

Enduring Injustice 1 Peter Overview

ETS:

ESS:

OSS:

PQ:

UW:

ME

Growing up, how many of you said “I’ll never be like my parents” and then one day you realized you were acting like you parents!

- Those **mannerisms** that may have irked you, YOU realize you have the same mannerisms—or one’s similar to them.
- Those **reactions** that may have bothered you, YOU realize you have the same reactions—or one’s similar to them.

Growing up, how many of you said “That will never happen to me” and yet it did!

Growing up, how many of you said “I’m going to change the world” but now you are “Whatever! I just want to eat my oatmeal and sit on the couch!”

Reality: We think that some things will NEVER happen to us—yet sometimes they do!

Disconnect: We read the Bible and say “That will never happen here” or “That’s not going to happen in my lifetime” But what if it does?

Sometimes we SAY one thing but don’t really BELIEVE it is going to happen.

Jesus condemnation: **Matthew 16:1-3** “The Pharisees and Sadducees approached, and tested him, asking him to show them a sign from heaven. 2 He replied, “When evening comes you say, ‘It will be good weather because the sky is red.’ 3 And in the morning, ‘Today will be stormy because the sky is red and threatening.’ You know how to read the appearance of the sky, but you can’t read the signs of the times.”

- **Knew the Scriptures**—yet **could not** or **would not** believe it was really happening!
- **Preached “The Messiah is coming”** but did not recognize it when He came!
 - **WHY?** He didn’t fit their **presuppositions**
 - **WHY?** He wasn’t acting the way they had determined the Messiah should act.

GOD

Turn to 1 Peter

Peter

- **Age:** Early 60's
- **Experience:**
 - **Followed Christ** before the crucifixion
 - **Witnessed the resurrected Christ**
 - **Preached the sermon on the Day of Pentecost**
 - **Church was born**
 - **Thousands** responded to the Gospel
 - **Extended the Gospel** beyond the Jews to the **Samaritans and Gentiles**
 - Knew what it was like to go to **jail** as a Christian
 - To be **awaiting execution**
 - Knew what it was like to **face injustice** at the hands of **government officials** and **religious leaders**.
 - Knew the pain of **buckling** under **pressure**—denied Christ.
- **Future:** Knew a painful future awaited him based on Jesus' prediction: **“Truly I tell you, when you were younger, you would tie your belt and walk wherever you wanted. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and**

someone else will tie you and carry you where you don't want to go.” (John 21:18)

- FUTURE persecution was coming for him **ultimately** resulting in his **death!**
 - The church historians Tertullian, Origen, and Eusebius state that Peter's was stretched out by his hands, he was dressed in prison garb, he was taken where no one wanted to go (a crucifixion), and was crucified. He was said to be crucified upside down because he felt unworthy to be crucified in the way that the Lord Jesus Christ had been.¹

LOCATION:

Peter was in a **unique location** when he wrote this letter:

- **1 Peter 5:13** “She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, as does Mark, my son.”
 - **Babylon** = cryptic language used by Christians to refer to Rome

Why would Peter call Rome Babylon and not just Rome?

¹ <https://www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com/apostle-peter-biography-timeline-life-and-death/#ixzz6iyCtmbJ9>

- In times of **persecution**, writers exercised unusual care **not to endanger Christians by identifying them.**”
 - **Paul** wrote the book of Romans “**To those who are in Rome, loved by God and called as saints**” around **A.D. 57**

Date:

- The **Apostle Paul** was under **house arrest** in Rome from **A.D. 60-62** and he **doesn't mention Peter** being in Rome
 - Likewise, **Peter does not mention Paul** being in Rome
 - **Conclusion:** Peter wrote in Rome sometime *after A.D. 62*

Growing Persecution?

