

SUFFERING SERVANTS AND ADVENTIST IDENTITY IN 1 PETER

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Abstract

The Epistle of 1 Peter was written to people from a gentile background. Peter underscores that these Christians were elected according to the foreknowledge of God, the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, and the sprinkling of Jesus's blood. They are called 'beloved.' Their identity has changed to becoming children of God. Their new identity was then accorded with the mission they needed to carry out, and fulfilling this mission would bring them various trials and suffering. Today, there is a tendency to believe that accepting Christ is tantamount to being exempted from suffering. However, 1 Peter presents a contrasting viewpoint. Becoming a member of the church means acknowledging and embracing suffering. The letter presents why Christians would suffer for the sake of the gospel. They would endure suffering because of Christ's example. Through a careful literary analysis of the letter, the study aims to present how 1 Peter portrays Adventist Identity. Examine how the church needs to carry out the mission from 1 Peter's perspective. The study also underscores that the suffering church is the triumphant church.

Keywords: Adventist identity, mission, suffering, obedience, and election.

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SERVOS SOFREDORES E IDENTIDADE ADVENTISTA EM 1 PEDRO

Resumo

A Epístola de 1 Pedro foi escrita para pessoas de origem gentílica. Pedro destaca que esses cristãos foram eleitos segundo a presciência de Deus, a obra santificadora do Espírito Santo e a aspersão do sangue de Jesus. Eles são chamados de "amados". Sua identidade foi transformada, tornando-se filhos de Deus. Essa nova identidade foi alinhada com a missão que precisavam cumprir, e realizar essa missão traria diversas provações e sofrimentos. Hoje, há uma tendência de acreditar que aceitar Cristo equivale a estar isento de sofrimento. Contudo, 1 Pedro apresenta uma perspectiva contrastante. Tornar-se membro da igreja significa reconhecer e aceitar o sofrimento. A carta apresenta as razões pelas quais os cristãos sofreriam por causa do evangelho. Eles suportariam o sofrimento por causa do exemplo de Cristo. Por meio de uma análise literária cuidadosa da carta, o estudo busca apresentar como 1 Pedro retrata a Identidade Adventista. Examina como a igreja precisa cumprir sua missão a partir da perspectiva de 1 Pedro. O estudo também destaca que a igreja sofredora é a igreja triunfante.

Palavras-chave: identidade adventista, missão, sofrimento, obediência e eleição.

SIERVOS SUFRIENTES E IDENTIDAD ADVENTISTA EN 1 PEDRO

Resumen

La Epístola de 1 Pedro fue escrita para personas de origen gentil. Pedro enfatiza que estos cristianos fueron elegidos según la presciencia de Dios, la obra santificadora del Espíritu Santo y la aspersión de la sangre de Jesús. Son llamados "amados". Su identidad ha cambiado, convirtiéndose en hijos de Dios. Esta nueva identidad fue alineada con la misión que necesitaban llevar a cabo, y cumplir esta misión les traería varias pruebas y sufrimientos. Hoy en día, existe una tendencia a creer que aceptar a Cristo equivale a estar exento de sufrimiento. Sin embargo, 1 Pedro presenta una perspectiva contrastante. Ser miembro de la iglesia significa reconocer y aceptar el sufrimiento. La carta explica por qué los cristianos sufrirían por el evangelio. Soportarían el sufrimiento debido al ejemplo de Cristo. A través de un análisis literario cuidadoso de la carta, el estudio busca presentar cómo 1 Pedro retrata la Identidad Adventista. Examina cómo la iglesia necesita cumplir su misión desde la perspectiva de 1 Pedro. El estudio también enfatiza que la iglesia sufriente es la iglesia triunfante.

Palabras clave: identidad adventista, misión, sufrimiento, obediencia y elección.



Introduction

The epistle of 1 Peter contributes significantly to how Christians should behave amidst persecution and suffering (Köstenberger, 1998, p. 205). The letter also highlights that these Christians find their identity in the divine—God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (1 Pet 1:1, 2) and are entrusted with the mission to witness Christ and share His sufferings (1 Pet 4:13). Today, there is a tendency to believe that accepting Christ is equivalent to being free from suffering (Guthrie, 2012).³ However, 1 Peter gives another perspective that contrasts this assumption.

