

# 1 Peter (November 10)

## Reading 1 Peter

“When will the new flock return from the high pasture?” a young shepherd complained. “We should have the gate closed and all things settled for the night.”

“Patience,” said the chief shepherd. “We have comfort enough. Our brother has a treacherous climb down the hill. New lambs and nursing ewes will slow everything down. But rightly so. Little ones must eat, and shepherds must keep watch and wait and lead them safely home.”

In his first letter, Peter encourages elders in Asia Minor to watch over their congregations with patient care and nurture them in the new life God gives. These new Gentile congregations were enduring significant suffering due to persecution and alienation from the corrupt culture in which they lived. Peter describes them as God’s people – chosen, holy, and supremely precious to the chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus.

## Author and Date

The author identifies himself as the apostle Peter, and the contents and character of the letter support his authorship. Moreover, the letter reflects the history and terminology of the Gospels and Acts (notably Peter’s speeches); its themes and concepts reflect Peter’s experiences and his associations in the period of our Lord’s earthly ministry and in the apostolic age. That he was acquainted with Paul and his letters is made clear; coincidences in thought and expression with Paul’s writings are therefore not surprising.

Nevertheless, some claim that the idiomatic Greek of this letter is beyond Peter’s competence. It is true that the Greek of 1 Peter is good literary Greek, and even though Peter could no doubt speak Greek, it is unlikely that he would write such polished Greek. But Peter claims that he wrote “with the help of” (more literally “through” or “by means of”) Silas. Thus Silas was the intermediate agent in writing. It is known that a secretary in those days often composed documents in good Greek for those who did not have the language facility to do so. Therefore in 1 Peter Silas’s Greek may be seen, while in 2 Peter it may be Peter’s rough Greek that appears.

The book can be satisfactorily dated in the early 60s. It cannot be placed earlier than 60 since it shows familiarity with Paul’s prison letters. Furthermore, it cannot be dated later than 67/68, since Peter was martyred during Nero’s reign.

## Themes

Although 1 Peter is a short letter, it touches on various doctrines and has much to say about Christian life and duties. It is not surprising that different readers have found it to have different principal themes. For example, it has been characterized as a letter of separation, of suffering and persecution, of suffering and glory, of hope, of pilgrimage, of courage, and as a letter dealing with the true grace of God. Peter says that he has written “encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God” (1 Peter 5:12). This is a definitive general description of the letter, but it does not exclude the recognition of numerous subordinate and contributory themes.

## Blessings for Readers

As you read 1 Peter, pray for your brothers and sisters who face suffering. Count it all joy that your Lord Jesus Christ suffered all pain and shame in order to redeem you and all who call upon him. As he gives you strength, rejoice in your sufferings, knowing that you share in the sufferings of Christ. As with Jesus, the sufferings you face must give way to the subsequent glories God will reveal in you.