of adversity. The words that he taught were against the background of opposition by both Rome and by religious Judaism, and that which Christ lived and that which Christ taught was Peter's education in order that he, the apostle to the scattered saints, might have a message of hope and comfort and consolation for them.

In the upper room where our Lord secreted himself away with the disciples, we find a preparation for such suffering as Peter was to endure and the saints themselves would endure. I direct your attention again to John chapter 15, beginning at verse 18. Our Lord said, If the world hates you, and it most certainly will, ye

know that it hated me before it hated you.

If ye were of the world, but ye no longer are, the world will love its own. But because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord.

If they have persecuted me, and they certainly have, they will also persecute you. If they have kept my sayings, and they certainly didn't, they will keep yours also. When we come again into chapter 16, verses 1 to 3, our Lord reiterated the expectation before the Apostle.

These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogue. Yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God's service, and these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father nor me.

In order to understand the enormity of our Lord's warning in 16.2, we have to understand the relationship between the synagogue and the life of the individual Jew. The synagogue was the center of every area of the life of the faithful Jew. It was his religious center.

It was there he went for instruction by the rabbis in the pharisaical interpretations as they had been codified in the collection of rabbinical interpretation. It was the educational center, for the schools were in the synagogue, and the children of the Jewish home were sent or taken to the synagogue in order that they might receive not only religious instruction, but instruction for living as well. It was the center, then, of both their religious and their educational system.

The synagogue was the center of the economic system, for unless one were a member in good and regular standing of the synagogue, there were no opportunities for employment open to him. They had what we would call today a closed shop, and it worked very, very effectively, and if one were put out of the synagogue for some disciplinary reason, he lost all rights that being in the synagogue gave to him. It was the social center of the community.

Social life revolved around it, and if one were out of the synagogue, he were excluded from any and all social contact in the community in which he lived. It is impossible to think of a single area of life for the Jew that did not have its center in the synagogue. To be put out of the synagogue meant to be excluded from that which made normal life possible.

Exclusion was a form of punishment that was meted out by the elders of the synagogue, and if for sufficient reason the man had been deemed to have lost his rights in the community, he was voted out of the synagogue. He was put out of the synagogue. That meant he was cut off from any religious instruction in Judaism.

His children no longer had a school where they could go for instruction and training. He lost all economic rights, the right to employment. He lost all social rights in the community.

He was considered an unclean Gentile. He was considered a leper who was to be totally excluded from the community. This was the strongest form of social pressure that could be possibly brought upon an individual, and our Lord, warning the disciples here in the upper room of the persecutions that they would face and the hatred that they would endure, says that time will come when they will exclude you or put you out of the synagogue, and if it is possible they would go the final step and put you to death.

When we turn to the book of Acts, we find there a record of the development of this hatred against the believers. Mind you that in the opening chapters of the book of Acts, the believers are all Jews. Any Gentiles who were included were proselytes.

Those who had by circumcision become members of the Commonwealth of Israel had gone through all of the initiatory and introductory rites and were considered as Jews, so that the persecutions in the opening chapters of Acts are not persecutions by Gentiles of Gentiles. They are persecutions against Jewish believers by both Jew and Gentile. When we come to the fourth chapter of Acts, for instance, in verses one to three, as Peter and John spake unto the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them.

You will notice that these are representatives of the religious and the political authorities in Israel, and they came upon Peter and John as they were preaching, being grieved that they taught the people and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead, and they laid hands on them and put them in hold unto the next day, for it was now even time. They are deprived of all of their civil rights. They are shot up in prison as common prisoners.

Why? Because the political religious authorities in Israel would not tolerate the preaching of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the proclamation of life through the resurrected one. In verses 15 to 17 of this same chapter, they commanded them to go aside out of the council they conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do to these men? For that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it, but that it spread no further among the people. Let us straightly threaten them that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.

