

Chosen Strangers

The New Birth Part 1

1 Peter 1:1-2 3-24-2012 & 3-25-2012

Summary: Peter is so eager to establish our identity (because it is the basis for so much of what he says in the book), he blurts it out before he even gets to the greeting. We are a chosen, alien dispersion (insiders with God and outsiders in the world). That status was preplanned in eternity past by the Father, brought about now by the Spirit, and it is all for the purpose of us obeying and being cleansed for our disobedience.

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1 Peter 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the elect, strangers [in the world], scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, 2 [chosen] according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance. 3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

Introduction: Your Place in this World

In the grand scheme of things, where do you fit? What is your place in this world? As you look around, all the countless things that are going on around us are not accidents. They are all components of a grand design. They are pieces of a giant puzzle that, if you could stand back far enough to see the whole picture, would fill you with joy and wonder at the beauty and complexity and perfection of it. But in this life we cannot stand back that far. We are like one little cog inside a massive machine, and all we can see around us is a giant complex of gears and pieces of the machine that seem to turn and act on each other in random chaos.

We know from God's Word that the machine is wonderful and beautiful and perfect, but my question for you today is this: what is your role in the machine? Where do you fit?

One of the main reasons Peter wrote this letter was to answer that question. And he is so eager to answer it that he cannot even wait for himself to begin the letter. The way the Apostles said hello at the beginning of a letter was by saying, "Grace and peace to you," or some variation of that. Peter says it in his opening greeting at the end of verse 2. But before he gets around to saying that, he discusses election, foreknowledge, predestination, the Trinity, sanctification, obedience, and the sprinkling of Christ's blood. When all that comes out before a person gets to "hello" in his greeting, you know he has something urgent on his mind. All he is doing is addressing the letter, and he spills all the beans.

Verses 1-2 are what you write on the outside of the envelope as you address the letter. Peter includes all that massive load of doctrine on the outside of the envelope. He is so eager to make sure his readers understood their place in this world, that he just blurts it all out right at the beginning before he even gets to “hello” in his letter. So he starts out with, “Dear friends...who, by the way, are elect, chosen, aliens and strangers in the world dispersed all over the place and who are chosen, dispersed, aliens on the basis of the foreknowledge of God the Father, and who came to be in that condition by means of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit for the purpose or goal of obedience, and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ....greetings! Everything Peter wants to say to them in this book hinges on our understanding of that information - our identity and the how and why of our identity. So let’s take a careful look at this description.

Description of our Identity: A Chosen, Alien Dispersion

In the Greek word order, the very first word after Peter identifies himself is the word “chosen” (or “elect”). Here is a literal translation:

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the chosen strangers of dispersion of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia

What a phrase that is - **chosen strangers of dispersion**. That is our identity.

Strangers (Aliens)

The word **stranger** refers to someone who is living in a place that is not his home. A temporary alien, a foreigner - someone who is residing in a place where he is not a citizen, not a part of that culture.

Dispersion

The word **dispersion** is a very interesting choice of words. The NIV translates it “scattered.” It is the Greek word *diaspora*, and for hundreds of years before Jesus’ time the Jews had used that word as a technical term to refer to Jews who had left Israel and were living in Gentile territory. Because of wars and various other reasons millions of Jews had left their homeland and were scattered around the Gentile world. And that situation was commonly referred to as The Dispersion. So here Peter steals that term from Jewish culture and refers to Gentile Christians as the new Dispersion.¹

Why? Peter is writing to all the various churches within five regions² (which make up pretty much the entire country of modern day Turkey). Had all these Gentile Christians in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia left their hometown and traveled somewhere else? No. There is no indication of that. People then did not move around as much as we do in our transient culture, so most of the people in these churches had been born and raised in those towns. So how is it that they are aliens and strangers in a foreign land? Why does Peter call them the new Dispersion? He is making a very important point. Those people used to be citizens where they lived and they fit right in. When they were unbelievers they were indigenous and were right at home in those towns. They had bumper stickers that said, “Native.” But Peter is letting them know that on the day they first believed and were born again, they instantly went from being natives to being aliens. Overnight they went from belonging and being right at home in the world to being foreigners who had been dropped behind enemy lines. Their citizenship was transferred from this world to heaven. Their family loyalty went

¹ Evidence that Peter has gentiles in mind are passages like 1:18, where their heritage is called “empty” (not true of the Jewish heritage).

