

Peter

1 Peter 1:1-9, Acts 2:14-21

April 12, 2026

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Peter—born Simon. A fisherman on the shores of Galilee. Brother of Andrew. Called by Jesus to follow him. The one who boldly confessed, “You are the Messiah.” The one Jesus renamed Petra - “Rock.”

And yet—also the one who sank in the water, who denied Jesus three times, who knew failure deeply. But by the grace of God, Peter was restored. And after Pentecost, he became a leader of the early church—preaching, guiding, suffering, and bearing witness to the risen Christ.

This is the Peter who writes to us. Not a perfect man—but a redeemed one. Not a distant figure—but a fellow disciple who knows both weakness and hope.

In Acts, Peter stands up on the day of Pentecost and quotes the prophet Joel: “In the last days... I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.”

That phrase—“the last days”—is telling. Peter is saying: with the resurrection of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit, God’s new age has begun.

The last days are not just future—they are now. An age defined by the living resurrected presence of Christ and the manifestation of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit poured out on all people—young and old, men and women. The church is now a Spirit-filled, witnessing community, called to proclaim what God has done in Jesus Christ.

So Acts tells us when we are living: in the age of resurrection and the presence of the Holy Spirit, and 1 Peter speaks to his readers about *how* to live in this new reality. Through 5 of the 6 weeks of Easter we are going to explore Easter through Peter’s eyes by following his sermon in Acts, and his letter called 1 Peter. Historians differ on whether 1 Peter was written by Peter during his ministry in Rome in and around the year 63-64. Or whether it was penned by students of Peter’s giving honour to Peter in the next generation. For our purposes, it doesn’t make a difference, so for ease of communication, I’ll refer to the author as Peter.

The letter is addressed to Christians scattered across Asia Minor—modern-day Turkey. These believers were not at the top of society. They lived in an uneasy space—possibly above slaves, certainly below citizens. Restricted. Marginalized. Viewed with suspicion.

And their faith in Jesus only made things worse. They faced exclusion, slander, and discrimination.

So Peter writes to advise them on how followers of Jesus ought to live in a world where they do not fully belong. The letter begins with a standard greeting:

To the exiles of the dispersion in (Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,) 2 who have been chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ and to be sprinkled with his blood: May grace and peace be yours in abundance.

There is a lot packed in this first sentence. Peter acknowledges their fragile status as exiles, yet greets them as those chosen, destined, sanctified by God. In a society that marginalized them, the good news comes that God chose them. Peter calls them to root their identity—not in social standing—but in belonging to God and God’s people.

For those early Christians, one of the greatest discoveries was this: They belonged to a new family. In a world where they were excluded, they were accepted in this new gathering - the church.

This has been good news for all generations that have come after. Regardless of the standing we have in society, Jesus' people belong to God and to one another. We have a place and a people where we belong. Many of us have not faced significant exclusion because of our faith in Jesus, but some of us have, and many have learned that faith in Jesus can put pressure on our lives—socially, professionally, financially, even personally. Following Christ can set us at odds with the values around us.

It gives me great comfort when I am ostracized from others, I have a church family where I belong. When looking at the question of how to live in this age, Peter doesn't begin with ethics—but with identity.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

We are a people who have been born into a living hope.

Not fragile. Not wishful thinking. Not dependent on circumstances.

A living hope—because it is rooted in a living Savior. And this hope rests on three unshakable realities:

First: We have been born anew. This is not something we achieved. It is something God has done. Our identity is not self-made—it is given by grace.

Second: We have an inheritance. Imperishable. undefiled. Unfading. Everything in this world wears out. But what God promises does not.

Third: We are sustained by God's power. Our hope does not depend on how tightly we hold onto God— but on how faithfully God holds onto us.

And in light of the resurrection, we can serve God as those with a living hope...even in trying

circumstances. Peter explains, “even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials...”

Following Christ does not remove suffering. In fact, sometimes it intensifies it. Because the message of salvation is offensive to our culture.

It tells us we are not self-sufficient.

It tells us we need grace.

It tells us we must be made new.

Puzzled looks as I explained Jesus to the college students. Why would they, or anyone, need Jesus? Not until I explained that Christians don't see everything as fine with Jesus is added on top, but that salvation means being saved from and saved for, could they see why Jesus matters to Christians. Yet understanding came with some resistance - could they see that what was wrong was outside of their ability to fix? You can do anything, be anything, fix anything. Salvation rests on a Saviour. God is at work doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

When such news comes with resistance, even suffering, Peter says such suffering is not meaningless. It is like fire refining gold. It tests. It purifies. It reveals what is real.

Peter encourages his readers to not only persevere, but to rejoice. Practice resurrection joy even in trying times. And then Peter says something remarkable:

“Though you have not seen him, you love him... and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy.”

This is us. We have not seen Jesus in the flesh. And yet—we can and do grow to love him.

We trust him. We rejoice in him. Because the same Spirit poured out at Pentecost is at work in us.

Opening our hearts.

Strengthening our faith.

Drawing us into communion with the risen Christ.

So here we are.

A people living in the last days.

A people filled with the Spirit.

A people born anew into a living hope.

So we live as Easter people:

A people of hope.

A hope that lives.

A hope that endures.

A hope that bears witness.

Because Christ is risen.

The Spirit has been given.

And we are being sustained—securely, faithfully—by the power of God.

Thanks be to God. Amen.