

## **A Courageous Christian Life (1 Peter 1:1-7)**

### **Introduction**

Nov 15, 1862. “The President, Commander-in-chief of the Army and Navy, desires and enjoins the orderly observance of the Sabbath by the officers and men in the military and naval service. . . . The first General Order issued by the Father of his Country after the Declaration of Independence indicates the spirit in which our institutions were founded, and should ever be defended: "The General hopes and trusts that every officer and man will endeavor to live and act as becomes a Christian soldier, defending the dearest rights and privileges of his country.” (signed) Abraham Lincoln.

Our culture, while granting liberty of religion and conscience to its citizens, has nevertheless been a Christian culture with Christian ideals, where Christianity is not simply protected but actually venerated and promoted. While this still exists in some areas, you’ll recognize that this is generally no longer the case.

In God’s providence, we are entering into a period where we will experience what most Christians in most non-Christian nations have experienced. 1. We’re grudgingly tolerated (as long as we cause no trouble), 2. we’re occasionally persecuted (when we are found in conflict with the powers that be), and 3. we’re officially marginalized outside of the official position of our institutions and culture. We’re having to learn *how* to live as lights in the darkness of this world.

### **1. Grieved by Various Trials (1:6)**

See 2:12, 3:16, 4:3-4, 3:9, 3:14, 4:15-16. God’s people in Asia Minor have been suffering “various trials,” and the verb “to suffer” is used twelve times in the book.

They’re not yet in the midst of official persecution. There isn’t any open, violent hostility, at least not officially. That kind of persecution is coming in just a few years, beginning after the burning of Rome in A.D. 64, the first official persecution by Nero.

### **2. Pressured to Conform in our Practice (1:14)**

See 2:11, 3:16, 4:1, 4:4, 5:8-9. The emphasis in 1 Peter is not, “keep the faith,” although that’s in there, 1:7 and 2:6. His exhortation time and time again is “maintain your holy distinctive life.” “Stand fast in the face of this immoral pressure to conform.” We face the same pressures to conform (see 3:3-6 on pressure about modesty / submission).

### **Application:** *Are we outwardly accepting everything?*

Many Christians are living half-hearted, less-than-holy lives. They’re compromising, and they’re defensive about it. They’re feeling the pressure to do what everybody else is doing. They’re conforming, and they’re leading other Christians to conform with them. There’s a great deal of pressure, not to leave the faith, but to forsake holiness and purity. Do you know that pressure to conform in morality, modesty, purity?

### **Conclusion:** *Illustration from early church*

Peter here sets the agenda for the pre-Constantine church. And it worked. The people maintained their relationships, they persistently did good in the face of evil, and the world was transformed. “Whenever and wherever the gospel went out, believers emphasized the priority of good works, especially works of compassion. . . . The heroes of the faith who demonstrated the grace of Christ through such deeds of kindness during the apostolic era were legion” (George Grant, *Third Time Around*, p. 26).