Through an analysis of the letter, the present study starts by examining the identity of the *ἐκλεκτός* in 1 Peter and their mission. It also studies the Christ model to Christians. The study then examines the suffering and persecution, as argued in the letter, culminating in triumph. Lastly, it also analyses how 1 Peter informs Adventist identity and mission. Considering that the Seventh-day Adventist Church regards itself as a chosen nation at this end of time to proclaim Christ's excellencies to humanity, 1 Peter can provide a fresh meaning to its identity and mission.

The identity of the Chosen in 1 Peter

The identity of the *ἐκλεκτός* ("chosen") is stated in the opening of the letter (1 Pet 1:1-2).⁴ Peter addresses himself to those who are scattered in the regions of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia and calls them the *ἐκλεκτοί*. Four vital elements concerning these chosen believers are underlined in 1 Peter 1:2. First, they are chosen *κατὰ πρόγνωσιν θεοῦ πατρὸς* ("according to the foreknowledge of God the Father"). The preposition *κατὰ* + the acc. *πρόγνωσιν* might function as denoting the reference/respect (Wallace, 1996, p. 377), implying that these believers are chosen with reference to God's foreknowledge.⁵ Second, they are sanctified (or set apart) by the Spirit (*ἐν ἁγιασμῷ πνεύματος* [lit. "by the sanctification of the Spirit"]). The dative of means conveys the idea that it is through the Holy Spirit that these chosen are sanctified. The third and fourth elements—

³ Challenging our assumptions about suffering. available in: <https://www.verachristian.com/connecting-the-dots/challenging-our-assumptions-about-suffering>. Accessed on 02 January 2025.

⁴ Unless otherwise indicated, Greek texts used in this paper are taken from Michael W. Holmes (2010).

⁵ Doering posits that "that election is grounded in God's plan" (Doering, 2016, p. 249). Williams and Horrell argue that believers are depicted as "people whose distinctive identity and covenant relationship with God is sealed by the blood of Christ, with which they have been sprinkled." (Williams; Horrell, 2023, p. 330).



obedience and sprinkling—signal that the double accusative (*εἰς ὑπακοὴν καὶ ῥαντισμὸν*) indicates that the Holy Spirit sanctifies them to the obedience and the sprinkling of Jesus Christ’s blood.⁶ The preposition *εἰς* might convey the purpose idea, indicating that they are sanctified in order to obey and be sprinkled by His blood.⁷

The idea of the “sprinkling” of the blood is seen in the Old Testament (OT) when Moses sprinkled the blood of the covenant/seal upon the people to ratify the covenant, and this blood would help the people keep the commandment (Exod 24:7-8; see Heb 9:15-22). They would keep the commandments as a result of having been delivered (Exod 20:1-2). Similarly, Peter mentions that believers are to obey because God chose them first to be His people, and Christ’s blood ratifies their calling. The identity of the chosen is also affirmed by the full deity expressed in the texts. God the Father, the Spirit, and Jesus Christ are probably mentioned in this preliminary text to underscore the divine calling of these chosen. From this confidence of their divine appointment, these believers can witness Christ and endure hardships and persecution, a thesis Peter discusses throughout the epistle.

Peter also parallels the believers, “living stones” (*λίθοι ζῶντες*), to Christ, “a living stone” (*λίθον ζῶντα*) in 1 Peter 2:5. He highlights that these living stones (believers) “are being built” (*οἰκοδομεῖσθε*) as *οἶκος πνευματικὸς* (“spiritual house”) to perform a “holy priesthood” (*εἰς ἱεράτευμα ἅγιον*), to “offer spiritual sacrifices” (*ἀνενέγκαι πνευματικὰς θυσίας*) “acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (*εὐπροσδέκτους θεῷ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*). The present passive *οἰκοδομεῖσθε* might denote the divine passive, indicating that these believers, the living stones, are being built by God on the cornerstone (2:6), the foundation, the living stone (2:4), Jesus Christ. The present tense also indicates that being “built up” is an ongoing process (Doering, 2016, p. 254). In addition, Peter, in 2:5, employs sanctuary language (“spiritual house/temple,” “priesthood,” and “sacrifices”) to explain the identity of these believers. However, in this case, the believers are themselves a spiritual house, the spiritual sacrifices, and they need to perform the priesthood.

