

III. I Peter in Biblical Perspective
The Elect in the Exile
“The Elect Exiles, Part 2”
I Peter 1:1–2
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This is God’s Word and God’s Word is the truth. I Peter 1:1–2 says [1] *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, [2] according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may this His Word be preached for you.

This is a letter, inspired by a human author, named Peter to a very specific group of people and to that people to us but this is a first century letter. First century letters had a number of marks to them as they were framed a certain way. So it is with I Peter. I Peter has three identifying features as a first century letter. One is that the author identifies himself which was required then. Two, the author identifies his audience as the recipients of his letter. Thirdly, the author offers some initial words of his disposition of encouragement. Peter identifies himself as an Apostle of Jesus Christ. He identifies his audience in these provinces as the elect exiles according to the foreknowledge of God the Father in the sanctification of the Spirit, for the obedience to Jesus and for the sprinkling with His blood. Then Peter gives this wonderful piece of disposition and encouragement by saying ‘may grace and peace be multiplied to you.’

This is our third study on this opening paragraph of the book of I Peter. I have written a lot of letters in my life and ministry. My guess is that no one out there with my letters is spending four weeks looking at the opening paragraph but we are doing that with this one. I hope that you will see why as we get to the conclusion of it and I hope it’s helpful to you because what we are grasping in this opening paragraph will drastically affect everything that he writes later and how we understand it, apply it, embrace it and implement it.

He starts by giving us these identifying marks. Identity is important. When you go to the airport they always ask for your identification. They look at you and then your identification to make sure it’s you. Now when you travel internationally they have a system to identify you by your fingerprints and they are matching it up with your identity. We are in a society today that is constantly working toward this issue of identity. In our rebellion against the sovereignty of God we decide on the sovereign self and we identify ourselves the way we want to.

Actually there is a God who identifies you through creation, redemption and providence. By creation He identifies you the way He makes you – male or female, created in the family He gave you with the genetic structure that you have. In redemption He identifies you through the redeeming work of Jesus Christ and then in providence He identifies with the way that He is working in your life as He matures you and develops you but we tend to say ‘no’ to this. We will identify the way we want to so we’ll identify ourselves any way we want to look at our gender or by our sexual behavior or by ‘isms’ like racism, nationalism and all of those things. We do that in rebellion against God. God says that our identity is what He has made us. We can struggle against it all we want to but it is who we are.

This past week I did a segment on 'ask the pastor' on our special needs ministry and I love that ministry. These are kids who face autism, Asperger's, down syndrome and other disabilities. The love I have for this all started with a boy named Petey who had down syndrome. The very week I did this segment came the same time that Vestavia High School coaches and football team and the Briarwood High School coaches and football team gave an opportunity to a wonderful young boy with down syndrome to run the ball and score a touchdown for his team. My favorite moment was when both teams just collapsed on top of him and they were all celebrating. I know it was a great moment for him but also for those kids and they will never forget that. Although that young boy doesn't go to our church he has been ministered to through the Briarwood camps ministry for many years.

On my segment I was responding to that silly but saddening, sobering and heartbreaking headline that said "Iceland eradicates down syndrome." They didn't eradicate them they just killed them. They have killed 97 percent of them. When they find out the child in the womb has down syndrome they abort them, they kill them. France does this to 77 percent of them and the US does 67 percent. They are not curing anything. They are just killing it. That gave me the occasion to do this segment and then all this happened at this high school football game. I think it was the mother of the boy with down syndrome who said "It was so wonderful that everybody got the chance to meet Jake who God blessed with an extra chromosome." What a way to say it! The God who made the seeing, the blind, the ones who speak, the ones who don't speak, the ones who hear and don't hear, as He is specially designing all of us – identity.

Peter gives his identity as the Apostle of Jesus Christ. Then he gives the identity of his audience and there is something we need to hear in that about our identity. He is speaking to them but through them to us. So we asked the question how does a man named Simon, brash and tempestuous, called by Christ as a Disciple, become Peter, bold and humble, sent by Christ as an Apostle? When God saves us He breaks us to make us in order to use us for His glory and grace. So to save us and prepare us He breaks us but the objective is not brokenness. So how will God use Peter? He says he is no longer Simon but Peter, for now he is called as a Disciple and when God is through with him He will send him as an Apostle for Him and that is how Peter will glorify Him for the rest of his life to eternity. That is Peter.

