

## To the Elect

1 Peter 1:1-2 *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.*

This morning as we will be looking further into these first two verses of First Peter, let us be reminded that it is a letter that was written to a body of believers who were and would be undergoing severe persecution. It was written by a man who had been called by God to be an Apostle in the church. Peter, to whom authority had been given to lay the foundational teaching of the church, a body of believers that will be made up of God's elect. It is a letter filled with deep doctrinal truths. It always amazes me when men shy away from doctrinal studies. That is, I find it a bit puzzling when people say that doctrinal studies are not practical studies. I think that as we look into the doctrinal studies that fill the pages of the epistle, doctrines of election, providence, prolegomena, that is, the study of Scripture that we will find these doctrines are most comforting, encouraging and therefore most practical for the Christian in his or her daily walk. This morning I shall spend time on the recipients of this letter, who they are and where they are living. What is their standing and what is the means of their standing that they have in God.

A. To whom was this epistle written?

1. To strangers, pilgrims of the Dispersion

a. Strangers, that is, aliens, foreigners living among the native citizens of a country

(1) Abraham was called to go into a foreign land where he would dwell as a stranger, a pilgrim in the land

Heb 11:9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country,

(2) Abraham, Isaac and Jacob considered themselves as strangers, as sojourners on the earth

Heb 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were **strangers and pilgrims on the earth.**

2. Secondly Peter refers to them as a people dispersed, scattered throughout the world

a. This would include the Jews who had been exiled from the land of Israel at the time of the captivity to Babylon who had migrated and were now living throughout Asia

b. It can also refer to the Jews that had been ordered to leave Rome under the Emperor Claudius around 50 A.D.

c. It would definitely include all the Jewish converts that had come to faith in Christ through the missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul

3. This also can be understood as referring to all believers, Jew and Gentile alike, for we are all exiles from heaven, strangers and pilgrims in this present world

a. Jesus speaks of our standing in the world in this manner - as being in the world, but **not of it**". (c.f. Jn 17:15-16)

b. In the same prayer Jesus refers to the believers as those the Father has given Him out of the world. (c.f. John 17:6)

c. In Ephesians Paul reminds the believers that they had walked according to the course of this world but that God had raised them up to sit in heavenly places in Christ. (c.f. Eph. 1:1-4)

d. Paul describes the believer as having their citizenship in heaven. (Phil. 3:20)

e. Like Abraham we are but strangers in a foreign land

4. The elect, according to the foreknowledge of God

a. Peter here introduces one of the most comforting doctrines of the church which is also one of the most despised

b. Most precious for it speaks of the undeserving standing we have in Christ Jesus

(1) We have been chosen by God in Christ before the foundation of the world (cf. Eph 1:4)

(2) We have been adopted as children of God according to the good pleasure of His will (cf. Eph 1:5)

(3) And therefore since our salvation is all of God and not of ourselves it is to the praise of the glory of His grace **alone** (cf. Eph. 1:6)

Eph 1:3-6 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as **He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world,** that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, **having predestined us to adoption** as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, **according to the good pleasure of His will,** to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.*

c. At the same time despised by many for it wounds the very pride of man

- (1) Despised because it flies in the face of man's desire to be like God
- (2) Called unfair because God has not chosen all men to salvation

d. But the truth is not one of us would be saved were it not for the electing grace of God

- (1) As natural men, conceived in sin, not one of us could understand anything of a spiritual nature

1 Cor 2:14 *But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

- (2) As men born dead in sin not one of us would have sought after God

Rom 3:10-11 *There is none righteous, **no, not one**; there is none who understands; there is **none who seeks after God**.*

- (3) As natural men not one person could come to God unless God had first drawn them to Himself

John 6:44 *No one can come to Me **unless** the Father who sent Me draws him.*

- (4) Freed us from our captivity in sin to the glorious liberty of being His captive; we read in Ephesians 4:8 *"When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive."*

- (5) Even our faith, that very faith, that enables us to trust in the saving work of Christ alone is not our own but was given us as a kind and undeserving gift of God

Eph 2:8-9 *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and **that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God**, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

- e. Yes it may wound our pride, but the wonder of it is this, as we bask in the gracious gift of God's salvation, all praise, thanks and glory belongs to God alone.

B. By what means is one made a part of this standing in Christ?

1. As already noted by being chosen by God the Father in Christ Jesus
2. Having been sanctified, that is, made holy by the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ
  - a. Able now to stand in the presence of God not in our righteousness but in the righteousness of Christ

2 Cor 5:21 *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God **in Him**.*

- b. Having been sprinkled by the blood of Christ

Heb 9:13-14 *For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*

3. By the shed blood of Jesus Christ and by His perfect obedience *"not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith."* (Phil 3:9)

CONCLUSION: To whom then is this epistle written?

Yes, to the elect of that day living in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia but also - - -

To us here this morning who, in a real sense, are part of the great dispersion of God's people scattered throughout the nations of the earth

To us who are as strangers and pilgrims upon this earth looking for and waiting for that moment when our Savior will come again and gather us unto Himself whereby throughout eternity we shall rejoice in His presence

To us who are the chosen of God and precious in His sight, only because *"God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.* (Eph 2:4-6)

To us who have been washed, who have been cleansed, in the blood of our Savior Jesus Christ

No wonder it is called in Scripture, not just a salvation, but a **great salvation** (cf. Heb. 2:3)