Elaborating on 1 Peter 2:5, v. 9a underscores the believers’ divine possession. Ὑμεῖς δὲ γένος ἐκλεκτόν, βασιλεῖον ἱεράτευμα, ἔθνος ἅγιον, λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν

⁶ Michaels points out that “to ‘obey’ was to accept the gospel and become part of a new community under a new covenant; to be sprinkled with Jesus’ blood was to be cleansed from one’s former way of living and released from spiritual slavery by the power of his death (See 1:18).” (Michaels, 1988, p. 12–13).

⁷ On different uses of this preposition (see Wallace, 1996, p. 355).



(“But you are [a] chosen people, lit., race, [a] royal priesthood, [a] holy nation, [a] people for [God’s] possession”). The following characteristics or description emphasize their identity. This description— “race,” “nation,” and “people”—alludes to the declaration God Himself gave to the Israelites through Moses in Exod 19:6:⁸ “And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”⁹ Priests were performing a holy task and needed to be holy as they would officiate their duties in a holy place where God dwelt. Similarly, the Israelites were to act as priests and seek holiness as attributed to them; they were to keep themselves away from all malice to liken the holiness of God (Lev 20:26; Deut 7:6). Peter applies this declaration to his readers to remind them of their divine appointment (1 Pet 1:15). Remind these believers to be holy would reflect the holiness of God and witness Him even amidst persecution (1 Pet 1:6),¹⁰ and this reminder would reassure God’s providence and protection.

Therefore, in 1 Peter, the believer’s identity is portrayed as grounded in God’s election. This identity is confirmed by the full-divine deity—God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Since God is holy, these believers are called to embody holiness as they have been entrusted to fulfill a sacred mission. As the subsequent section points out, the identity of God’s people in 1 Peter goes along with the mission. God’s choice for them is that they make known Him to the rest of their surroundings.

The Mission of the Chosen

The epistle of 1 Peter is a mission-oriented letter. Peter starts asserting that believers are chosen to obey Christ (1 Pet 1:1-2), and by obeying, they proclaim Him to others (1 Pet 2:9-10), which will involve suffering from which Christ Himself

⁸ Horrell points out the three designations of God’s people in 1 Peter, which were formerly attributed to the Israelites, indicating that these newly Christ’s followers have taken “the possessions and identity of the people of Israel” (Horrell, 2013, p. 142; see p. 152). Williams and Horrell also highlight that “the author depicts the letter’s recipients as people with a formerly Gentile identity who have now taken on, through their commitment to Christ, the identity of the people of Israel” (Williams; Horrell, 2023, p. 212; see p. 214).

⁹ Unless otherwise indicated, All Bible references are taken from the New American Standard Bible (NASB). Beentjes, commenting on Exod 19:6, emphasized that “Israel’s existence is not in splendid isolation, but is explicitly related to the other nations and the whole earth” and was indebted to portray God’s light to neighboring nations (see Beentjes, 2006, p. 9).

¹⁰ These Christians faced persecution not because they were a threat to the political system; they were “reviled for their allegiance to Christ.” (Horrell, 2013, p. 182). Stenschke argues that the new identity these believers was precarious, and as such, they needed to be prepared to face atrocities and persecutions (see Stenschke, 2009, p. 115; Villiers, 1975, p. 64).



endured (1 Pet 2:21-24). They are also to emulate Christ and share His sufferings (1 Pet 4:12-14). Their loyalty to Him culminates in being granted eternal glory (1 Pet 5:10). This mission is underlined in 1 Peter 2:9b (*ὅπως τὰς ἀρετὰς ἐξαγγείλητε τοῦ ἐκ σκότους ὑμᾶς καλέσαντος εἰς τὸ θαυμαστὸν αὐτοῦ φῶς* (“So that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of the darkness to His marvelous light”). The first half of the verse points out the chosen, belonging to God, and the second states the goal of the calling. This purpose is indicated by the *ὅπως* (“in order to [that]”), for the believers to be called *ἐκλεκτός*.¹¹ That is, they are “chosen” in order to “proclaim” (*ἐξαγγείλητε*) the “excellencies” or “merits” (*ἀρετὰς*) of the one who singled them out of other nations.¹² These excellencies allude to the work of God accomplished through death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Pet 1:3). This redemption becomes a “living hope” for Christians, who are also indebted to proclaim it.

