

Encouragement for Elect Exiles

- 1 Peter 1:1-2
- A big thank you goes to Janet Phillips and Kari Fox for providing the PowerPoint template for this series! And slides along the way that will help illustrate the themes of this wonderful book. We will spend the next 18 weeks in 1 Peter, which Edmund Clowney calls “a traveler’s guide for Christian pilgrims.” He is writing to exiles, then and now, strangers, temporary residents, people who belong to Christ and are headed for their native land. Let’s look at his greeting today under two main points: the writer and the readers.
- **The Writer (verse 1)**
- Peter needs no introduction to anyone who is a student of the Word. We could spend time looking at key verses in the Gospels and the book of Acts, and I encourage any of you who are not familiar with this man to do that. The Gospel of Mark was written by John Mark who was a companion of Peter and learned the story of Christ from him. Most believe the readers of this letter knew Peter personally or by reputation. They had heard the stories of his walk with Jesus as a disciple, his denial of Jesus at the Lord’s trial, and his restoration as a shepherd to the sheep. But I would suggest that they learned a lot more about Peter just from reading his letter. That’s what we are going to do. This book is significant because of the person that Peter is calling us to be in every relationship we have. It is written to encourage those who suffer as strangers in a strange world, to show us how to respond humbly to suffering and how to be refined by it. I am not there yet and I see that as I read 1 Peter, but I want to grow. This book is relevant because we live in a world that is increasingly like *that* world, the one Peter wrote to.
- Peter identifies himself with the name that Jesus gave to him. He is no longer Simon, a reed that is blown about by the wind of change or the storms of suffering. He is Cephas or Peter, the rock, steady and strong in his resolve to serve Christ to the end, by the grace of God. He also identifies himself as “an apostle of Jesus Christ.” He doesn’t have to defend his apostleship. Peter is comfortable with his calling and authority, but he doesn’t make his office bigger than it is because he is an apostle of *Jesus Christ*. Jesus is the cornerstone, the Son of God who suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous. Peter will tell them *and us* that we can “rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.”
- Peter is writing from Babylon, as we see in the final greeting, which is a code word for Rome. He uses that name perhaps to remind his readers that he too is an exile, a displaced person in a place that hated Christ. The year is estimated to be around 63 A.D. Some date it at 65, but that was when Nero’s fierce persecution of the church was at its height. In fact, the early church fathers were unanimous in their belief that Peter was crucified at the hands of Nero in Rome in 64, and Paul, because he was a Roman citizen, was beheaded in the same year. If Peter were writing in 64, it is likely he would have mentioned Nero, especially when he encourages the readers to be subject to the emperor. That leads us to...
- **The Readers (verses 1-2)**
- “To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion.” This is the new Diaspora, a term that was used to describe the Jews who were scattered in the 6th century when Babylon conquered Jerusalem. But notice Peter doesn’t mention anything about race, ethnicity, or language, but defined these people by their status as God’s elect. This diaspora is made up of mainly Gentiles, who “were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from (their) forefathers.” (verse 18) They did not grow up in the covenant, but Peter greets these Gentiles as God’s chosen people. They are a “chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession.” (2:9) They are elect exiles, and so are we who belong to Christ. We live among a people and in a culture that is not native to us now, as citizens of heaven. I am reminded of that often at Elon, and sometimes it’s just that I cannot keep up with the 18-21 year old

vernacular. When I was growing up, “sick” was a bad thing. We’d feel bad for our sick friends and we didn’t know anything about a sick movie or song. Same with nasty. Nasty was when the kid next to you threw up in the cafeteria, not when he tomahawk-dunked a basketball. “Dope” was something we were told to avoid, not something really cool. Or rad. Either way, we are elect exiles, living between two worlds, passing through this one while living for the glory of Christ by the grace of God so that others may see the hope that is within us and ask us for a reason. We are living in God’s “Witness Rejection” program, and that is not a problem for him at all.