² Each one was a large region with numerous churches. For example all the churches in the letters to the churches in Revelation 2-3 (Ephesus, Smyrna, Laodicia, etc.) are in the region of Asia.

from being their natural family to their spiritual family. Their goal in life, their reason for living, their purpose, their direction - all turned 180 degrees.

The day you decide to become a Christian you forfeit any chance of fitting in in this world. If you are a high school student and you want to fit in at school - forget it. If you want to be just like everyone else at work - forget it. You might work with some people who are kind and polite about it, or you might work with people who are rude or cruel about it - but either way the reality is you do not fit in there anymore. You are an alien. The things that are most important to them are not important to you. The things that are most important to you do not mean anything to them. The things you would die for, they would not even give up their favorite TV show for. So you are now an outsider in this world.

Chosen

But before you get too depressed about that, look at the whole phrase. Peter says you are the **chosen, alien dispersion**. Do you feel the dichotomy in that? Alien – that is an outsider. Chosen – that is an insider. Peter addresses his letter to the insiders/outsiders. To the world, you are an outsider. To God, you are an insider. Every person on the planet is an insider and an outsider. Either you are an insider in this world, which makes you an outsider in God's kingdom, or you are an insider with God which makes you an outsider in the world. Scripture even uses the word "outsiders" to refer to unbelievers as (Col.4:5, 1 Thes.4:12, 1 Tim.3:7).

Remember which Side You Are On

Becoming a Christian is kind of like a pro athlete being traded. Last Tuesday Tim Tebow was a member of the Denver Broncos. Wednesday he was a New York Jet. Overnight his relationship to the Broncos went from teammate to opponent. If it were football season, and those two teams were playing, last Sunday Tebow would have been on the Broncos' side trying to make them win and the Jets lose, but this Sunday if they played he would be on the Jets' side trying to make the Broncos lose.

What happened to us is a little bit like that, with one major difference. Now that the trade is final Tim Tebow is going to pack his bags and move to New York. But when God acquires us from team World, he tells us, "Just stay put. Keep living there among them." If we want to make the analogy fit we would have to say this - it would be like if the Jets told Tebow, "Just stay right there in Denver, and show up in the Broncos' locker room and get on the field with them and try to help us by sabotaging what they are doing on the field, and also by recruiting their players to come play for the Jets." When you become a Christian God says, "I'm not going to bring you home to heaven just yet. Just stay there with the opposing team, and do all you can do to sabotage the devil's work in the world. (In case you didn't know, Satan is the coach of team World.)

Or to use a different analogy, being a Christian in the world is like being a soldier behind enemy lines. We are soldiers in God's army fighting behind enemy lines. But the way we got here was not by parachuting in at night. No, we got here by being born and raised here back when we were on the enemy's side in this war, and then we were converted over to God's side, so we went from being citizens of the world to being soldiers on the kingdom side who are now behind enemy lines.

The problem is, when that happens it is so easy to forget which side you are on. You were born here, grew up here, you have always been on this side – it is so easy to forget about your conversion and start to think this is still your home. And there are so many problems in the Christian life that are caused by that - forgetting that you are no longer on the world's side, that Peter writes a whole epistle mainly designed to remind us who we are.

Throughout this whole book Peter just keeps hammering that home - "Don't forget you are on God's team." Every time Peter mentions election, calling, belonging to God, accepted by God, chosen

by God, rejected by this world - every time he talks about holiness, being set apart – it is all a reminder: you are on God’s side, not theirs.³

Suffering

Just one example of why this is so important: suffering. Suffering and persecution were big issues for these people. They were perplexed about why they were having such a rough time. And Peter says, “Why are you having a rough time? You are behind enemy lines! What do you expect? Do you think you are going to show up in the opponents’ locker room and work against them on the field, and it’s just going to be a picnic? You think they are just going to welcome you? Of course you’re going to be persecuted and rejected - you’re in the opponents’ locker room!”

But do not measure your acceptance or rejection in terms of the world. Their assessment does not matter - only God’s does. The greatest men and women who ever walked the earth - the people listed in the great “hall of faith” in Hebrews 11 - all were rejects in this world. Those men and women of whom this world was not even worthy - many times have been forced to wander in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground (Heb.11:38). Your success, your importance, your status - has nothing whatsoever to do with where you are in this world’s pecking order. If you went in your back yard and saw that there was an anthill, and you dug around and discovered that in the entire colony there was no place of honor for you - no special room for you, no place in their system, no recognition of your importance, no acknowledgment that you even exist - in fact, when they see you, instead of thanking you for the space in the yard, or showing you any respect - all they do is try to crawl on you and bite you - would that send you into a mid-life crisis or deep depression because you are such a failure?