Peter’s missionary statement can be observed in the prepositional clause *ἐκ σκότους ... εἰς τὸ θαυμαστὸν αὐτοῦ φῶς* (“from darkness... to His marvelous light”). In this context, the preposition *ἐκ* denotes separation and contrast between the former and later life. The believers were called from darkness, which implies an unholy life in which they lived, to the marvelous light, which points to life after receiving the light—Christ (John 8:12; see Ps 119:105). This conversion marks a new life characterized by self-devotion to proclaim the merits of Christ. The former life to which Peter alludes was the life characterized by *ἐπιθυμίαις* (“lusts”) performed *ἐν τῇ ἀγνοίᾳ* (“in the ignorance,” 1 Pet 1:14; 2:1; 4:2-4).¹³

In 1 Peter 2:11, the apostle also “urges” (*παρακαλῶ*) them “to abstain” (*ἀπέχεσθαι*) from the “fleshly lusts” (*τῶν σαρκικῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν*). The present infinitive *ἀπέχεσθαι* conveys the idea of a continuous, daily abstention from these

¹¹ Abbott-Smith argues that *ὅπως* denotes a “purpose or design (in which the original idea of modality has been merged).” (Abbott-Smith, 1922, p. 321; see Bauer *et al.*, 2001, p. 718, entry *ὅπως*).

¹² Bauer *et al.* points out that the noun *ἀρετή* can express a “manifestation of divine power, miracle.” It can also be rendered as “praise.” (Bauer *et al.*, 2001, p. 130, entry *ἀρετή*). Reicke argues that “to proclaim the glorious deeds” signifies “the realization of the gospel in daily living” (Reicke, 1978, p. 93).

¹³ Bechtler, however, contends that the lists of vices in 1 Pet 4:3–4 shouldn’t be taken as facts and “even as correlating evidence,” characterizing the former life of Peter’s audience. They should be viewed as reflecting the stereotyped vice list of Jewish, Christian, and Hellenistic moral exhortation” instead (Bechtler, 1998, p. 69). Williams seems to agree with Bechtler arguing that “this list of previous vices is not introduced simply for the sake of demarcating proper behavior from improper behavior. the reason why the author brings up this issue is because the readers had stopped participating in certain activities and as a result had begun to face the social repercussions” (Williams, 2012, p. 241). In contrast, Stenschke argues that “the futile ways are those of ignorance of God, of pagan religion and morality” (Stenschke, 2009, p. 108).



fleshly passions. These “lusts” must be fought against, with the help of the Holy Spirit, for the gospel that these Christians bear and need to proclaim to be well received. The ones proclaiming the gospel must live and interiorize it before its recipients do so. Stenschke argues that “the people of God are to share their faith by conduct and words” (Stenschke, 2009, p. 117).

In addition, 1 Peter 2:12 points out four elements: behavior, good deeds, observation, and God’s glorification that these believers must cultivate to fulfill God’s mission, and each of them is discussed in turn. The verb governing these elements is the present participle ἔχοντες (“have”).¹⁴ The first element is behavior. The outward behavior and practices have an impact on the mission. As such, Peter instructs these believers to have their behavior mannered among the Gentiles, for their way of living can either bring these Gentiles to accuse them falsely or truthfully. Good conduct in Christ is a way to silence false accusations and slanders (1 Pet 3:16). “God wants to silence the foolish speech of detractors through the good deeds of Christians” (Williams, 2014, p. 179). Good behavior is also a means to win people to God without a word (1 Pet 3:1-2). Peter urges his readers to keep their conduct intact to aim for the new heaven and earth (2 Pet 3:11-13).

The second element is good works. Performing good deeds is a demonstration of the grace that one obtained through Christ. It is a responsive way to manifest the faith one has in Him. Peter points out examples that set out the significance of good works, though not explicitly stated but implied. To the suffering servants, he argues that they need to endure that harsh treatment even though they are doing what is right (1 Pet 2:20). He stresses such obedience and perseverance probably in the context of mission. By enduring these hardships, they exemplify Christ to their masters, who, in the long run, will likely be won for Christ. Women, as also the bondservants of God, are encouraged to be such to their unbeliever husbands (1 Pet 3:1-2). From their Christ-centered life, exemplified and lived in their daily life, they will win over their husbands to Christ.