- Look at the four phrases Peter uses to describe the position of the elect. (Read them) Notice that Peter is a Trinitarian. He didn’t have to wait around until the 4th century for the church fathers to write the Nicene Creed. He already believed in One Triune God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit who are all equal but separate persons in the Godhead. Let’s ask the question, then: Why and how are we elect?
- **“according to the foreknowledge of God the Father”** Those who are elect are chosen by God before the foundations of the world. The ESV Study Bible says that the foreknowledge of God “does not merely refer to God’s foreknowing that they would belong to him but also means that he set his covenantal affection on them in advance, foreordaining that they would belong to him.” David Guzik writes, “Election is not election at all if it is only a cause-and-effect arrangement basing God’s choice only on man’s.” That means, believer, that you were the object of God’s loving concern from all eternity. He loved you even before he formed you in the womb. Edmund Clowney writes, “The mystery of God’s choosing will always offend those who stand before God in pride. Forgetting their rebellion and guilt against God, they are ready to accuse him of favoritism. But those whom God’s love has drawn to Christ will always confess the wonder of his initiative in grace.”
- **“in the sanctification of the Spirit”** Those whom God called, he “predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.” (Romans 8:29) That’s the process of sanctification that happens while we are living here, between two worlds. And that work is in the hands of the Holy Spirit. God sent his Son to save us and then God and Jesus sent the Spirit to sanctify us. Jesus said to his disciples, “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.” (John 15:26) This work of sanctification happens over time and is the proof that we belong to the Father. We start to look more like him. I remember years ago when Antioch met on the Elon campus every Sunday that one day we were going through the campus on a Saturday. We were divided up into groups of two or three and were passing out flyers that invited students to come on Sunday to our worship service in Whitley Auditorium. Micah was not with me and one of the students he gave a flyer to said, “Hey, are you related to Mark Fox?” Micah said, “Yeah, he’s my dad.” The student said, “I thought so! You look like him.” I apologized to Micah for that later but the point is that we, the sons and daughters, are being made more and more to look like the Lord in our character and in our obedience.
- **“for obedience to Jesus Christ”** The obedience here starts with the faith we received as a gift from God to believe! Paul talked a lot about that, even in his greeting to the church in Rome he said “we (the apostles) have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations.” (Romans 1:5) Peter says to the elect exiles, “You were chosen by God and are being sanctified by the Spirit *for* obedience to Jesus Christ.” You have the Triune God with you, working on you, walking with you, helping you to stand and promising you an inheritance that, as Scott will talk about next week, is beyond anything our imagination can conceive. So walk. And stand. And obey by faith. How can we do that?
- **“for sprinkling with his blood.”** You will see Peter use some Old Testament references through the letter, perhaps to give these Gentiles some understanding of the tree they were grafted into. The two times in Exodus when blood was sprinkled on people may be in Peter’s mind here. The first was in Exodus 24 when God was confirming his covenant through Moses to the people of God. Moses threw the blood of the sacrifice against the altar, and the people said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.” Then Moses took the other half of the blood and threw it on the people,

saying, "Behold the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you..." That's a heavy weight and a joyful one, that it is by the blood of Christ that we come into God's family. The other time we see this sprinkling is in Exodus 29 when Moses was ordaining Aaron and his sons as priests, according to God's command. He was told to take blood and sprinkle it on them and their garments and God said, "He and his garments shall be holy, and his sons and his sons' garments with him." (Exodus 29:21) Last week we baptized 8 young people and children and I reminded you that they had already been sprinkled, washed, by the blood of Jesus. They were brought into the covenant by grace through faith when they first believed. They entered into the royal priesthood when the Spirit gave them life. The baptism of water was a picture of that.

- Finally, Peter ends his greeting with, "May grace and peace be multiplied to you." That's a great way to end a service of worship. Or sign a card. Or speak to someone we love in Christ. May the grace of God, which you have through Christ, and the peace of God, which you have in Christ, be poured out upon you in greater and greater measures! Amen.
- Prayer
- Greet One Another