



1 Peter

STAND FIRM IN GRACE

BPC

Term 3, 2018

Introduction to 1 Peter

1st Peter is a great book for times like these. The Christians Peter wrote to in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (modern-day Turkey) didn't face systematic persecution, yet like us, they lived in a **world that was increasingly hostile to Jesus**.

Peter writes to Christians who suffered because they didn't fit in. They didn't worship Roman gods, they rejected their society's sexual promiscuity, and they kept trying to convince people to follow Jesus. **In that sense they were strangers, aliens, and exiles in their society**. Which means Peter's readers lived in a world that was very similar to the one we live in. Christianity isn't illegal in Australia. Christians generally don't need to worry about imprisonment, torture, or execution. Yet every day we are more and more likely to be discriminated against simply because we live for Jesus.

1st Peter tells us that when we live life all for Jesus, it makes us different. It makes us strangers in the world. So **1st Peter teaches us to how to live in a society where Christianity is not welcome**. It teaches us to live with joy and hope and love when we're mocked and maligned and misunderstood because of what we believe. **Peter reminds us that even when following Jesus doesn't mean losing your life, it certainly means losing out.**

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WITH THE HELP OF SILAS, WHOM I REGARD AS A FAITHFUL BROTHER, I'VE WRITTEN TO YOU BRIEFLY, ENCOURAGING YOU AND TESTIFYING THAT THIS IS THE TRUE GRACE OF GOD. STAND FAST IN IT.

1st Peter 5.12

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“

DEAR FRIENDS, DON'T BE SURPRISED AT THE FIERY ORDEAL THAT HAS COME ON YOU TO TEST YOU, AS THOUGH SOMETHING STRANGE WERE HAPPENING TO YOU.

1st Peter 4.12

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But Peter does more than just remind us of our suffering! Peter encourages us to **stand firm** and **stay joyful**. He helps us 'prepare our minds for action', to endure discomfort and hostility with understanding and Christ-likeness. He does this by reminding us of the true grace of God (5.12), who has brought us into a living hope (1.3) that fills us with inexpressable joy (1.8), through Christ Jesus.

study 1 preparation

1st Peter

- Complete this page of preparation **before** you meet at Small Group.

Reading the passage before Small Group greatly increases the benefit you receive from the discussion. But it's also a powerful way to love the others in your group as you share what you have discovered.

- Pray and read 1st Peter

Peter wants us to stand firm in the true grace of God. Look out for ways he encourages us to do that.

Are there any clues about who this letter is written to? How does this help us read it?

What clues are there about the author and his circumstances?

In what ways are the challenges faced by Peter's readers here similar to the challenges you face as a Christian?

What does Peter say about our new identity and life in Christ Jesus?

How does this letter encourage you to stand firm in the true grace of God?

1 Peter 1.1-5

Read 1st Peter 1.1-2

What do we learn about the people Peter is writing to?

Peter calls his readers *strangers* or *exiles*. They're people who rejected the Roman gods and lived differently to the people around them. Peter will later say that because they are different they'll be accused of wrongdoing (2.12), government officials might discriminate against them (2.13-17), their employers might treat them unjustly (2.18-20), their non-Christian husbands may desert them (3.1-6), people will question them and even speak maliciously about them (3.16), and they'll be insulted (4.14).

In what ways might you be **mocked, maligned, or misunderstood** as a Christian today?

Peter also calls his readers *elect* and *chosen*. What does Peter say about why and how this choosing has happened?

How might this be a particular comfort to the readers of Peter's letter?

How do you feel about being an *elect stranger* in this world?

Read 1st Peter 1.3-5

What are the powerful promises listed in these verses?

How have these promises come about?

How are these promises a comfort for us as we live for Jesus in a world that is increasingly hostile to Jesus?

Read 1st Peter 5.12

Why does Peter write this letter?

From what Peter says about himself in chapter 1 verse 1 and what you know of Peter from the gospels, what qualifies him to write about the grace of God in Christ Jesus?