¹⁴ It is a debate about the nature of the participle ἔχοντες in the text. Some argue that it functions as an imperatival participle (see Elliott, 2005, p. 169, 173; Selwyn, 1955, p. 37); Though Michaels seems not to agree with the imperatival use of this participle, he states that “by virtue of that same link it not only functions imperatively but carries the main thrust of Peter’s command” (Michaels, 1988, p. 117). This idea of imperatival force comes from the idea that the participle might be of an “attendant circumstance,” which William Horell refutes suggesting that the participle should be taken as “denoting means or, more likely, result” (Williams; Horrell, 2023, p. 703).



Third, observation is expressed in the present participle *ἐποπτεύοντες*, which means “to pay close attention to, watch, observe” (Bauer *et al.*, 2001, p. 387, entry *ἐποπτεύω*). That is, the unbelievers pay close attention to “the good deeds” (*τῶν καλῶν ἔργων*) of the believers, and these good works form a basis for the non-believers to praise God.¹⁵ However, if these believers disobey the word and conduct themselves in lust, malice, and other ungodly practices, their mission to the Gentiles will not bear any fruitful results. It will only result in blaspheming God and His rejection. In contrast, Peter wishes for them to be the source of which these Gentiles come to acquaint with God. In 1 Peter 4:9, the apostle Peter portrays the same idea, indicating to these believers to “be hospitable” (*φιλόξενοι*) to one another.

Fourth, God’s glorification. The point of performing such deeds is that God may be glorified through Christ in all things (1 Pet 4:11). The mission is not about the one carrying out it but about God and the work accomplished through Christ. Believers are to be mindful not to bring shame to God but to honor Him through their way of living and actions. Nevertheless, they must model Christ as a living example to be able to do so.

Christ the Living Model

Peter portrays Jesus Christ as the model for His followers. For instance, 1 Peter 2:21 affirms, *εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ ἐκλήθητε, ὅτι καὶ Χριστὸς ἔπαθεν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν, ὑμῖν ὑπολιμπάνων ὑπογραμμὸν ἵνα ἐπακολουθήσητε* (“For you were called to this, and because Christ suffered on your behalf, living for you [an] example so that you would follow”). Runge argues that the demonstrative pronoun *τοῦτο* could function as pointing forward to signal something significant in the clause (Runge, 2010, p. 43-44.). In this case, the pronoun would point to Christ’s suffering on behalf of the sinners, whom the recipients of Peter’s letter are part of. Peter also uses the verb *ἐπακολουθέω* to convey the idea of “following.” This verb highlights the idea of using “someone as a model for doing someth[ing]” (Bauer *et al.*, 2001, p. 358, entry *ἐπακολουθέω*). Christ is set as an example for them to follow as He is the ultimate

¹⁵ Reickie points out an important note arguing that “here, the epistle’s remarkable theory of missions is expressed. The gospel will be promulgated to the extent that the believers everywhere show such extraordinary patience and loyalty, in spite of the ill will of the non-Christians, that every observer will be astonished and converted” (Reicke, 1978, p. 94).



role model for mission and self-denial (Phil 2:5-7). Like Paul, who points his readers to imitate Christ, who gave himself to them (Eph 5:1-2), Peter similarly shows them who to emulate—Jesus Christ, their redeemer.

Peter describes Christ's characteristics in 1 Peter 2:22-25 by echoing the OT. He uses Isaiah 53:4-9 to underline Christ's selfless sacrifice to redeem humanity. He argues that Christ was sinless in His actions; no deceit was found in His mouth (1 Pet 2:22). Though He was "abusively insulted," He did not "retaliate," but instead, He submitted himself to the righteous judge (1 Pet 2:23). Such a way of life is what Peter underscores to His addressee to imitate, for "Christian ... [who] follows the pattern of Christ's own sinless suffering ... will also be greatly rewarded" (Stenschke, 2009, p. 19).