If Peter was writing sometime between **A.D. 62-64**

- And if **Paul** was willing to **identify Rome**, but **Peter**—just a few years later—used **cryptic language**, then it seems that **persecution is growing** against the Christians.
- It seems that the church was **not yet facing an organized** Roman persecution
 - Peter's calls on his readers to “**Submit to every human authority because of the Lord, whether to the emperor as the supreme authority**” (**1 Peter 2:13**).

Rome—the seat of power of the Roman Empire!

- The **Emperor** is in Rome
- The **Senate** is in Rome
- The **Army** command is based out of Rome

Peter sees the **storm clouds** are **gathering** and **getting darker!**

Finally, in **A.D. 64** the **emperor Nero** began to **severely persecute** the Christians

- Once unleashed by the main powers, this persecution will spread throughout the empire!

1 Peter 1:1 “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ: To those chosen, living as exiles dispersed abroad in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

Believers are not exempt from Suffering

Audience: “To those chosen”

- Believers are “**Chosen**” by God!

Members of the Audience

- **Husbands and wives** (3:1, 7),
- **Slaves**
- **Leaders** (5:1–4)

- **Younger people (5:5)**

No believer is exempt from suffering

Social status: “Exiles”

Suffering is often the result of injustice

Which group is it easiest to show **injustice** to?

- Majority or the minority?

Which group is it easiest to show **injustice** to?

- The powerful or the powerless?

Which group is it easiest to show **injustice** to?

- The financially rich or the financially poor

Which group is it easiest to show **injustice** to?

- The politically strong or the politically weak?

The believers, who were **scattered** throughout the land, were an easy target for **injustice**.

1 Peter 1:1 “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ: To those chosen, living as exiles dispersed abroad in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

- Western Turkey

Why were they “dispersed abroad”?

- Many of these Christians had fled **north** of **Jerusalem** to an area between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea after the **martyrdom** of **Stephen** in Acts 8.

WHY would the Christians be persecuted?

- **Romans—who were in power--** viewed the Christians as
 - **Antisocial.** WHY? Because they would have secret meetings in homes.
 - Those meetings engendered suspicion, rumors, and a growing hostility.
 - **Atheists** (like some philosophers, for rejecting the gods)
 - **Cannibals** (for claiming to **eat** Jesus’ “**body**” and **drink** his “**blood**”), and
 - **Incestuous** (for statements like “**I love you, brother,**” or “**I love you, sister**”)
 - **Unpatriotic.** Their **fierce allegiance** to **Christ**, that kept them from participating in **worship of the Emperor** and state gods was viewed as a lack of patriotism

We have heard the term “**Injustice**” used much in the last year.

Which group is it easiest to show **injustice** to?

- Majority or the minority?
 - The Christians were clearly a minority!

Which group is it easiest to show **injustice** to?

- The powerful or the powerless?
 - The Christians had no political power

The Romans didn't like the Jews either, but **Judaism** was a **poor target** for outright persecution!

- WHY? Because its adherents were **numerous** and it was **popular** in some circles;
 - **Nero's mistress, Poppaea Sabina**, was a **patron** of Jewish causes.
- By **contrast**,
 - Christianity was viewed as a **form of Judaism** whose support was **tenuous** even in Jewish circles, and therefore it was an **appropriate political scapegoat**.

The Christians were an easy target for persecution

In **Rome**, Peter is seeing the **storm clouds gather** and **get darker**

- He knows the emperor **Nero**, is a man who will do whatever to preserve his power!
 - **Step brother** poisoned and killed for fear of him taking the throne
 - **Mother, Agrippina**, killed by inviting her as a guest of honor to a sumptuous banquet at his villa. Nero had planned for his

mother's **ship to sink**, and depending on the writer's account, **Agrippina** either **died at sea, or survived** the incident only for Nero to **send soldiers** to her villa to **finish the job**.

- Had his **wife** beheaded for adultery

Storm clouds getting **darker** so this letter is an **encouragement** to believers as they face **persecution**. (Some were already facing persecution in pockets of the empire.)

