



Author: Simon Peter, apostle
(for more, see “Peter’s Life and Ministry” in The Lutheran Study Bible p. 2148)

Date: Before AD 67

Genre: Letter; possibly a sermon or early baptismal liturgy

Purpose: To instruct and encourage the Lord’s people as they endure suffering for the sake of righteousness

Outline:

IV. Specific Instructions and Encouragement for Holy Living (2:11–4:11)

E. Christian brotherhood (3:8–12)

F. Christian witness (3:13–17)

G. Jesus treated unjustly and vindicated (3:18–22)

H. Jesus’ example inspires his people (4:1–6)

I. Faithful to the end (4:7–11)

V. Joy Amid Suffering and Community Roles (4:12–5:11)

Commit to Memory Verses:
Baptism now saves you (3:18–22)

The Letter of Hope

1 Peter 3:8–4:11

hope in spite of suffering

Overview: Peter lifts up the eyes of his suffering and fearful brothers and sisters to the objective reality of the victorious Savior. Christ’s successful work and triumphant coronation provide the basis for hope and confidence in life.

1 Peter 3:8–17 ▪ Christian Brotherhood and Witness

+ What does “brotherly love” imply about our relationships within the Church? See Mark 3:31–35; 10:28–31.

+ What words and teachings of Jesus inform St. Peter’s approach suffering? See Luke 6:22–23, 27–36. Is suffering to be expected? Is it evidence of being outside the will of God? See 1 Peter 4:12.

+ Who wrote Psalm 34? What was the setting for this psalm? See 1 Samuel 21:10–15. What is the wider context in 1 Samuel? Skim chapters 16–31, especially 24 and 26.

+ How did St. Peter initially respond to evil? See John 18:10–11. Jesus? See Luke 23:33–34.

+ What opportunity do we Christians have in suffering?

What Does This Mean?

+ St. Peter urges five things for Christians: (1) unity of mind; (2) sympathy; (3) brotherly love; (4) a tender heart; and (5) a humble mind. Why are these especially important?

+ We are called to “bless.” How do we typically respond to evil and reviling against us? How do we react to what St. Peter says?

+ When asked the reason for your hope, be prepared to make a defense [*apologia*]. How would you confess the Christian faith in a few sentences, if given the opportunity?

+ “If that should be God’s will” —Is suffering ever God’s will? Why, or why not? See Matthew 6:10; Luke 22:39–42.

1 Peter 3:18–22 ▪ Jesus Vindicated

+ Like a hymn or creed, verses 18 to 22 narrate the great events of Christ’s humiliation and exaltation. What are these events? How is this central to our hope, even in suffering?

+ He descended into hell. When? What does St. Peter teach about Christ’s descent?

+ What Old Testament event is in view? See Genesis 6:5–8, 11–13.

+ Echoing the words of our Lord in Mark 16:16, St. Peter says very simply that “baptism now saves you.” How does baptism save? Is baptism necessary for salvation?

What Does This Mean?

+ Who is on the throne? What difference does it make to us?

+ Luther's "Flood Prayer" is often used in the rite of baptism: "Almighty and eternal God, according to Your strict judgment You condemned the unbelieving world through the flood, yet according to Your great mercy You preserved believing Noah and his family, eight souls in all. . . . We pray . . . that through this saving flood all sin . . . would be drowned and die. Grant that they be kept safe and secure in the holy ark of the Christian Church." What did the flood waters do? The water of baptism?

1 Peter 4:1–6 ▪ The Example of Jesus

+ How has one who "suffered in the flesh" thus "ceased to sin"?

+ Since the Christian life goes against the flow, what should Christians expect in this life?

What Does This Mean?

+ What account are we prepared to give?

1 Peter 4:7–11 ▪ Faithfulness to the End

+ What does St. Peter now have in view? How should we then live?

Conclusion: In the midst of trials, we may be tempted to feel self-pity and despair. But God calls us to something greater. Our powerful Lord forgives us in our Baptism and gives us His life, because He suffered in the flesh and became sin in our stead.

1 Peter 3:8–4:11

hope in spite of suffering

+ How does love cover a multitude of sins? Does this mean that by our love we merit forgiveness? See Genesis 9:20–27.

What Does This Mean?

+ How do we "cover" the sins of others? Why and in what ways is this necessary? Are there ever times when sin needs to be uncovered? If so, when and by whom?

+ How do verses 10–11 speak to service in the church?

Luther: The power, work, profit, fruit, and purpose of Baptism is this—to save. For no one is baptized in order that he may become a prince, but, as the words say, that he "be saved." We know that to be saved is nothing other than to be delivered from sin, death, and the devil. It means to enter into Christ's kingdom, and to live with Him forever. (LC IV, 24–25).

Next week . . . 1 Peter 4:12–5:14—hope for those humbled

Opening/Closing

Like newborn infants,

long for the pure spiritual milk of the Word.

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous,

that He might bring us to God,

being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,

in which He went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison,

because they formerly did not obey,

when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared,

in which eight persons were brought safely through water.

Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you,

not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience,

through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God,

with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to Him.

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

Before the study

*Almighty God, our heavenly Father, without Your help our labor is useless, and without Your light our search is in vain. Invigorate our study of Your holy Word, that by due diligence and right discernment, we may establish ourselves and others in Your holy faith; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.***

After the study

*Heavenly Father, grant Your mercy and grace to Your people in our many and various callings. Give us patience, and strengthen us in our Christian vocation of witness to the world and of service to our neighbors in Christ's name; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.***