The idea of suffering for what is right is punctuated in 1 Peter 2:20; 3:17-18. For example, 1 Peter 3:17 posits, "For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong." The text starts with the particle *γὰρ*, which supports what has been said previously (Runge, 2010, p. 37). The immediate context (v. 16) indicates that Peter points out to the believers to keep, lit., have, a good conscience (exemplified in their behaviors in Christ) that when they are abusively accused, their oppressors will be put to shame. 1 Peter 3:17 then reinforces this thesis, stating the necessity of doing and suffering for what is good, not otherwise. The exhortation consists of not grumbling or retaliating when falsely accused, insulted, ill-treated, or persecuted but rather enduring it patiently as Christ did. It also emphasizes the element of "God's will." Believers should recall that when they undergo suffering, it is because, sometimes, God willed it to be so (1 Pet 4:19). In addition, 1 Peter 3:18 also commences with the same particle, *γὰρ*, elucidating the rationale why Christ's disciples should imitate His deeds. The text says, "For Christ also suffered for sins once for all time, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit" (NASB). Christ once experienced the suffering they had to face. His hardships and sufferings that led to His death were to rescue the unjust and bring them to God. Thus, as a living testimony, Christ is a role model for Christians to emulate (1 Pet 4:1).



Suffering Servants, Persecution, and Triumph

Suffering and persecution are prominent themes in the epistle of 1 Peter (Williams, 2012, p. 3). The verb “to suffer” is referred to 11 times in the letter, and four times, the noun “suffering” is mentioned in the epistle, starting right at the beginning. 1 Peter 1:6-7 argues that Peter’s readers rejoice for a little while, for they have been “distressed in various trials” (*λυπηθέντες ἐν ποικίλοις πειρασμοῖς* [v. 6]). The verb translated as “distressed” is *λυπέω*, which indicates the state of becoming sorrowful or distressed (see Bauer *et al.*, 2001, p. 604, entry *λυπέω*). Peter illustrates this proof by a gold that is refined through fire. The faith proofed by trials and sufferings is a resilient faith, which proves steadfastness and endurance. Such faith results in “praise and glory and honor” (*ἔπαινον καὶ δόξαν καὶ τιμὴν*) “at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (*ἐν ἀποκαλύψει Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*). Suffering, in this case, is associated with positive results. Peter might have wanted his readers not to concentrate on their present situation but on the future, at the appearance of Christ, where their faith and loyalty are recompensated (1 Pet 1:9).

The suffering idea is also mentioned in 1 Peter 2:21; 4:14. The apostle Peter claims that his readers have been called to share Christ’s sufferings. The sufferings of Christians echo Jesus’s own words in Matthew 5:11: “Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me” (Matt 5:12; 10:22-23; 24:9; Luke 21:12-17). He calls those who suffer injustice *μακάριοι* (“blessed”) because of His name.¹⁶ Peter argues the same when he states in 1 Peter 3:14, “But even if you suffer” (*ἀλλ’ εἰ καὶ πάσχοιτε*) for the sake of righteousness, you are “blessed” (*μακάριοι*). Such sufferings and persecution happen to them because God’s Spirit is upon them (1 Pet 4:14). It then implies that the sufferings of Christians can be a blessing for themselves and others. For themselves because these trials, sufferings, and hardships raffinate their faith and strengthen

¹⁶ Argues that Christians were being persecuted prior to the time of Nero, in his time, and the reign of the emperor Domitia (see Williams, 2012, p. 210–226). The persecution of Christ followers will continue “during the second and third centuries CE, as we have demonstrated, adherence to the Christian faith was considered to be a punishable offense” (p. 222). See also Horrell, 2013, p. 190. Williams and Horell argue also that the issue of persecution is “not from the addressees’ socio-legal status prior to conversion, but solely from their socio-spiritual status consequent on their conversion” (Williams; Horrell, 2023, p. 223, emphasis in original).



their relationships and loyalty to God, and for others because they can become a way to witness Christ to unbelievers.¹⁷