What about his audience? For the audience Peter gives two identifying marks and that is they are elect exiles. In the last study we took time looking at the word exiles and it can be translated stranger, sojourner, pilgrim or alien. When you take all of those words God is telling us that if we are saved (elect) then we are an elect exile, meaning a resident alien where He saved us. This is how we are to view ourselves when God's grace takes us from the kingdoms of this world and the kingdom of darkness and brings us into the Kingdom of God in His saving grace. In the next five chapters Peter will give us a traveler's guide for a pilgrim in this world.

He gives us our spiritual citizenship and our physical citizenship. The singular supreme way we identify ourselves as a Christian means that we are in the Kingdom of God. The King has come, died on the cross, set me free from the kingdoms of sin, of darkness, brought me into the Kingdom of light so now my citizenship is in the Kingdom of God. Of the dispersion is a technical term that means something in the Old Testament that Peter was familiar with and is using. It is known as the Diaspora, the dispersion, which refers to God's covenant people under the hand of God's judgment and is used 12 times in the Old Testament. God's people were dispersed out from their nation and Promised Land into the nations of the world under the hand of God's judgment. God did this two times. One time was when He used Assyria to disperse the

ten northern tribes and then a century and a half later He used Babylon to disperse the two southern tribes.

Now that we are in the New Testament, the dispersion is not there as the evidence of God's hand of judgment but it's there as God's hand of salvation and mission. In other words, He goes into the nations of the world to save His people, brings them into the Kingdom of God and then leaves them in those nations. The New Covenant dispersion is the evidence of God having saved you from the nations, putting you into the Royal Nation and sending you into the nation where He saved you into all the nations of the world. It is a statement of the hand of God's salvation by grace and His commission to take the Gospel of the glory of grace to this world. That is your spiritual citizenship from those who are elect exiles.

You also have a physical citizenship. The physical citizenship of those Peter is writing to is in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia or for us the country we are living in right now. Augustine would say there is the city of God and the city of man. I reside in a nation. I live in the United States of America as a citizen but when I was converted I now have a citizenship that trumps that citizenship. My citizenship now is in the Kingdom of God. I still have my papers, passport and all those things for here but I identify myself as a citizen in the Kingdom of God. Peter does that here with these people that he lists and the provinces he lists are in the order of the trade route that Silas likely would have travelled from Rome when he delivered the letter to all these people. The five provinces that are mentioned here are today known as Turkey. He is telling these people they have a new homeland, a new citizenship which is the supreme identity they have and because they are an elect exile they are now set free to be an ambassador of that kingdom into the Kingdom where He saved them and from that Kingdom into the kingdoms of this world. You will never be free to be an ambassador to the kingdoms of this world until you see your citizenship in the Kingdom of heaven.

I remember the first time I went to Uganda. When I arrived there I was going to be living there for a short period of time and they were still in the middle of a war with machine gun fire every night. We had guards with us that carried us everywhere. They took me to the United States Embassy in Uganda and said 'if something happens do whatever you have to do to get here because you don't belong in our nation. We are giving you residency to be here to preach for this period of time but you need to get here if something happens.' I was a citizen of the United States but a resident alien in Uganda. That is how I see myself here where I am a resident alien with papers of citizenship in my country but my ultimate papers are that I am a citizen of the Kingdom of God. As a citizen of the Kingdom of God I am a resident alien here that frees me up as an ambassador for Jesus Christ to my nation and from this nation to all the nations of the world.

The Apostle Paul says in Philippians 3:20, *[20] But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,* yet three times he claims his rights as a Roman citizen. Now there are multiple reasons why he did that which I won't go into in this study yet the supremacy of his allegiance was the Kingdom of God. That is why we are always remembering that by God's grace we don't know how to live for Christ until we understand who we are in Christ. To be exiles we have to understand who we are in Christ and we are elect. You can't live for Christ to do what Christ has called you to do until you understand who you are in Christ by His grace. So what has He called you to be? He has called you to be a resident alien. Why are you a resident alien? It is because you are in Christ and Christ is in you and you are the elect of God. An exile is who you are for Christ by His grace and elect is who you are in Christ by His grace.