Let us threaten them." Now, what was the limit of the threat that they could impose? Since Rome retained the right of death penalty, they could not threaten them with death, but they could threaten them with excommunication or separation from the synagogue, and that is what they did. We turn to chapter 5 in verse 17, and we find a wave of persecution coming again. Then the high priest rose up, and all that were with him, which is the sect of the Sadducees, and were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison.

The Lord had said in John 15, They shall hate you, and Luke testifies in Acts 5.17, they were filled with indignation or bitter hatred against the apostles. In chapter 6 and verse 8, we read of the persecution against Stephen. 6.8 Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, the freedmen, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and then of Cilician Asia, disputing with Stephen. They were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. Then they suborned men which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God.

They stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council. They set up false witnesses which said, This man ceases not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law, for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered. And all that sat in the council looked steadfastly on him, and saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

Persecution against Stephen, as he is dragged before the council on an accusation based upon false witnesses. Then, when we come into chapter 7, verse 54, when they heard these things, they were cut to

the heart and gnashed on him with the teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.

Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him. The witnesses laid down their clothes, and a young man's feet his name was saw. The rise of hatred against the believers.

Now, what was the response of the believers while this rising tide of persecution was taking place? We find that it was necessary for the believers to sustain themselves, because they were being put out of the synagogue. They had no right to employment. They had no social contacts with their own people.

So when we go back into Acts 2 and verse 44, all that believed were together, and they had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men as every man had need. Now, we find that because they had been put out of the synagogues and lost their livelihood, they soon began to get hungry, and the way of meeting this need was for each man to put into a common treasury that which he had, and they lived out of the common treasury, distributing to each individual in the family as a member of the family had need. This was not a political system.

It was not a governmental thing. It was not compulsory. It was a voluntary family relationship, and each one put into the treasury so that each one, according to need, might take out of the treasury.

And we find that this system continued at the close of Acts 4. In verse 32, we read of this same thing, "...the multitude of them that believe were of one heart and of one soul. Neither said any of them that all of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common." Verse 34, "...neither was there any of them that lacked, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet, and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need." Now, you will notice that this manifestation of love of believer for believer was the believer's response to the hatred by the world, and when the world hated them and cut them off from all economic and social contacts, they were bound together in this family relationship, and the love of believer for believer was the answer to the world's hatred. They were not under compulsion to bring the price of their houses and lands into the treasury other than the compulsion of love.

So, on the one hand, you have the hatred of the established religious system and the hatred of the world against believers, and the believer's response to that hatred was to manifest their love by sharing that which they had one with another. But as we continue on into the eighth chapter of the book of Acts, we find that this persecution by unbelievers continued and intensified. After the death of Stephen, a great wave of persecution broke out against believers, and in 8.1 we read, Saul was consenting unto his death, and at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem.

Now, notice these next words, and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. They were all scattered abroad, and those who were scattered abroad were called the scattered ones, the dispersed ones, or the diaspora. And after they had fled from Jerusalem and left the apostles behind, they went northward out of Jerusalem as far as Samaria.

But they were not safe in Samaria long, because it took only a short time to go from Jerusalem to Samaria, and as persecution continued against the saints of God, the saints went further and further away from Jerusalem. They went northward up the coast of the Mediterranean to Antioch, and then from Antioch they

went northward into those regions entirely away from the authority of Jerusalem that were known as Asia Minor. Now, the apostle Peter had been ministering to these saints down in Jerusalem.

They were his sheep, if you please, and he was their shepherd. The fact that he, in the will of God, was left to face the opposition in Jerusalem, and these saints were scattered as far away as Asia Minor, did not sever the ties between the shepherd and the sheep. And so, Peter is writing to the strangers, or the sojourners, or the diaspora, the scattered ones for whom he had been responsible, who, because of the persecutions in Jerusalem, have now gone far beyond the land itself.

