

Message: God Has Made Us Aliens

Text: 1 Peter 1:1-3

Introduction

- A. No one likes to be an outcast. No one likes to be treated as an alien. No child or teen likes to be excluded from other youth at school or church, belittled, mocked, bullied, beat up, torched on social networks. Neither do adults. No one likes to be treated as an outcast, as an alien.
- B. People treat others as outcasts and aliens for many reasons, such as the color of their skin, their lack of athletic ability, their weight, their looks, their clothes, their political party, their gender, their ethnic origin, and even for their doing what is right in the eyes of Christ as a Christian. This was the experience of Peter and Christians in the first century world, and this continues to be the experience of Christians throughout the world today.
- C. Whatever else God might say to us through His Word, we need to hear Him say ...
 - 1. God's people will always in this age be aliens scattered among the nations.
 - 2. God's people are aliens by His design, not by our defect.
 - 3. Stand firm and rejoice in our alien status among the nations in the hope of inheriting Christ's kingdom at His return.

I. God's people will always in this age be aliens scattered among the nations.

- A. Notice how Christ's apostle Peter addresses the largely Gentile Christians living in 5 provinces in what is today the country of Turkey. He calls them "aliens," even though they are living in their native lands. (Show map)

1 Peter 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, **to those who reside as aliens**, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,

- B. Peter himself is being treated as an alien and outcast as a Christian, suffering imprisonment in Rome where, according to early church writings, he would be crucified upside down. Babylon, the OT world empire that oppressed God's people, was used by persecuted Christians in the first century as a code word or metaphor for Rome, the empire currently oppressing God's people.

1 Peter 5:13 She who is in **Babylon**, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark.

Revelation 17:3 And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw **a woman sitting on a scarlet beast**, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns. ...⁵ and on her forehead a name was written, a mystery, "**Babylon** the Great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth." ...⁹ "Here is the mind which has wisdom. **The seven heads are seven mountains** on which the woman sits,

- C. Believers to whom Peter writes were now themselves beginning to experience mistreatment as outcasts and aliens in their own countries.

1 Peter 4:3 For the time already past is sufficient *for you* to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries.⁴ In *all* this, they are surprised that you do not run with *them* into the same excesses of dissipation, **and they malign you**;

- D. Believers today in their own countries are being mistreated as aliens and outcasts. This appears to be the direction in which our own country is moving.

1. It was only 10 years ago that president George Bush campaigned on a marriage amendment to our U.S. constitution, defining marriage as being between 1 man and 1 woman, and amendment many states including South Carolina have put in their constitutions. But recently activist judges are deciding for the American people what our definition of marriage must be, striking down traditional definitions in one state constitution after another. (Show U.S. map.) It was only 2.5 years ago that the first U.S. president in history openly supported gay marriage.
 2. The Human Rights Commission examiner in Lexington, Kentucky ruled that Christian Blaine Adamson broke the law when he declined to print T-shirts promoting the LGBT agenda, and recommended as punishment that his company, Hands On Originals cannot discriminate against individuals because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, and that Adamson attend "diversity training" conducted by the Human Rights Commission - I.e., government re-education of a citizen due to his Christian beliefs.
 3. Houston's lesbian mayor subpoenas Christian pastors' sermons, writings, etc. over any anti-gay rhetoric.
 4. Tim Keller speaks noted the "disappearing umbrella over conservative Christians" in the U.S., noting a greater polarization in our culture due to the "mushy middle" no longer siding with devout Christians.
- E. Concerned for suffering believers in the provinces to which he writes, Peter weaves two dominant themes throughout his letter to encourage believers to stand firm in their faith -suffering and the second coming of Christ.

1 Peter 4:13 but to the degree that **you share the sufferings of Christ**, keep on rejoicing, so that also **at the revelation of His glory** you may rejoice with exultation.