If we are the elect and reside in a nation as resident aliens then how did we get to be elect? Peter tells us exactly how it happens in I Peter 1:2. He will tell us three things that tell us how we became the elect of God. One is we became elect *according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*. The word foreknowledge is a crucial word. It is made up of two Greek words. The first word is ginóskó which means to know. Foreknowledge is something God knew beforehand but it's not something but someone God knew beforehand. God knew you before you existed. The word 'know' is interesting. When we think of know we may just think of facts but the word 'know' in the Bible means to have an accurate, intimate, personal knowledge of someone.

Peter used this same word in his first sermon after the ascension of Jesus. He is preaching to the people at Pentecost. He says this in Acts 2:22–23, [22] *“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— [23] this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.* This is saying that before God's Son came into this world to accomplish God's definite plan which was to go to the cross to atone for our sin, rising from the dead triumphant over all His enemies for our salvation, God knew His Son. It is a statement of a loving relationship.

It is a word we use to talk about marital intimacy. Abraham knew Sarah. This is not talking about a physical description of her but he knew her in a way that resulted in their son Isaac. It is speaking of the personal, intimate relationship in a marriage. It is the fact that they loved each other in a covenant of marriage with intimacy and carefulness.

So what does it mean that God foreknows you? Before you existed in the covenant of grace God chose to love you before you existed personally and intimately. This is why Paul says in Ephesians 1:4b–5, [4b] *In love [5] he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.* One might think this means foresight where He foresaw what I would do when a preacher would preach to me and then He predestined me to eternal life. First of all if Peter and Paul wanted to use foresight they had a word for that but they didn't use that. They used foreknowledge. He doesn't say *what* he foresaw but *whom* He foreknew.

Romans 8:28–30 says [28] *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. [29] For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. [30] And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

Don't you see this? The elect of God by the grace of God by the love of God, before you ever existed in eternity past God chose to love you. It is not because of what He saw you would do for that would make God a respecter of persons. God didn't choose to love us because He knew what we would do but He chose to love us in spite of what He would know we would do. He chose to love you personally from all eternity – the electing grace of God. Then He decreed through the moral agencies of men (preachers, prayers, parents, friends) to bring you to a place where you would freely come from death unto life where He would set you free by His determined power and before you ever existed He decreed that He was going to do that. Then from eternity past you then step into time. Whom He foreknew He predestined and whom He predestined He called you as you step in time and whom He called who is still in time He justified you. Now we step into eternity future where whom He justified He also glorified.

Notice, that God loses nobody. The same of whom He starts off with in eternity is the same He ends up with in eternity.

Whom He **foreknew** He **predestined**, whom He predestined He **called**, whom He called He **justified** and whom He justified He **glorified**. Those five golden links are unbreakable. Why are they unbreakable? It is because it depends on God's sovereign grace and not our fickleness. That is where it begins and ends and that's where it begins into all eternity. We are the elect of God according to the foreknowledge of God the Father who is at work within our lives. So before you ever existed God chose to know you intimately. He chose to love you within the covenant grace when you had nothing, no merits, no inclinations and nothing you were going to do that God needed but you needed Him. Here is the only case in your life that you will ever experience – unmerited, undeserving, pure love. We will make all kinds of efforts at it as parents but there will never be any pure gift to you of undeserved, unstoppable, unmerited love than what the Father chose in eternity past before you ever existed to give to you to bring you from death unto life.

Secondly, according to I Peter 1:2, we are the elect of God *in the sanctification of the Spirit*. Many times when we use the term sanctification we are normally referring to the process whereby we are growing in and by the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, because of the love of God that is at work in our life. That is not what this is. While many times sanctification does refer to this process, the foundational use of the word sanctification is to set apart for sacred use. So the Father who has loved you before you existed has now sent the Spirit who sets you apart from sin to the sacred relationship with Jesus Christ. This is what He does for His people. So the electing love of the Father is then carried out with infallibility as the Spirit brings all whom the Father loves from their profane existence to the sacred existence of being set apart for God's glory through His grace in Christ.

Thirdly, we are elect because of two things in Jesus Christ. One the love of the Father and the sanctifying work of the Spirit is at work in you so that you are now identified *for the obedience to Christ* and two you are identified *for the sprinkling clean of the blood of Christ*. So the elect of God will be identified with a lifestyle, not of perfect, but with evidenced obedience to Jesus. This is not what makes them elect. It just evidences their election. They not only have a lifestyle but they have a life status. Their lifestyle is they have been set apart for obedience to Jesus. Their life status is they are sprinkled clean with the blood of Jesus.