This world is an anthill outside the gate of the glorious kingdom of God, where you are royalty. Our problem is we keep forgetting we are not ants anymore. We suffer so many defeats in the Christian life just because we constantly keep forgetting what side we are on. We start to fall in love with this anthill, and we start to feel at home here, and we start adapting and integrating ourselves into the culture and Peter says, “Hey, what are you doing? This isn’t your home. This isn’t your team. This isn’t your country. You are not on their side. You’re on God’s side.” That is one of the main purposes of the book of 1 Peter.

³ Some examples:

1:2 set apart by the Spirit

Set apart from what? The world’s team.

Set apart for what? God’s team.

15 But as the One who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct; 16 for it is written, Be holy, because I am holy. ...

17 Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.

Do not forget what team you are on. Yes, you are in this old locker room, but now you are here as a stranger, not a teammate. Verse 24 - the world’s team is like the grass of the field - here today and gone tomorrow. But you are on a team that endures forever. Then in chapter 2 He talks about how we come to Christ, who was rejected by the world’s team and drafted by God.

2:4 As you come to him, the living Stone--rejected by men but chosen by God

And the difference between us and the world is when they see Him they see nothing special, and when we see Him we see a treasure greater than the whole world.

7 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone 9 But you are a chosen people ... a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

He called you away from their team onto His team.

10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God

Conclusion?

11 I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires...

4:3 For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do

Do not follow their game plan anymore - follow your new Coach who drafted you.

13 She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings

Origin: The Foreknowledge of the Father

So he starts out by getting that straight right off the bat: You are the chosen, alien dispersion. Then he gives three important pieces of information about our condition as chosen aliens. The first is the *origin* of our condition. We are in this condition as chosen, scattered aliens ...

2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father

The Whole Phrase Goes Together

For some reason, all the major translations take the word “chosen” (or elect) and drop it down to the end of verse 1 so that the choosing is the only thing that is connected to the foreknowledge of God the Father. The only exception is the ESV. They just leave the original word order of the Greek. And I think the ESV is correct in doing that. It seems arbitrary to me to look at that description at the beginning of verse 1 - **chosen, alien dispersion**, and just take one piece of it to connect with verse 2. Why assume that the choosing is on the basis of foreknowledge and not our condition as scattered aliens? The whole phrase goes together. Our condition of being outsiders to this world, and insiders with God are two sides of the same coin. So I am convinced the three descriptions in verse 2 are talking about the whole phrase. Your situation of being behind enemy lines, being in the opponents’ locker room - an outsider in the world and an insider in the kingdom of God - this is all happening **according to the foreknowledge of God the Father**.

Foreknowledge Implies Causation

So what is the significance of that? Why is it significant that God knew ahead of time that we would be chosen strangers? Well, when God foreknows something, how does He know it? By looking into the future? Does he have a crystal ball? No, God does not find out what is going to happen in the future by looking into the future and observing. There is nothing to observe - the future does not exist. The future has not happened yet, so it does not exist. The only way you can know for sure if something is going to happen in the future is if you control that thing. God knows all things that will take place in the future not because He observes them, but because He plans them. God knows all the things that are going to happen because He makes them happen. That is why when Scripture speaks of God’s foreknowledge, it connects it with His power.

Isaiah 46:10 I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. (How do you do that God? How do you know what is still to come?) I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.

He knows the future because He plans the future.

Acts 2:23 [Jesus] was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge

God knew it would happen because God planned for it to happen, and then caused it to happen.

Acts 4:28 [the people who crucified Jesus] did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.

The Armenian view of election says that God just peeked into the future, observed who would eventually believe, and then ordained that to happen. It was already going to happen, and God just observed that. So when Acts 2 says God foreknew that Jesus would be crucified, God got His crystal ball, looked into the future, and said, “Well, look at that - look what’s going to happen to Jesus! I’d better jot that down.” They want to explain election that way because they are afraid that if the decision of who will be saved is ultimately God’s decision, then that seems to contradict the fact that

Scripture presents it as a real decision we make. And Scripture does indeed present it that way. So they solve the tension by saying, "It's not up to God who gets saved. It's only up to us."