We **don't know** if this letter was written just a couple years **before A.D. 64** or shortly **after A.D. 64**, but a **fire** devastated Rome in **A.D. 64** but suspiciously left **unscathed** the **estates** of Nero and his friend **Tigellinus**.

- Like any good politician, **Nero** needed a **scapegoat** for his ills, and what appeared to be a **new religion**, *understood as a fanatical form of Judaism* begun by a **crucified teacher** three and a half decades before, filled the need perfectly.

According to the early-second-century historian **Tacitus**

- Nero **burned Christians alive as torches** to light his **gardens** at night.

- He **killed** other Christians in equally **severe** ways (e.g., **feeding them to wild animals** for **public entertainment**).

Nero's persecution of the Christians was compounded by the fact that

- The **Greek** part of the Empire loved Nero and the **Jewish community** generally **avored him**.²
 - So the Christians found no support

Believers are not exempt from suffering

1 Peter 1:6 “You rejoice in this, even though now for a short time, if necessary, you suffer grief in various trials”

FORMS: Suffering can come in many forms

- Physical
- Emotional
- Mental
- Spiritual

CAUSES:

- The cause of the suffering Peter is addressing is **not illness or disease**

²Keener, C. S. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (1 Pe 1:1). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

- The cause of the suffering is at the hands of **others!**
 - Suffering brought on by outside forces

1 Peter 1:1 “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ: To those chosen, *living as exiles dispersed abroad in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.*

- These **five Roman provinces** of the peninsula of **Asia Minor**.
 - That area today is northern **Turkey**.
- Asia Minor was the stronghold of **emperor worship**.³

The suffering Peter’s audience was going to face, or was starting to face, was brought on by those **loyal** to the **emperor** or by those who did not want the **wrath** of the **government** to be brought against them.

- The Christians were **not buying the party line**—they **weren’t playing the game**
- The Christians were different and the **majority** tends to **persecute the minority!**

YOU

WHY 1 & 2 Peter?

³Keener, C. S. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (1 Pe 1:1). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

Did you know that **Christians** are the most persecuted group in the world?

- The **last century** saw more Christians die for their faith than all other centuries combined.
 - **Wikipedia**—which is not Christian service—has this statement “Despite disputes and difficulties with numbers, there are indicators such as the Danish National Research Database, that Christians are, as of 2019, the most persecuted religious group in the world.”
 - [Newsweek](#) reported in January 2018 that “the persecution and genocide of Christians across the world is worse today than at any time in history.”

What is **persecution**?

- English Oxford Living Dictionary, “Persecution: “hostility and ill-treatment, especially because of race or political or religious beliefs; oppression.”

In **America**, we haven't experienced persecution in that people are *dying* for their faith, but we are seeing **outspoken Christians** on **college campuses** regularly **demeaned, debased** and **targeted** for their beliefs.

- Increasingly, **academics, social groups, and college organizations** regularly **ridicule Christians** by calling them **hateful, bigoted, and privileged**, among other labels.

WHY 1 & 2 Peter?

I am seeing **storm clouds** quickly gathering on the **horizon** against Bible-believing Christians in America—and I am NOT alone.

- **In 2016**, the *October Evangelical Leaders Survey* asked U.S. evangelical leaders about their experience with persecution and their projections for the future.
 - While only **32%** indicated that they have been **persecuted** for their Christian faith,
 - **76%** expect *they will be persecuted in coming years*.
- Leith Anderson, president of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), noted that **“American evangelical leaders recognize changes in the cultural wind and anticipate a backlash against themselves and other followers of Christ.”**

Persecution is NOT just physical, but also comes in the form of **oppression, repression, hostility and ill-treatment.**

We are living in the **“last days”** and I believe we are living at the **END** of the **Last Days.**

I base that belief on **Matthew 24:32-34.**

- I believe that the generation that sees the **“fig tree budding”** is the **final generation**
 - **Fig Tree** = rebirth of Israel - which occurred in **1948**
 - A **generation** in the bible was usually **30 years** to up to **100 years.**
 - If that is correct, we are within 30 years of the 100th anniversary of Israel’s rebirth.

