

Refined

Fire of Life

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Week 1

1 Peter 1

Welcome to week one of a teaching series that will take us all the way through the NT books of 1 & 2 Peter. We're calling this series, Faith Under Fire, because this is where Peter's writings from the 1st century connect with us in the 21st century. We live in a world where following Christ is not always easy. For some, it means discomfort. For others, rejection. For many around the world, it means real persecution. And increasingly, even in our own context, living faithfully can feel like swimming upstream.

1. When has been a time or circumstance in your life when following Jesus was not easy?

There is a process of using high-temperature smelting to determine gold and silver content in metal. It's called, "Fire Assay." It is the most precise method for quantifying gold and silver in precious metal samples, involving a high-temperature process that separates and measures these valuable elements. Useless information, right? At least for most of us. But here's a takeaway—Heat reveals what's really there!

So then the question becomes: How do we maintain faith when life turns up the heat? This is the heart of 1 Peter.

Context of 1 Peter:

The letter of 1 Peter was written by the apostle Peter—the same Peter who once denied Jesus three times and later became a bold leader in the early church. This alone should encourage us: God uses imperfect people to deliver powerful truth. Peter likely wrote this letter around A.D. 62–64, during a time when Christians were beginning to face increasing hostility under the Roman Empire. This was just before the intense persecution under Emperor Nero.

The recipients of this letter were scattered believers living in regions like Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia—modern-day Turkey. These Christians were not living in comfort. They were marginalized, misunderstood, and often mistreated because of their faith. They were not just dealing with inconvenience—they were dealing with suffering. And they needed help, and they needed hope.

2. Is there a hardship or suffering that you recently had to endure or are going through right now?

So, Peter writes to encourage believers to stand firm in their faith despite suffering. His message is not “escape hardship,” but rather “endure it with hope.” Many times in life you can’t escape hardship, but we can learn to endure it with hope.

The original recipients of Peter’s letters are primarily Gentile Christians, though some Jewish believers were likely included. These were ordinary people—families, workers, neighbors—trying to follow Jesus in a culture that didn’t understand or accept them. Sound familiar? Peter’s goal is clear: to help them see that their suffering is not meaningless, and their faith is not misplaced. Suffering is not meaningless, and faith is not misplaced.

We come to the first chapter of Peter’s first letter in the New Testament, and we see that trials do not destroy genuine faith—they refine it. This is “Fire Assay”—Heat reveals what’s really there. In fact, heat can refine what’s really there. How? Well, let’s take a look.

Peter begins with a greeting, but it’s loaded with theology: “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles...” (1 Peter 1:1, ESV). That phrase—elect exiles—is powerful. These believers are chosen by God, yet they feel like strangers in the world. Peter then reminds them that they have been “...born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3, ESV).

This is not wishful thinking. It’s not optimism. It’s not “things will get better.” It is a living hope—anchored in a risen Savior. Did you catch that? “Living” hope, not “dead” hope. What makes the difference? The truth of where your hope lies—the anchor of your hope. I read one time that, “Hope is not a feeling—it is a certainty anchored in the promises of God.”

3. What makes a difference for you? In the midst of suffering or hardship, or the reality of living like strangers in a godless world, how does the promise of a “living hope,” change the way you approach life?

In verse 4, our inheritance is described as: “...an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:4, ESV). In a world where everything fades, breaks, and disappoints—this hope does not.

In verse 5, Peter says, “...by God's power [we] are being guarded through faith...” (1 Peter 1:5, ESV). Think about that: our confidence doesn't rest in our strength or power but in God's power that guards us—protects us—watches over us. Even, and especially, when we go through the fire.

Here's where Peter shifts his tone. “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials....” (1 Peter 1:6, ESV)

Notice what he doesn't say. He doesn't say, “Ignore your trials.” He doesn't say, “Pretend everything is fine.” He acknowledges grief. He acknowledges pain. But he also says—you can rejoice. That sounds almost contradictory, doesn't it? How can you have joy and sorrow at the same time? Because Christian joy is not based on circumstances—it's based on Christ.