If that view is true you can stop praying for people. If human free will is ultimate, then if you say, "God, please bring my loved one to salvation" He would say, "Sorry, not My department. That's out of My hands - I have no control over that." Thankfully that is not the case. Nothing is out of God's hands and everything is in His department so we pray about everything.

It is nonsense to say that something was already going to happen, and God's foreknowledge was just God observing that. Outside of God's plans, nothing was already going to happen. Before the creation of the world, nothing existed but God. Nothing was going to happen unless God set it in motion. If you want to say that something was already destined to happen - but not by God, He is just an observer - but somehow it is destined to happen, what power destined it? Before God created anything there was no other power.

So foreknowledge, when it refers to God, implies not just God being aware of information about something, but also God being the most essential first cause of that thing. Foreknowledge is not just an eternal awareness, but an eternal *intention*.

I Love it when a Plan Comes Together

And in this context Peter is saying that we are a chosen, alien dispersion as a result of the eternal intention of God that we be a chosen, alien dispersion. In other words, he is saying, "You are on God's team because God picked you." The fact that you don't fit in here - that is part of God's plan. The fact that you are scattered all over the place - that is God's plan. The fact that you are accepted by God - on His team, in His family, and insider in the Kingdom - all pre-planned from eternity past. That is why in 4:12 he says, "Don't be surprised about your suffering as if something strange were happening."

When I was a teenager back in the 80's I used to like to watch the original A-Team TV show. It was about these four ex-military guys who hired themselves out to solve problems for people. They called the leader of the group Hannibal, and I always loved Hannibal because he was always in control. They would all get captured by the bad guys, they would be tied up, guns to their heads, absolutely no way out - about to be buried alive or something, and Hannibal would just get this great big smile and say, "I love it when a plan comes together." Then something would happen and it turned out the whole thing played right into his plan. That is fiction for the A-Team, but it is reality for God. When this world rejects you, and you are mistreated, and everything is going wrong and your life feels like it is spinning out of control, God sits back and smiles and says, "I love it when a plan comes together." We are in this condition as part of God's eternal, perfect, wise, glorious plan.

Implementation: The Sanctification of the Spirit

That is the origin of our condition in eternity past, but from there Peter moves to the second prepositional phrase that talks about implementation of that plan in the present. We are chosen, dispersed aliens **through (by means of) the sanctifying work of the Spirit**. The word sanctification means "to make holy." Now, it probably comes as no surprise to anyone here that the Holy Spirit is at work making us holy. What might be a surprise is the fact that our sanctification is the means of our election. If election takes place way back in eternity past, and sanctification takes place when you become a Christian, you would expect it to say that the sanctification happens by means of the election (the earlier thing caused the more recent thing). But it is the other way around. So how can Peter say the way you became an elect stranger is by means of sanctification?

Eternal and Temporal Perspectives on Election

To answer that it is important to understand that election is presented in Scripture from two different points of view - the eternal point of view and the temporal. From the eternal point of view, election happened before creation happened. God selected who would be saved from eternity past. There is no way around that.

Ephesians 1:4 He chose us in Him before the creation of the world.

However, very often Scripture also presents election from a temporal perspective. From the standpoint of time, people are spoken of as being elect only *after* their conversion. For example here - when Peter addresses his letter to the elect, he is referring only to people who have already been converted. He goes on to say things like, “You have been born again,” “You have an eternal inheritance” - things that only apply to believers.

If you only look from the eternal perspective, you would think we would refer to everyone who is eventually going to be saved as being elect - whether they have been converted yet or not. You might think, “If God chose them before the creation, then they are really on their way to heaven right from birth. Conversion is almost a formality.” But that is not the case at all. Even if you end up being one of the elect, prior to your conversion you were not on your way to heaven. You were on your way to hell. Ephesians 2:3 says that prior to our conversion we were by nature objects of wrath. So from the standpoint of time, you become one of the elect at the moment you are converted.

So here in verse 2 Peter is speaking from the temporal perspective. If you are a believer you are a chosen alien. But you were not a chosen alien prior to your conversion. Prior to being born again you were a citizen of this world and an enemy of God. You were an insider in this world and an outsider in the kingdom of God. And before the foundation of the world God planned for that to change. And the means by which it changed - the action that brought about the situation where you are now chosen by God and rejected by the world, is an action where the Holy Spirit of God takes you and separates you from this world (sanctification). The day you placed your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit made you a holy person. He set you apart from this world, set you apart from sin, and set you apart for God. That is why Scripture calls us saints. The word saint just means holy one. Every Christian is a saint, because every Christian has been sanctified - made holy - by the Holy Spirit.