1 Peter 5:12 Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard him), I have written to you briefly, **exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!**

II. God's people are aliens by His design, not by our defect.

1 Peter 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as **aliens, scattered (diaspora)** throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are **chosen**

- A. When we hear the term "alien," we rarely think of it as a term of endearment, as a label of privilege.
1. In legal terms, aliens in our country do not have the full rights and privileges of citizenship.
 2. Children sometimes use the term in a derogatory manner to describe their parents or other adults they regard as totally removed and out of touch with world as they see it.
- B. Even in biblical times, being an alien tended to carry a built in disadvantage, so that God in Exodus 22:21 had to instruct even His people, who themselves had been aliens, "You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."
- C. Yet Peter, on behalf of Jesus Christ, tells Christians that we ought to be encouraged to persevere through hardships and through sufferings, precisely because we are aliens! Why should we find any encouragement in being aliens, in being different, in being regarded by the world as not belonging? Because God chose us to be aliens

1 Peter 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, **to those who reside as aliens**, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, **who are chosen² according to the foreknowledge of God the Father**,

1. We are not aliens by defect; we are aliens by design, by God's choice. If we are not popular with the world because we follow Christ, it is not because there is something wrong with us, it is because there is something right with us, it is because God is making us into the image of Jesus, whom the world hates and rejects.

2. Peter is passing on to us what Jesus had taught him. John 15:16-20; 16:1-4,33

John 15:16 **"You did not choose Me but I chose you,** and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. 17 "This I command you, that you love one another. 18 "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. 19 "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; **but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.** 20 "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' **If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you;** if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

John 16:1 "These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling. 2 **"They will make you outcasts** from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God. 3 "These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me. 4 "But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them. These things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you. ... 33 "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. **In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."**

III. Stand firm and rejoice in our alien status among the nations in the hope of inheriting Christ's kingdom at His return.

1 Peter 4:13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, **keep on rejoicing,** so that also at the revelation of His glory **you may rejoice with exultation.**

1. Because the kingdom of this world with its citizens, is passing away, but this is not our home.

1 John 2:17 **The world is passing away,** and also its lusts; **but the one who does the will of God lives forever.**

2. Because we are aliens of the Diaspora - our citizenship is in heaven.

a. The Greek of 1 Peter 1:1 literally reads ...

1 Peter 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, **to the chosen aliens of the Diaspora** of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,

b. diaspora = technical term for the Jews dispersed among the nations (cf Jn 7:35)

John 7:35 The Jews then said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we will not find Him? He is not intending to go to **the Dispersion (diaspora) among the Greeks,** and teach the Greeks, is He?

b. The Jews of the Diaspora were aliens, because their homeland was the promised land of Israel.

c. Christians are the true Diaspora of God. We are aliens, because our citizenship is in heaven.

Philippians 3:20 For **our citizenship is in heaven,** from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

d. We are the true children of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob through faith in Christ. Like them, we consider ourselves strangers and exiles on the earth.

Hebrews 11:13 All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and **having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.**

e. We are citizens, not of a democracy, but of a monarchy, a kingdom over which God the Father anointed His Son, Jesus as King! Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world."

Conclusion

- A. Because God has made us aliens, we will be treated as aliens, outcasts.
- B. To be able to stand firm in the true grace of God, we need to ...
 - 1. Understand that suffering is abnormally normal in this present age.

1 Peter 4:12 Beloved, **do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;**

2 Timothy 3:12 Indeed, **all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.**

Acts 14:22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "**Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.**"

- a. 2 NC magistrates resign this month rather than marry gay couples.
 - b. Columbia interim police chief Santiago's attempt to force Christian police officers to participate in the gay pride parade last year. Sheriff Leon Lottt agreed with him. Implications for our first responders.
- 2. We need to prepare ourselves to suffer according to the will of God in imitation of Christ with a "lose my life for Christ's sake" mentality. Without a "lose your life for Christ's sake" mentality, we will neither live well, nor suffer well, nor die well.

1 Peter 4:1 Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, **arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,**² so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

Luke 9:23 And He was saying to *them* all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must **deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.**²⁴ "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but **whoever loses his life for My sake,** he is the one who will save it.

- a. The important question is not, "Can Christians have fun, be popular, be cool. The important question is, Can Christians endure when life is not fun, when they are not popular or regarded as cool, but regarded as aliens, misfits, those who don't belong? "Can we identify with the Christ who came to His own, yet His own received Him not?
 - b. The Lord through Peter says, " yes you can, Christian," for God chose you to be ...
 - not conformed to this world but conformed to Jesus
 - not a friend of this world, but a friend of God
 - not loved by this world, but loved by the Lord
 - not praised by this world, but honored by Heaven's King
 - not destroyed with this world, but delivered by Christ
- C. So persevere, even through hardships and sufferings, Christian. God's thoughts and intentions toward you are very kind, very affectionate, very encouraging, and absolutely perfect and faithful. You are an alien, not by mutation but by election, not by defect, but by God's design. You are in good company, with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, but most of all with the Christ, who said, "My kingdom is not of this world," and is coming back to make all things new.