

INVITATION TO 1 PETER

In the final years of his life and ministry, in the early AD 60's, the apostle Peter was a leader of the church in Rome. From there he continued to encourage and challenge believers in other parts of the empire. Peter learned that the communities of Jesus-followers in the Roman provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia (all located in what is now Turkey) were experiencing persecution. He wrote to urge them to remain faithful to Jesus and to live godly lives, to show their opponents that they were really blameless. Peter shares introductory greetings and then he writes an extended blessing to God. Jesus' resurrection has brought the believers into an inheritance kept in heaven for them. Peter tells them this is the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming, when God will reunite heaven and earth. Following this profound statement of Christian hope, Peter's letter has three main sections: : He first tells his readers to be holy in all you do. He reminds them that as Gentiles, they once lived in ignorance (they didn't know the ways of God). But they're now a holy nation, part of God's own people, called to a new way of life. Peter here uses language and images drawn from the description of God's people in the First Testament. This new life, Peter insists, is to be lived out specifically in their community—in their relationships with one another. : Peter then describes one effect of this way of life: it will impress those who would accuse and persecute them without just cause. Live such good lives among the pagans, he writes, that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. Once again Peter teaches that this must be achieved practically, in the world of human relationships. : Finally, Peter comes directly to his purpose for writing. He acknowledges that his readers are suffering for their faith,

but he explains that this is only to be expected: do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. The Messiah himself suffered, and their fellow believers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings, so they should bear up patiently and faithfully. Peter can even tell them to rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. Peter's letter was delivered by Silas, a man who also worked with the apostle Paul (see pp. 1548–1551). Peter introduces Silas in the letter and explains that he helped write it. As Silas visited each of the communities this letter was addressed to, he brought the message that he and Peter recognized was needed: followers of Jesus are waiting for the day God will visit them, and even in the face of suffering they can live in a way that shows that they belong to God.