And that sanctification was not just a one-time action at your conversion. It is an ongoing work that keeps going from the day you become a Christian until the day you die.

Function: Obedience and Sprinkling by the Son

So what is your identity? Chosen, dispersed alien. What was the origin of that condition? The Foreknowledge of the Father. How was that plan implemented in time? Through the Sanctifying work of the Spirit. So we have seen the Origin, and the Implementation, now Peter gives us one more: the Function. There is a reason behind all this. God did all this with the goal of having us function in a certain way. Peter gives us three descriptions in verse 2, each one beginning with a different preposition. The first one was **according to**. We are chosen aliens **according to** God’s foreknowledge. The second preposition was **through**. We entered into this condition of being chosen aliens **through (by means of) the sanctification of the Spirit**. Now the last one is **for**. God went to all this trouble to make us chosen aliens for a purpose.

2 ...for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.⁴

⁴ The word order in the Greek is “...**obedience and sprinkling by the blood of Jesus Christ**.” I do not take “of Jesus Christ” as modifying “obedience” because if it did it would have to simultaneously function as two different kind of genitives. Clearly it is a genitive of possession (or source) in relationship to the blood. But for it to modify Jesus Christ it would have to be either an objective genitive or a subjective genitive.

God has made us chosen aliens for the purpose of obedience. He has done all that He has done in our salvation so that obedience would result.

Obedience

Not optional

That is very important to understand because many people downplay the importance of obedience because of a misunderstanding of grace. Their thinking goes something like this: “We are saved by grace, not by obedience. Therefore, you do not have to be obedient to God in order to be saved. Therefore, it is possible to be saved even if you are not willing to obey the Lord in some areas.” That is as wrong as it can be. It is like saying, “You don’t get married by means of faithfulness, therefore it’s not necessary to be faithful once you’re married.” It is true that being faithful is not what makes you married, but getting married is a vow of faithfulness. And it is the same with our relationship with God. We do not enter into His family by being faithful and obedient to Him, but that does not make obedience optional. The whole point of our salvation is to place us in a relationship of obedience.

So grace does not make obedience less important; it makes it more important. People say, “If I don’t have to obey in order to become saved, it must not be that important.” But the exact opposite is true. If obedience were nothing but the way to get saved, it would not be as big a deal. But the fact that obedience is God’s goal in saving us - He saves us in order to make us obedient - that elevates the importance of obedience. Instead of the key that lets you into the house – it is the house you are being let into. It is the reason you are being let in.

Do not ever think that grace makes obedience less important. Do not ever think grace replaces obedience or makes obedience optional. Grace is for the purpose of obedience.

Ephesians 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

We were not saved by good works, but we were saved *for* good works.

Titus 2:11 The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. 12 It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.

God gave us grace not to exempt us from obedience, but for the very purpose of making us obedient. He did all that He did in salvation because He wanted an obedient people.

14 [Jesus Christ] gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Our willing, eager obedience is so important to Him He was willing to sacrifice His life to bring it about.

Do not ever let anyone fool you into thinking a life of unrepentant disobedience is an option for a Christian. I hear people say all the time, “I invited Jesus into my heart when I was a kid, but I didn’t really get serious about living for Him until years later.” If you did not get serious about obeying Him until years later then you did not get saved until years later. If you tell me that God saved you, and for ten years you were not serious about living for Him, and you were not eager to be righteous and holy and obedient, then you are telling me that His saving you was a failure for ten years. If He saves people for the purpose of good works, and for the purpose of making them eager to obey, then there is

no such thing as a Christian who is not eager to obey because God's purposes in salvation do not fail for ten year stretches.

Sprinkling

Now, as soon as I say that, I know many of you begin to doubt your salvation, because you disobey so frequently. So what should we do with that? If obedience is the mark of salvation, does that mean a true Christian will always obey and never disobey?

No - look again at the two-part goal of our salvation. God chose you and made you an alien in this world **for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ**. What is that? The sprinkling of sacrificial blood is an Old Testament concept that is explained in several places in the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 9:13 The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. 14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

Do we still sin and disobey God? Yes, every day. But if we confess the sins that we know about, He will cleanse us from all unrighteousness by applying the blood of Jesus' Christ - applying what He accomplished in His death, to us. This is the same thing David was talking about in Psalm 51 when he said, "Cleanse me with hyssop and I will be clean." The hyssop branch was what they used for sprinkling.