Only time will tell if that is the correct view, but there is NO QUESTION that the world is rapidly changing.

- Things have happened (and are happening) that we never thought possible.

Believers in America have **enjoyed freedom to practice religion** in America but the **tide is turning.**

- The Biblical views of **morality** are not **considered intolerant and outdated.**

- The Biblical views of **Christ** as the Only Way to God is **considered too exclusive** of other religions (Even though all religions have points of exclusivity)
- The Biblical view of the **existence of God** is being trumpeted as **outdated** by the **new atheists**.
- We are now being told to worship at the **altar** of “**Science**” because “**Science**” has the **answer** for **everything**.
- We are now being told to look to **government** rather than God for the **answers**.

As we **remove God** and **Biblical principles of morality** from our **foundation**, the question becomes: Who/What determines what is “**morally upright or good**”?

- The definition of what is “**morally upright and good**” will be/ and is **defined** by “**Spiritual wickedness in high places**”
 - The **proclamation** of **new definitions (and fluxuating definitions)** of morality will be trumpeted throughout **America**—and the **world**—via those who have the **loudest** and most **powerful voice!**
 - **News Media**
 - **Social Media**
 - **Government**

- Corporations
- Hollywood

Prediction: As these views are the ones **constantly piped** into our homes via the **news media** and **social media feeds**, those who follow Christ and seek to follow the Scriptures will become more and more **ostracized**.

America has, and is, changing.

- The **Church in America** is on the **decline** in membership and in **influence**.
- It appears that **true believers** may be in for a **rough ride** that we never thought would happen in America.
 - The true believers in America—just like believers in the rest of the world—may soon find themselves living as “**exiles, aliens, strangers**” because we have failed to “**Evolve**” and change our views of morality and faith.

We are **not likely** to see **physical persecution** of Bible-believing Christians in America in the *near future*.

- However, we are likely to see **social, financial** and **political** pressure put on the church to **conform** to society's redefinition of **morality**.

During the **Democratic debates**, Former Texas congressman **Beto O'Rourke** was asked whether "religious institutions like colleges, churches, charities" should lose their tax-exempt status if they **oppose same-sex marriage**. O'Rourke's answer was a straightforward "yes."

- It is very possible that **colleges, churches, charities** which oppose same-sex marriage will lose their **tax exempt status** in the coming years.

WE

Peter is writing to believers about **HOW** to **ENDURE SUFFERING**

Persecution, which may come in various forms, results in suffering

- Suffering which may come as the result of **injustice**
- Suffering which may come as the result of outright **physical persecution**
- Suffering which may come as the result of loss of **friendships**
- Suffering which may come as the result of **financial punishment**

- Suffering which may come as the result of **being locked out** of groups
- Suffering which may come as the result of **ridicule, slander and lies.**

HOW are we to **handle suffering?**

WHAT are we to be **doing** in the midst of **persecution?**

HOW do we **respond** to those who are **persecuting us?**

HOW can we **leverage** persecution?

We are going to answer these questions, and more, in this **new series** in the books of **1 & 2 Peter**.

Believers are not exempt from suffering

PQ: Are You Willing to Suffer for the Cause of Christ?

- **NOT asking you to seek out persecution!**
 - Not asking you to become a **martyr** on Facebook
 - Not asking you to say things that will get you **banned** on Twitter
 - Not asking you to be so **opinionated** that you stop being invited to family **gatherings.**
- **NOT asking you to seek out persecution!**

I AM asking you, that if you are willing to suffer for taking a stand for God's truth?

- Are you willing to **suffer the consequences** of the **Truth** that Jesus is the **ONLY way**?
- Are you willing to **suffer the consequences** of the not agreeing with the **redefinitions of morality**?

PQ: Are You Willing to Suffer for the Cause of Christ?

Believers are not exempt from suffering