What I'm trying to show you, beloved of God, is that this epistle was written against a background of political, educational, social and economic pressure far beyond anything that you and I have experienced today. And Peter, as a faithful shepherd, is writing to them to sustain them in their suffering, to encourage them who are undergoing persecution, to tell them how they might live a victorious life of Christ in the midst of such surroundings. And then he desires to relate their suffering to the whole program of God.

Why do believers suffer? Job had wrestled with that problem ages before, but the answer to Job's suffering needed to be brought home to them. Why do believers suffer? What is God's purpose in it? And perhaps when believers suffer, the first question that comes to mind is the question, is this suffering really in the will of God? Is God sovereign in this area, or has God somehow abdicated His throne and turned me over to forces of evil and of sin and of Satan? Have I gotten beyond His care and His concern? And so, it was Peter's desire in writing to these who were scattered abroad to reveal to them how God will use suffering in their lives to conform them to Jesus Christ. The apostle Peter wants to remind them, first of all, that they are elect of God.

They are elect of God, and these who were strangers from their homeland because of the persecution of the day, are still the elect of God. This election is based on a plan, for Peter says they are elect according to the foreknowledge of God, and when Scripture refers to the foreknowledge of God, it has to do with the infinite wisdom of God that has mapped out a perfect program, a perfect design for a man's life that includes all the individual segments and parts of that life. God, as a sovereign God, is in authority over every area of a man's life, and God has not treated us as isolated individuals.

God treats us, the beloved of God and the elect in Jesus Christ, as a family, a body of believers, and God works out the detail not only for my life, but for your life as well. And Peter wanted these who were scattered to have this confidence that even in the midst of these sufferings, these sufferings fit into the plan of an infinite God, all wise in his counsel, who has brought into their experiences the very thing that will accomplish God's purpose for them and in and through them. And so he does not remind them that as strangers they are loved of God, for they were not questioning God's love, they were questioning God's wisdom in letting these things come to them.

And so he assures them that they are elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. But this election operates through setting them apart, or as our text says, they were elect through sanctification of the Spirit. Now, sanctification means essentially to set apart.

One may be sanctified unto God, or set apart unto God. One may also be set apart unto suffering, and that is the emphasis the apostle has here. We were not only electing Christ so that we were set apart to be Christ, but our election in the foreknowledge of God included all the sufferings and the details of life, and he wanted these saints to be reminded of the fact that when God works according to his infinite wisdom, he sets us apart by the Spirit to those very things that God brings into our experience.

Then he tells us that we were elect unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Obedience is the response of the individual to the provision which God has made through the death of Jesus Christ. God has set forth Jesus Christ to be a sacrifice for our sins.

2 Christ has shed his blood in order that salvation might be available to sinners, so that the song could be written, There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins that sinners plunge beneath that flood whose all their guilt is paid. The fact that that fountain has been provided avails the individual sinner nothing unless he is obedient to the gospel, and that which Christ asks of the individual is faith. This is the will of God that ye believe on him whom God hath sent, for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life.

And so, Jesus Christ has been set forth before us as one crucified, but God asks the individual in obedience to the gospel to receive Jesus Christ as his or her own personal Savior. These who are suffering have been set apart by the Spirit of God. They have been obedient and have experienced the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.

In the Old Testament order, the blood that cleansed was applied to that which was unclean by dipping a hyssop branch into the blood and shaking or applying the blood to that which was defiled, and that sprinkling by blood rendered that which was defiled clean and acceptable before God. God pictures for us here the benefits of the death of Jesus Christ, that the one who obeys the gospel has the blood of Jesus Christ applied to him by Almighty God, so that the one who was unclean and unacceptable in God's sight is now made clean and acceptable to the Father. All this included in the election according to the foreknowledge of God.

Then Peter, in this brief introduction, having reminded these strangers, these scattered ones, of the fact of their election that includes in it the sufferings that unfold before them, assures them, grace unto you and peace be multiplied. Grace does provide salvation, but grace is used in another sense in Scripture. I find it, for instance, in Hebrews chapter 4 and verse 16, where the Apostle writes, "...let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." The grace that is referred to at the conclusion of this verse is, as the Apostle said, a grace that helps in time of need.