Jesus' death solves the problem of God's wrath over our sin, because Jesus bore His wrath in our place on the cross. Jesus' death solves the problem of us being filthy and disgusting in God's sight when we sin because on the basis of God's favor for His Son, He is willing to turn His eyes away from our sin and not look at it anymore when we ask forgiveness. And Jesus' death solves the problem of our ongoing failures in our war against sin in our lives because through His death He purchased sanctification for us, which means the Holy Spirit is constantly at work making us more and more holy in practice. All of that is included in that idea of sprinkling. It is because of all that that we can approach God in worship even though we fall into sin.

Hebrews 10:22 Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience

So there is a provision for our acts of disobedience.

What a magnificent combination of ideas this is in this third prepositional phrase - He made us chosen strangers for the purpose of obedience and sprinkling. It is a beautiful comingling of the human side and divine side of our righteous living. On our part, we obey. On His part, He applies the benefits of the death of Christ to our lives.

That combination of ideas is no accident. It comes from Exodus 24. In the Old Testament sacrificial system, the blood was not normally sprinkled on people. That only happened on rare occasions. But the first time it happened was the one that is referred to in the book of Hebrews when it refers repeatedly to sprinkling, and I believe that is the one Peter has in mind here as well.⁵ It happened right after Moses first read the law to the people.

Exodus 24:7 Then [Moses] took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey." 8 Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words."

⁵ The only other occasions when blood was sprinkled on people was 1) on the sons of Aaron when they entered the priesthood, and 2) on a leper who was being cleansed.

There you see the same two concepts that Peter mentions - obedience and sprinkling. Put them together and you have a covenant. In this case the covenant was in the form of what was known as a Suzerain-Vassal treaty. A Suzerain is a king, and a vassal is a people who have been conquered by that king, and who now belong to him. When a king conquered a nation, he would make a deal with them. He would say, "Here's the new situation. I am your new king. On my part, I will offer protection for you from invading armies, I will govern you and provide all the various things kings provide for the people. On your part, I require loyalty. And when I say loyalty - here's what I mean:" and then he would give them a list of laws that they were required to keep. If they did the things on that list, they would be considered loyal to this new king.

Those lists had a certain format, and the ten commandments are presented in that format. So God was telling the people, "I'm your new King, you are my vassals, and here is the new arraignment. I will provide all kinds of benefits for you as your King (protection, provision, leadership, etc.), and on your part I require loyalty. And here are the things I would accept as expressions of loyalty to Me: (then He gave them the Law of Moses).

That arraignment was called a covenant, and it was sealed in blood. And all that is what Peter is referring to here with the obedience and the sprinkling. Salvation is a covenant between you and God - like a contract. On our end, it requires loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ. On His end, among other things, He provides cleansing through the blood of Christ.

God did all this - pre-planning your chosen alien status and bringing it about through the Spirit so that... you would live a life of obeying, and being cleansed from disobedience, obeying, and being cleansed from disobedience, etc.

Conclusion: Remember!

What is your role in this world? Chosen alien –an outsider in this world, and an insider in the kingdom of God. Why? Because God wanted to give a priceless gift to His Son - a people who willingly, eagerly honor and obey Him. How did it come to pass? The whole Trinity rolled up their sleeves, and each Person in the Godhead had a different role. It is all part of a brilliantly-planned, flawlessly-executed purpose designed to make an obedient and cleansed people for God. The Father pre-planned it and set everything in motion to make it happen. The Spirit draft picked you out of this world and set you apart from the world for God, making you holy. The Son died for you and constantly applies to you the benefits of His sacrifice so you can have cleansing, forgiveness of sins, and acceptance in the eyes of the Father.

That is who you are. That is your place in the grand scheme of things. And one thousand problems in your life will be solved just by having a greater awareness of that truth.

Benediction: Ephesians 4:17-24 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. 20 You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. 22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Application Questions:

This passage does not command anything. It just gives us information. When a passage only gives information that means the life application God is looking for is a thinking application rather than a doing application. God's purpose in this text is to get us to think a certain way (namely, to remember our status and chosen, dispersed aliens).

- 1) In your particular case, which times would you be most helped in your walk with the Lord if you were reminded of this principle (if you could only pick one, which would you pick as the most important for you right now? And why?):
 - When you are tempted with a particular sin
 - When you are being rejected or neglected by people in this world
 - When you are suffering

- 2) What memory cue could you set up so that when those times come, you will be reminded of the truth of 1 Pe.1:1-2?