4. What truth do we discover here about experiencing joy in the middle of trials?

Peter explains that these trials serve a purpose: “So that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold...may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 1:7, ESV)

“Fire Assay”: Gold is refined by fire. Faith is refined the same way. A preacher once said, “A faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted.” (Adrian Rogers). Trials are not meant to destroy your faith—they are meant to prove it. “Faith Assay!” Trials reveal what is truly fireproof in our lives.

Peter goes on: “Though you have not seen him, you love him...you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible...” (1 Peter 1:8, ESV). This is remarkable. These believers had never seen Jesus in the flesh—yet they loved Him deeply. That's faith under fire.

Peter then zooms out to show the bigger picture in verse 10, where he says the prophets of old searched and inquired carefully about this salvation. They longed to understand what we now know. Verse 12—even angels long to look into these things. Do you realize how incredible your salvation is? We often take it for granted. But Peter says this is something generations longed to see.

Charles Spurgeon once said, “If Christ is not all to you, He is nothing to you.” (Charles Spurgeon)
Our salvation is not just a ticket to heaven—it is a relationship with the living God.

5. Though you haven’t seen Jesus, do you believe in Him? Do you seek a relationship with the living God? What does the way you respond to Him (when life gets hard) reveal about your faith?

Now Peter turns practical. “Therefore, preparing your minds for action...set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you.” (1 Peter 1:13, ESV). Faith under fire doesn’t lead to passivity—it leads to action. Peter calls them to holiness: “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance....” (1 Peter 1:14, ESV)

Holiness is not about being perfect—it’s about being set apart. Why? “Because it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’” (1 Peter 1:16, ESV). God’s character becomes our standard. And here’s the challenge: It’s easy to blend in. It’s easy to compromise. It’s easy to lower the bar when everyone else does. But Peter says—don’t. Be different. Not weird for weird’s sake—but distinct because of Christ.

Peter reminds them that they call on a Father who judges impartially. So, in v. 17, he says, “Conduct yourselves with fear throughout your time of exile” (1 Peter 1:17, ESV). This is not a cowering fear—it’s a reverent awe. Why? Because of what it cost to save you: “You were ransomed...not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ....” (1 Peter 1:18-19, ESV)

6. Your salvation was not cheap. It cost the life of the Son of God. Should that change how you live?

Finally, Peter brings it home: “Having purified your souls...love one another earnestly from a pure heart....” (1 Peter 1:22, ESV). Faith under fire produces love—not bitterness. It’s easy to become cynical

when life is hard. It's easy to withdraw. It's easy to lash out. But Peter says—lean in. Love deeply. Why? Because “You have been born again—not of perishable seed, but imperishable—through the living and abiding word of God.” (1 Peter 1:23, ESV)

Peter closes with a reminder: “All flesh is like grass... the grass withers... but the word of the Lord remains forever” (1 Peter 1:24-25, ESV). Everything in this world fades. But God's Word—and God's promises—endure.

Takeaways:

- Anchor your life in living hope. Don't build your life on circumstances. Build it on Christ.
- Expect trials—but don't waste them. God is refining your faith. Don't run from the fire—let God use it.
- Pursue holiness in a compromised culture. Stand firm. Live differently. Reflect Christ.
- Remember the cost of your salvation. Let the cross shape your priorities.
- Love deeply—even when it's hard. Especially when it's hard.

Through trials, through pressure, through fire—God is shaping you, refining you, forming you—until the image of Christ is seen in you. “Fire Assay”—Heat reveals what's really there.

Trials do not destroy genuine faith—they refine it.

Faith under fire is not easy. But it is worth it. Because at the end of it all, Peter says, it will result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. So, stand firm. Hold fast.

7. The next time the heat gets turned up in your life, what will it look like for you to trust Jesus with your trials and circumstances?