And the Apostle, by saying to these scattered believers, grace unto you, is reminding them that when God in his infinite wisdom chooses to bring sufferings into their experience, God promises his help and his assistance, that we may find grace to help in time of need. God has yet to ask one of his children to walk through suffering or testing or persecution alone, for he walks with them through it. Grace, God's help, is our portion, and the child of God who understands the purpose of God in the persecutions and the tests of life can go through those experiences with the peace of God upon him.

For peace is that quietness that comes from knowing that God is in sovereign control, and that these things that are brought to me are brought because it is God's will. The Apostle Paul, in those familiar words in the eighth chapter of Romans, summarizes that which was also Peter's concept, for he tells us in verse 29 of Romans 8, whom God did foreknow, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son. Conformed to the image of his Son.

No individual by nature is like Jesus Christ, nor is he conformed to Jesus Christ. When one is born into the family of God by obeying the gospel of Jesus Christ, God necessarily begins a polishing process to make him like Jesus Christ. Going recently through a shop that displayed a large number of unmounted, semi-precious and precious stones, I saw there on the shelf a number of uncut and unpolished gems.

The gemstones as they were taken from the earth, and as the rocks that contained these gemstones were cut and exposed there, one could see no brilliance, no beauty, no light, no fire in those stones whatsoever. What a contrast between the rough, unpolished stone and the unfinished, polished gem. Peter recognized that we are in the state of those rough, cut, unpolished stones, and if we are to reflect the glory of Christ and bear the image of Christ, there is a long process necessary before we realize God's purpose for us to be conformed to the image of Christ.

There can be no glow apart from an abrasion, and the abrasive process could be long, difficult and painful. But Peter tells us that God, through sufferings and through persecution, is working according to his own purpose and will to conform us to Jesus Christ. Look, for instance, in 1 Peter 1, verse 6. He greatly rejoiced that now for a season of need be ye are in heaviness through manifold testing, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

How can a believer be found unto honor and glory and praise at the coming of Christ? By going through the polishing process. Look again in chapter 1, verse 11. The prophets were searching, wondering what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.

What is Peter telling us? That the glory that came to Christ at his ascension was the result of the sufferings that preceded his ascension. That there is a vital relationship between suffering and glory, and without the suffering there can be no glory. Or look again, please, in chapter 4, verse 12.

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you as though some strange thing happened unto you, but rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's suffering, that when his glory shall be revealed ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. And there the apostle tells us that as the sufferings of Christ were the means of the glorification of Christ, so the sufferings of the saint will be the means through which Christ is glorified in the life of the saint. May we remind you as we give thought to these introductory things in approaching this book, that God is at work in your life to conform you to Jesus Christ, and God chooses his own polishing agent, his own abrasive.

He knows when and how to put you to the polishing for you, because God has chosen you and elect you according to his foreknowledge, and as a result of your obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and God has begun a process that will continue until the time of your glorification in his presence. But how do we live in the midst of the trials and the sufferings and the circumstances? We live by faith, we live by grace assured of his health, we live in peace knowing that God is sovereign and is controlling all things according to the counsel of his own will. I trust that God will give you a passion to delight Christ, give you an overwhelming desire to reflect and bear the image of Christ, and then give you a hunger to know how God can use those testings in the life of his child to accomplish his will and purpose that will drive you to this book, to see God's answer to the problem of testing in the believer's life.

We pray, our Father, that the Spirit of God may so create a hunger for the Lord Jesus Christ in the lives of those who have been obedient to the gospel that we shall cry out unto thee for practical righteousness and holiness. That we shall submit to the polishing work of God, that we might bear the image of Jesus Christ. May the blessing of God rest upon each one that we might be conformed to Christ in our walk and in our talk.

In Jesus' name we pray.

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