In the Old Testament there are three kinds of baptisms – with water, with oil and with blood. He refers to one of the baptisms where the priest would dip the hyssop into the blood and sprinkle it on the objects that he would declare clean which meant they were consecrated and set apart. The Father has loved you, the Holy Spirit has set you apart and the blood of Jesus sprinkles you clean. The evidence is your desire to obey this Jesus who is your Savior and Lord. That is the identity of the elect as Peter unfolds it in the text.

Now I want to give you some life takeaways. This text sets up for you a two-fold functional framework. One is that as we study this epistle you will see who (the author) is writing this in the power of the Holy Spirit which is Peter, an Apostle of Jesus Christ. So when Peter tells us to always be ready to give an account of the hope that is within us and to do it with gentleness. This is the same guy that pulled out a sword wanting to cut someone's head off. That wasn't very gentle but brash and tempestuous Simon became bold but humble Peter. We will read what he says through who he is, what he has done and where he has been. When he tells us to be ready to suffer and not be surprised by it, this is the Peter who suffered serving

Jesus, put in prison, whipped and would die a death that if was told wouldn't follow Me (Him). Now this is the Peter telling us to be ready to suffer.

This Peter tells us to humble ourselves under the hand of God and is the same Peter who was humbled under the hand of Jesus in which I gave 16 accounts of this. There are more than that which I didn't even get to. This was the same Peter who was humbled by Paul in the presence of others when Peter began to walk away from the Gospel of grace. So when he talks about humility we know who it is who is talking about humility. When he tells us we love Him who we have not yet seen this is the Peter who has seen Him. When he tells us we'll something called the inexpressible glory of God this is the Peter that was up on the Mount of Transfiguration and saw the glory of God with Moses and Elijah. When Peter tells us to humble ourselves, this is the one who was privileged to be at the forefront of healings, at the transfiguration, a personal appearance with Jesus after His resurrection, a personal seminar with Jesus at the Sea of Galilee after the resurrection yet this is the Peter who calls himself *an* Apostle of Jesus Christ.

The second framework we have is that as we study it we'll see he gives us a pilgrim's travel guide of how resident aliens live. We will continue to remember this as we read through I Peter because of what he tells us and it will show us how to know how we are to live in this world. I love the illustration R.C. Sproul uses as he was travelling through Hungary and Romania when they were breaking away from the Soviet Union. Every time you crossed the border guards would come in talk to you saying 'we can't tell you what will happen or promise you safety.' When the train R.C. and his wife were travelling on came to a stop a guard entered their room on the train and said 'Papers!' R.C. handed him all the identification he had on him and the guard looked at them and then said 'Open your suitcase!' Right on top as R.C. opened his suitcase was his Bible. The guards looked at the suitcase and then the papers and one of the guards said 'You're not a citizen of the United States of America.' R.C. said 'Yes sir I am, let me show you all the papers again.

The guard repeated himself, 'You're not a citizen of the United States of America' and then pointed to his Bible and said 'Are you a Christian?' R.C. said 'Yes sir' and the guard said 'Then you're a citizen of heaven' then the guard winked at R.C. What a moment in Romania! God, please let me live in such a way that everybody knows that I want to be a good resident alien citizen wherever I am but my citizenship is in heaven and that framework is what Peter talks about constantly in the text.

The second takeaway is know-be-do and this is not a new Star Wars program. This what a college minister taught me years and years ago. Know who you are in Christ. Be who you are for Christ. Now go Do what you do to lift up Christ. This is what Peter is doing in this epistle. Know that you are elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, sanctified by the Spirit sprinkled clean with the obedience. Now do what He has called you to do and that is to be a resident alien in the nations of this world. You are an exile in your obedience to Jesus Christ.

Paul does the same thing in all his epistles by first telling us who we are in Christ and the second half is telling us how we live for Christ. In Romans Paul says he is not ashamed of the Gospel for the first 11 chapters and then it says in Romans 12:1, *[1] I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.* Paul does the same thing in Ephesians. For three chapters he tells you who you are in Christ and then Ephesians 4:1 says *[1] I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.* So know who you are in Christ, be who you are in Christ and then do.