Peter also refers to suffering as an object of rejoicing. He states it in 1 Peter 4:12-19. He starts by affirming (in v. 12) to his readers not to “be astonished” (*μὴ ξενίζεσθε*) because of the “fiery ordeal” (*πυρώσει*) which was among them. The noun *πύρωσις* signals “an intense degree of some painful occurrence or experience.”¹⁸ This noun implies the severe persecution or pain these Christians were undergoing. However, Peter points out to them not to be surprised as though a strange thing has come upon them. Instead, given that they “share Christ’s sufferings” (*κοινωνεῖτε τοῖς τοῦ Χριστοῦ παθήμασιν*), they are to *χαίρετε* (“rejoice”).¹⁹ It thus suggests that the focus is no longer on the hardships and persecutions they face but on the victory that Christ provides for them instead. The rejoicing is to take place in the present time and future at the revelation of Christ’s glory (1 Pet 4:13).

Additionally, believers are also to be sober in their way of living so as not to give an opportunity for the accusers to have ground to do so. Peter states that these believers had to scrutinize themselves, making sure that “none of you [them] suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler” (1 Pet 4:15). They were to witness a gospel that could not be compatible with the abovementioned evil behavior. Nevertheless, if they were to suffer *ὡς Χριστιανός* (“as Christian”), they were not to be ashamed but to glorify God (1 Peter 4:16).²⁰ He then ends the pericope in v. 19 by emphasizing that “those who suffer according to the will of God are to entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.” The reliance on the faithful Creator is a prerequisite to withstand or endure suffering and doing what is right.

Sufferings and persecution end with triumph. 1 Peter 5:8 seems to attest that the *διάβολος* (devil) is the agent behind the afflictions of the believers. However, 1 Peter 5:10 climaxes the discussion on suffering, saying *ὁ δὲ θεὸς πάσης χάριτος, ὁ*

¹⁷ Stenschke underscores that “suffering is an inevitable ingredient to Christian existence that is closely linked to the new status of Christians and to the calling they have as believers to proclaim their faith by conduct and word” (Stenschke, 2009, p. 126).

¹⁸ Bauer *et al.* points out that “in this sense the focus is on the degree of intensity of the trial” (Bauer *et al.*, 2001, p. 900, entry *πύρωσις*).

¹⁹ Williams and Horrell points out that “the reason why believers are expected to persevere in the midst of trials is because their situation parallels the experience of Christ” (Williams; Horrell, 2023, p. 814).

²⁰ Christianity from the time of Nero was illegal, and “those who refused to renounce Christianity are [were] executed” (Horrell, 2013, p. 184).



καλέσας ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν αἰώνιον αὐτοῦ δόξαν ἐν Χριστῷ, ὀλίγον παθόντας αὐτὸς καταρτίσει, στηρίξει, σθενώσει, θεμελιώσει (“But having suffered for a little [while], the God of all grace, the one who called you to His eternal glory in Christ will himself perfect, confirm, strengthen, [and] establish [you]”). Peter closes the letter by recapitulating what he stated in the introduction of the epistle, claiming that believers are to obtain “an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you [them]” (1 Pet 1:4, NASB, emphasis in original).²¹ This hope permits these Christians to focus on what God has prepared for them rather than be overwhelmed with pain that lasts for a while.

Adventist Identity and Mission in 1 Peter’s Perspective

The Seventh-day Adventist Church believes to have been elected by God to proclaim His excellencies in the last times (1 Pet 2:9-10; see Rev 12:17). They carry the gospel, which consists of bringing humanity to worship the creator, honor Him, and be prepared for His imminent coming (Rev 14:7-12). Drawing cues from Peter’s perspective, Adventists are to model Christ on how to carry out His gospel (1 Pet 2:21). In 1 Peter, the identity of the believers goes along with the proclamation of the gospel (mission). Believers are chosen to obey Christ (1 Pet 1:2), proclaim His goodness to the nation who are still in darkness (1 Pet 2:9-10), examine their conduct, behaviors, and way of living so as not to disgrace God’s name among unbelievers, but instead, bring them to Him through their lifestyle (1 Pet 2:14). This underscores Peter’s emphasis on loving others from the heart and putting hypocrisy aside (1 Pet 1:22). Similarly, the Seventh-day Adventists are called to witness Christ in the same way. In fact, it has succeeded in this aspect, primarily through public evangelism. However, the second facet of witnessing, i.e., proclaiming Christ through decent behavior and love for another, appears to fade. Fitzsimmons argues, “Beliefs don’t matter if they take precedence over being ‘lovable and loving Christians.’ Our beliefs are so far removed from the average person’s everyday life that ‘unconditional love’ must be the ‘be all and end all’” (Fitzsimmons, 2018). One