Implications

In a world where getting the maximum enjoyment out of life is praised, how does having a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus shape the way we live?

In a world dominated by materialism and accumulation of wealth, how does knowing we have an inheritance that never perishes, spoils, or fades, affect our view of money and possessions?

In a world where speaking up for Jesus leaves us open to be misunderstood, shouted down, or mocked, how does being shielded by God help us stand firm in the true grace of God?

Pray

What have you heard about Jesus in this part of 1st Peter that you can give thanks for?

What can you pray for each other at Small Group?

What can you pray for our church? What can you pray for all those outside our church?

study 2 preparation

1st Peter 1.6-13

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- Pray and read 1st Peter 1.6-13

Remember that Peter wants us to stand firm in the true grace of God. Look out for ways he encourages us to do that.

How does this section relate to everything we've read so far in 1st Peter?

What does Peter tell us about Jesus?

In what ways are the challenges faced by Peter's readers here similar to the challenges you face as a Christian?

What does Peter say about our new identity and life in Christ Jesus?

How does this section encourage you to stand firm in the true grace of God?

1 Peter 1.6-13

Read 1st Peter 1.6-9

What is the ‘this’ that Peter is referring to in verse 6?

Why might Peter’s statement that we rejoice even though we suffer seem counter-intuitive, and even absurd, in our society?

According to Peter, why do God’s people suffer?

According to Peter, how should God’s people grieve?

Read 1st Peter 1.10-12

What’s the difference between the time of the prophets and the time of Peter’s readers?

Why are Peter’s readers so privileged?

Have a read of Isaiah 52.13-53.12. According to 1st Peter 1.10-12, what should our attitude be as we read part of the Old Testament like this?

Read 1st Peter 1.13

Where is our hope in suffering?

Implications

This part of 1st Peter is all about joy. Where do you find joy? What happens when we look for joy in things other than the gospel of Christ Jesus?

How have hardship and suffering in your past proven the genuineness of your faith?

How have hardship and suffering in your past strengthened your hope in the grace of Jesus Christ?

Peter says even angels long to be in our shoes (1.12). How does understanding that we live in a privileged time – when God has revealed Jesus – encourage you each day?

How can we help each other rejoice in our suffering?

Pray

What have you heard about Jesus in this part of 1st Peter that you can give thanks for?

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study 3 preparation

1st Peter 1.13-21

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- Pray and read 1st Peter 1.13-21

Remember that Peter wants us to stand firm in the true grace of God. Look out for ways he encourages us to do that.

How does this section relate to everything we've read so far in 1st Peter?

What does Peter tell us about Jesus?

In what ways are the challenges faced by Peter's readers here similar to the challenges you face as a Christian?

What does Peter say about our new identity and life in Christ Jesus?

How does this section encourage you to stand firm in the true grace of God?

1 Peter 1.13-21

Read 1st Peter 1.13-16

In uncertain times, Peter points his readers to a certain hope. What is that hope?

Peter says to have this hope we must have “minds that are alert and fully sober”. What does this tell us about the kind of hope we have?

Peter now starts to flesh out for us what it means to set our hope fully on Jesus...

“*Like father, like son*”, is a common saying. How does that idea help us understand what it means to be holy (verses 14-15)?

Are you being holy in all you do? As you look back over recent years, are you becoming more like Jesus and less like the world?

Do your TV viewing habits look like the world, or look like Jesus?

Does what you do with your weekend look like the world, or look like Jesus?

Do your finances look like the world, or look like Jesus?

Read 1st Peter 1.17-21

What does Peter want us to know in order that we fear God?

At what cost did God bring us into his family?

In what other ways do these verses help us see the *extraordinary value* of the new life we have in Jesus?

Fearing God means making sure we don't treat him cheaply, or trivialise what he's done. How do these verses motivate us to fear God?

Implications

Are there areas of your life where you fail to live as an obedient child of God because you've put your hope in something other than Christ?

Are there areas of your life where you fail to live as an obedient child of God because you don't fear him?