Why do Peter and Paul want to know you are elect before they tell you how to live as an exile? It is because our tendency is to think we are elect because of what we do. No! You do because of what He did as His electing grace has saved you.

The third takeaway is that there is a scintillating fact in this text. After the resurrection Jesus tells the Disciples to go back and pray and when the Holy Spirit comes upon them they will be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the utter most parts of the world. Guess what *Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia* were? They were the utter most part of the world and less than 35 years after the ascension of Jesus they had churches growing with robust vitality in the furthest reaches of the Roman Empire and what today is called Turkey. That is a scintillating fact and they didn't have a printing press or Facebook or Twitter or Instagram. They were just people who loved Jesus and went and told people about the love of Jesus. The next thing we see is the Gospel going to the utter most parts of the world.

The fourth takeaway is there is a sobering reality. According to Operation World what nation has the fewest percentage of professing Christians today? It is Turkey. Did you know, arguably, the two greatest councils in the history of the church, dealing with the doctrine of God and the two natures of Christ were held right there in Asia Minor, not many decades after this letter from Peter. Now there is nothing. You don't think it could happen here? That is what happened there. There are not any grandchildren in the Kingdom. Every generation has to hear of the power of the Gospel of grace from the elect exiles in that nation in that generation.

The fifth takeaway is that it is a Trinitarian Gospel. I love this Trinitarian Gospel. Why are you elect? It is according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. You are sprinkled clean with the blood of the Son and you have been sanctified and set apart by the Spirit of God. I love the preeminence of Jesus but we don't have a Jesus only Gospel. We have a Trinitarian Gospel. The Father has loved you and authored your salvation. The Son has loved you and accomplished that salvation for all whom the Father has loved to pay for their sins and there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1).

Romans 8:29–33 says [29] *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. [30] And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

[31] *What then shall we say to these things? If God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) is for us, who can be against us? [32] He (Father) who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? [33] Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.* God has justified us through the redeeming work of the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. A Trinitarian God saves you! He is the One who holds you.

We know what Peter is doing. He is going back to that moment he would have observed constantly growing up as an observant Jew. He going back to that great feast and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. For that great feast where would you walk in? You would walk into the Father's house and the priest would take all that blood from those thousands of animals, put hyssop in it and sprinkle it on the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies where the Spirit of God dwells. Now Peter is telling us that 'you are My Father's House and you have another Priest who is Jesus who is also the Lamb who has taken the blood of the Lamb of God and sprinkled you clean. He has now set up apart as the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit who is within you.' Now it is not a Day of Atonement anticipating the salvation of a Triune God but the Day of Atonement manifested in people like you and me who have been saved by His grace.

Even though we needed Him we did not want Him and even though He didn't need us He wanted us and He saves us. We are His and He is ours. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. God, I thank You so much for the richness of Peter's letter. I thank You for the richness of Your grace. Father, there must be people reading this today who Your searching love is calling from darkness to light by the power of the Spirit, when they have heard of Jesus who died to make them clean that they can follow Him all because You have loved them. Now dear friends would You come to Him who came for you? If you would like to pray with someone personally and confidentially please call us here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 for we'd love to pray with you. There is a Savior who is ready to receive you. Finally Father, I pray for all who know Jesus who have been the great beneficiaries of Your electing love before time, in time for all time, in the Name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Help us to live with the confidence of redeeming grace in Your work of electing salvation and then help us to live for our Savior as His ambassadors from the Kingdom of God in the kingdoms of this world – resident aliens who are telling others of a Savior who loves them, I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

THE ELECT EXILES

When God saves us by His grace, He breaks us, to make us, to use us for His glory and our joy.

We will never live as we ought in grace for Christ without knowing who we are by grace IN Christ, and what we are through grace FOR Christ.

EXILES

WHAT WE ARE FOR CHRIST BY GOD'S GRACE

- I. Spiritual Citizenship
- II. Physical Citizenship

ELECT

WHO WE ARE IN CHRIST BY GOD'S GRACE

- I. According...
- II. In...
- III. For...

LIFE TAKEAWAYS

- I. Two-fold Framework
- II. Know-Be-Do
- III. Trinitarian Gospel
- IV. Scintillating Fact
- V. Sobering Reality