²¹ Williams and Horrell also aver that “what brings comfort to this marginalised and persecuted group of Christians is not simply that God foresaw their social alienation, but that their status as elect strangers is part of a proactive divine purpose that culminates in their vindication and salvation” (Williams; Horrell, 2023, p. 321).



may hold true light, but as long as this light is not exemplified in their daily life, it is highly likely that it may not have an impact on others either.

Christ must be lived and modeled. However, living a Christ-like life comes with a cost. It can result in hardships, suffering, and persecution. Köstenberger states, “Peter’s letter offers ‘an appropriate as well as a realistic perspective on the mission task in the context of persecution.’” (Köstenberger, 1998, p. 205). Believers in 1 Peter are persecuted and forced to experience hardships and sufferings, and so are today’s Christians in general (Vine, 2016, p. 36-38), and some members of the Seventh-day Adventists in particular (McChesney, 2022). However, 1 Peter offers a new perspective on how true Christ’s disciples should view persecution. They are to see these sufferings as an opportunity to share in Christ’s sufferings and witness Him even when their life are endangered. They are to place their hope in eternal glory that God will grant them through Christ Jesus after they have suffered for a little while (1 Pet 5:10), and in this sense, they become triumphant. Vine, positing about the persecution and sufferings that await Adventists in the future, argues,

Adventists in general, and Western Adventists in particular, must recognize and internalize the reality that the message entrusted to God’s end-time remnant compels us to prepare for persecution by learning the deep spiritual lessons from the Persecuted Church of the 21st Century, and to understand that the freedoms currently enjoyed in the West are merely a temporary and transient stepping stone to overwhelming legal, social, and financial pressures seeking to either force Adventists to comply with wider social mores, or be closed down as a public institution and as a public voice (Vine, 2016, p. 46).

Keeping an Adventist identity amidst suffering and persecution requires self-discipline in scrutinizing one’s ethics here and now. In fact, Adventist beliefs should impact Adventists’ lifestyle. As Doukhan puts it, “The way we relate to each other, the way we forgive each other, the way we eat and drink, the way we work, the way we make our choices should be inspired and nurtured by our eschatology” (Doukhan, 2015, p. 35). The distinctiveness Seventh-day Adventists hold among evangelicals should prompt them to strive to maintain their identity intact and exemplify their faith in their daily life so as to become a triumphant *ekklēsia* after enduring persecution either in the present or in the future.



Conclusion

The identity of Christians in 1 Peter resides in God the Father, Christ Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. They are elected to obedience and sprinkling of Christ's blood. In fact, Peter parallels these believers to Christ, calling them living stones. Their identity is also grounded in a tripartite identification that these believers are God's race, nation, and people. As argued, Peter reapplies these characteristics that portrayed Israel as God's people to His addressees as a way to affirm their divine appointment. This election, however, goes along with the mission to proclaim Christ's excellencies and merits to others. Fulfilling such a noble mission would require them to disassociate from lusts that could hinder its success. Doing such, they would watch out for their behavior and perform good deeds so that the Gentiles would observe them and glorify God. In addition, in carrying out this mission, they are encouraged to emulate Christ's example and share in His sufferings. Only by looking up to Him and having a constant desire to model Him could they endure suffering and persecution. Indeed, a call to be Christ's disciple is a call to share in His sufferings. In Peter's perspective, however, suffering should not be a basis for grumbling and discontentment but rather an object of rejoicing, knowing that Christ's faithful disciples receive eternal glory after suffering for a little while.

Such identity and mission corroborate the Seventh-day Adventist church's one. The identity of Seventh-day Adventists resides in God's commission. This *ekklesia* has been entrusted with the mission of preparing humanity for Christ's second coming, and fulfilling this task demands modeling Jesus's example. As Peter underscores, this church needs not to focus on the tribulations, hardships, sufferings, and persecutions that it may go through but on the glory and inheritance to be granted to the faithful ones at the revelation of Christ (1 Pet 1:4; 5:10).

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