Overall, what does the way you live say about where you hope is? Does thinking about this encourage you, or drive you to repentance?

What can you do this week to remind yourself of the magnitude of what God has done for you in Christ Jesus?

Pray

What have you heard about Jesus in this part of 1st Peter that you can give thanks for?

What can you pray for each other at Small Group?

What can you pray for our church? What can you pray for all those outside our church?

study 4 preparation

1st Peter 1.22-2.3

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- Pray and read 1st Peter 1.22-2.3

Remember that Peter wants us to stand firm in the true grace of God. Look out for ways he encourages us to do that.

How does this section relate to everything we've read so far in 1st Peter?

What does Peter tell us about Jesus?

In what ways are the challenges faced by Peter's readers here similar to the challenges you face as a Christian?

What does Peter say about our new identity and life in Christ Jesus?

How does this section encourage you to stand firm in the true grace of God?

1 Peter 1.22-2.3

Read 1st Peter 1.22-25

How does Peter describe his readers in verse 21 and verse 23?

What is the command that flows out of being born into God's family?

What is the tone of this command—do you get the impression that it is an optional extra for people in God's family? Pretty important? Or essential?

The obvious question then, is *how do we love each other like this?* Peter quotes Isaiah to illustrate that human families easily fall apart and don't last forever, but Christians are born into God's family through 'the living and enduring word of God'.

How does this reminder from Isaiah point us to where we should go for the power to love one another deeply, and from the heart?

How does this reminder from Isaiah give us *confidence* and *comfort* as we strive to love one another deeply and from the heart even when it's hard to do so?

Read 1st Peter 2.1-3

What are people in God's new family called to rid themselves of?

What is the pure spiritual milk that enables us to put away the things listed in 2.1 and instead love one another deeply?

Have you tasted that the Lord Jesus is good? What is so good about Jesus? Does it make you *crave* his word?

How does Jesus' love show us the type of love we should have for one another?

Implications

Loving the 100+ people in your church family with deep and sincere love is daunting! What creative ways can you come up with to do this?

What might it look like to love the handful of people here at Small Group with deep and sincere love?

In what way(s) do you find it hardest to love Jesus' church? What will it take to see those times as opportunities to love deeply, rather than reasons to stop trying?

What do you need to do to fill yourself with 'pure spiritual milk' to sustain your increasingly deep love of others?

Pray

What have you heard about Jesus in this part of 1st Peter that you can give thanks for?

What can you pray for each other at Small Group?

What can you pray for our church? What can you pray for all those outside our church?

study 5 preparation

1st Peter 2.4-12

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- Pray and read 1st Peter 2.4-12

Remember that Peter wants us to stand firm in the true grace of God. Look out for ways he encourages us to do that.

How does this section relate to everything we've read so far in 1st Peter?

What does Peter tell us about Jesus?

In what ways are the challenges faced by Peter's readers here similar to the challenges you face as a Christian?

What does Peter say about our new identity and life in Christ Jesus?

How does this section encourage you to stand firm in the true grace of God?

1 Peter 2.4-12

Read 1st Peter 2.4-5

How does Peter describe Jesus?

How does Peter describe God's people?

Old Testament Israel worshipped God in the temple. The temple was, in a sense, the place God lived. Where does Peter say God now dwells?

What does this mean for our Sunday gatherings?

Read 1st Peter 2.6-10

Peter quotes Isaiah 28, Psalm 118, and then Isaiah 8 to describe two responses to Jesus (who is the cornerstone of God's spiritual house). What are they?

How might the words of Isaiah 28 have encouraged Peter's readers – remember their circumstances discussed in study 1 – to stand firm in the gospel?

Who are the people Peter is referring to who have rejected Jesus, stumbled, and fallen?

Who, now, is God's chosen people?

For what reason have we become God's chosen people?

Read 1st Peter 2.11-12

How does Peter describe God's church?

What is the church's mission?

How would you explain to a new Christian the place and purpose of church in God's plan?

Implications

How has Peter's description of church changed your view of our church?

How might Peter's description of church change your participation in it?

How does Peter's grand picture of church encourage us to stand firm in times like these?

According to Peter, church is an extraordinary thing. How will this change your experience of our church meeting next Sunday?

study 6 preparation

1st Peter 2.13-25

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- Pray and read 1st Peter 2.13-25

Remember that Peter wants us to stand firm in the true grace of God. Look out for ways he encourages us to do that.

How does this section relate to everything we've read so far in 1st Peter?

What does Peter tell us about Jesus?

In what ways are the challenges faced by Peter's readers here similar to the challenges you face as a Christian?

What does Peter say about our new identity and life in Christ Jesus?

How does this section encourage you to stand firm in the true grace of God?

1 Peter 2.13-25

Read 1st Peter 2.13-17

Who does Peter call us to submit to?

For who's sake are we called to submit?

Does Peter's command change depending on whether our governing authorities are good or bad? Whether we voted for them or not? Whether we agree or disagree with their policies?

How do verses 15-17 inform how we submit to governing authorities?

What does it look like practically to submit to our governing authorities? How do these verses challenge you?

Read 1st Peter 2.18-20

What is so frustrating about this kind of unjust suffering?

What is Peter's command to those who suffer unjustly?

Have you ever suffered unjustly at the hands of someone in authority over you? How did you react? How does the world around us encourage us to react when we suffer unjustly?

How is Peter's command radically different to both our own instincts and the mindset of our society?

Read 1st Peter 2.21-25

What have we been called to?

If we follow Jesus' example, what will the world see when they look at us?

Implications

How is the knowledge that suffering as a Christian is following in Jesus' footsteps liberating?

How is the knowledge that suffering as a Christian is following in Jesus' footsteps challenging?

Take a look at the context of these verses by reading 1st Peter 2.12. How does living for Jesus help us share Jesus with the world around us?

"To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps." How do these words help you stand firm in the true grace of God?

study 7 preparation

1st Peter 3.1-17

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- Pray and read 1st Peter 3.1-17

Remember that Peter wants us to stand firm in the true grace of God. Look out for ways he encourages us to do that.

How does this section relate to everything we've read so far in 1st Peter?

What does Peter tell us about Jesus?

In what ways are the challenges faced by Peter's readers here similar to the challenges you face as a Christian?

What does Peter say about our new identity and life in Christ Jesus?

How does this section encourage you to stand firm in the true grace of God?

1 Peter 3.1-17

Read 1st Peter 3.1-6

Where might Peter's (female) readers be looking for beauty? Does Peter say these things are sinful?

Where should beauty come from for the Christian woman?

What is the goal of submission, purity, reverence, and a gentle and quiet spirit?

Read 1st Peter 3.7

What might Peter mean by the words 'in the same way'?

How does Peter describe wives in this verse?

What is the goal of consideration, respect, and valuing your wife like Jesus does?

Read 1st Peter 3.8-17

Peter now addresses *all* relationships, which includes marriages. How do these verses add to our understanding of what Peter said previously to wives and husbands?

In this section Peter particularly addresses non-Christians who *misunderstand, mock, and malign* us because we follow Jesus. How does Peter say we are to respond?

In what ways is the Christian life Peter describes here counter-cultural?

If you're married, how does all this challenge you?

Do these verses leave any excuse for domestic violence?

Implications

How can you support, encourage, and pray for Christian women with husbands who aren't yet followers of Jesus?

What gets in the way of you sharing the hope you have in Jesus? Do you fear suffering for what is right? Or have you never been asked about your hope because you've never been willing to suffer for Jesus in the first place?

What will it take for you to embrace Peter's – and Jesus' – view of suffering?

Pray

What have you heard about Jesus in this part of 1st Peter that you can give thanks for?

What can you pray for each other at Small Group?

What can you pray for our church?

What can you pray for all those outside our church?

study 8 preparation

1st Peter 3.18-4.6

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- Pray and read 1st Peter 3.18-4.6

Remember that Peter wants us to stand firm in the true grace of God. Look out for ways he encourages us to do that.

How does this section relate to everything we've read so far in 1st Peter?

What does Peter tell us about Jesus?

In what ways are the challenges faced by Peter's readers here similar to the challenges you face as a Christian?

What does Peter say about our new identity and life in Christ Jesus?

How does this section encourage you to stand firm in the true grace of God?

1 Peter 3.18-4.6

Read 1st Peter 3.18-22

What did Jesus' suffering achieve? What happened after this?

Why is Noah such a good example of salvation in the midst of suffering and overwhelming judgement?

How do these verses help us understand baptism?

No doubt Peter's readers knew exactly what Peter was talking about in these verses, but let's be honest, some of it seems to go right over our heads! Try to summarise what is *clear* in these verses, and how it encourages us to stand firm in grace in the midst of suffering.

Read 1st Peter 4.1-6

What might it look like to 'arm ourselves with the same attitude'?

How have Peter's readers changed?

How do those around them respond to this change?

How does this help explain why we suffer when we live for Jesus? How does this kind of suffering play out in your life?

Are there situations in your life where living for Jesus will lead to suffering? In those moments do you shy away from suffering, or is your attitude like Christ's?

How does verse 5 help us persevere in grace?

Why is verse 6 such incredibly good news in times like these?

Implications

Many may misunderstand, mock, and malign us for following Jesus. According to Peter, how much does their opinion matter?

How does this part of Peter's letter help you to stand firm in grace when you face pressure to live like the non-Christian world around you?

How might you be able to constructively share Jesus with people when they are surprised that you won't join them in what they're doing?

Pray

What have you heard about Jesus in this part of 1st Peter that you can give thanks for?

What can you pray for each other at Small Group?

What can you pray for our church? What can you pray for all those outside our church?

study 9 preparation

1st Peter 4.7-5.14

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- Pray and read 1st Peter 4.7-5.14

Remember that Peter wants us to stand firm in the true grace of God. Look out for ways he encourages us to do that.

How does this section relate to everything we've read so far in 1st Peter?

What does Peter tell us about Jesus?

In what ways are the challenges faced by Peter's readers here similar to the challenges you face as a Christian?

What does Peter say about our new identity and life in Christ Jesus?

How does this section encourage you to stand firm in the true grace of God?

1 Peter 4.7-5.14

Read 1st Peter 4.7-11

How does verse 7 relate to the main themes of this letter?

Given the end is near, how are we to live? Why would the alternatives to this be unhelpful?

What is the purpose of the gifts we've been given?

Read 1st Peter 4.12-19

What kind of suffering is Peter talking about?

Why should we not be surprised when we suffer like this?

What reasons are there to be joyful when we suffer like this?

What might it look like to 'commit yourself to your creator and continue to do good'?

Read 1st Peter 5.1-5

Describe the leadership style the elders are called to. Why do you think Peter says this?

How are the instructions for 'young men' and 'all of you' similar to the instructions for elders?

Read 1st Peter 5.6-11

What does it mean to 'humble ourselves under God's mighty hand'?

What is the danger, if we aren't careful and proactive about standing firm in grace?
Verse 10 is the climax of Peter's letter. How do you think Peter's readers would've felt reading it?

Read 1st Peter 5.12-14

Has Peter convinced you of the value of standing firm in grace?

Implications

Do you think Peter would be surprised at how little you suffer? What might that say about how committed you are to living for Jesus?

Think back over this letter. What reasons has Peter given us for standing firm in grace?

How does the devil devour those who are not self-controlled, alert, and standing firm in grace?

Are there things in your life that are currently a threat to you standing firm?

Peter has reminded us of the glorious future in store for those who stand firm. Is this something you think about often? Is it something you think about when you suffer?

Are you willing to lose out every day because you follow Jesus? How has Peter challenged your attitude on this?

Has this letter changed the way you suffer?

What can you do this week to help your Small Group, your family, and your church family, stand firm in grace?

Pray

Pray for our three church families, that we would stand firm in the true grace of God.