

Strangers in the World: 1v1-2

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[0 : 00] Sanctifying in this context means the Holy Spirit sets us apart. He marks us out as those who will belong to God.

In fact, the Holy Spirit's work, his primary work, is to make our belonging to God a reality in our lives. A few years ago, Kirsty and I had to write a will.

And in that will it states that should anything ever happen to us, all that we own, all our belongings, will go to our children. Which means a mortgage, by the way.

They will receive ownership of all that we have. Now for that to happen, we need a guarantor who will enact what the will says to ensure that they receive everything that has been willed to them.

Now in the same way, as we've just seen, in eternity past, the Father has willed, he has chosen us to be his children. And the Holy Spirit acts as the guarantor.

[1 : 07] He sets us apart, making sure that we will become God's children and that we will belong to him. He makes the will of God a reality in our lives.

You see, as a Christian, we might be outsiders in this world. We might feel alone and abandoned and that nobody understands.

We may experience a form of isolation. But because of the Spirit's work in our lives, we have been set apart by God and called to be God's children.

We're not loners, wandering around without purpose and without meaning. We've been set apart, marked out by the Holy Spirit to live as God's people in this world.

Don't let the world make your identity. Let God shape your identity. So we've been chosen by the Father, set apart by the Spirit, and now belong to Jesus.

[2 : 19] Let's read again, chapter 1, verse 1, to God's elect. Verse 2, who've been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the setting apart work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ, and sprinkling by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Now, to help us understand this, we need to go back to a very important occasion in the Old Testament. So keep your finger in 1 Peter. Let's go back to Exodus, chapter 24.

Exodus, chapter 24. And here we get an understanding of what that little phrase, for obedience to Jesus, and sprinkling by the blood of Jesus, what that means.

So in Exodus 24, what's happened is, the people of Israel, remember, were taken into slavery in Egypt, and God comes, and he rescues them from Egypt, and he delivers them across, and promises to bring them to a new land and a new place.

And towards that land, on their journey, God calls all the people together at Mount Sinai. And at this mountain, God enters into relationship with these people.

[3 : 50] It's where God makes a covenant. He makes a promise to belong to these people. And that's where we come to in Exodus, chapter 24, verse 7. So here they are, gathered at the mountain.

God is speaking through Moses, their leader. Verse 7. Then he, that's Moses, took the book of the covenant and read it to the people. And they responded, we will do everything the Lord has said.

We will obey. So everything that God says, we're going to do what God says. We're going to obey him. Verse 8. Moses then took the blood of an animal that had been sacrificed and 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.

So on the one side, the people, as they come into relationship with God, he says, the people say, we're going to obey God. We promise to obey God. And then God, on the other side, through the symbol of the sprinkling of the blood, promises to be committed to these people.

It's God's way of saying, you belong to me and I belong to you. I am going to be your God and you're going to be my people. But why would he start sprinkling blood?

[5 : 16] It sounds really gross, doesn't it? You could imagine just blood being thrown around all on top of you just now. Why that? Well, the blood underlined the seriousness of this relationship, this commitment, one to each other.

In other words, God is saying, I will give my life for you. I will be prepared to shed my blood for you. I will be ready to die for you so that you belong to me. Of course, as the story unfolds, the problem is the people keep on breaking their side of the promise.

They continually disobey. They continually walk away from God and the relationship to God is completely broken. But now, as we see in 1 Peter, through Jesus, our belonging to him is now made permanent.

It can never be broken because Jesus has come and he has stepped in for us. First of all, Jesus gives us his perfect obedience so that we always stand before God as right and as pure and as blameless because Jesus has clothed us with his perfection.

[6 : 37] But not only that, second, Jesus has taken the blame for all of our disobedience. And as Jesus died on the cross, all my disobedience was placed on him.

He suffers the punishment that I deserve. He gives his life for me. He sheds his blood for me. He dies in place of me so that I, a rebel, can belong to him for all eternity.

By faith in the death of Jesus, it's just as if we've been sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, a sign of God's eternal commitment, telling us time and time again, saying, I have died for you.

You belong to me and I belong to you and I am your God and you will be my people. We have been set apart by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus and the sprinkling of his blood.

You see, if we are Christians, we don't belong in this world. But the point is, we do belong to Jesus.

[7 : 59] We cannot get better or greater than that. If God has chosen you from before time began, if he has set you apart by his Holy Spirit, if he sent his Son to die for you, then you do belong.

You are God's chosen people to live for him in this world. In a moment, we are all going to walk through that door.

And if you are a follower of Jesus, you will walk out through there as an exile. It is like we will be scattered to different places.

We will go to our places of work tomorrow morning. We will go into college or school. We will be mixing with our friends in our neighbourhoods. We will be going back home to our families.

And it is not going to be easy. It will be hostile. It will be difficult. People will not always want to be your friend. They won't agree with what you have to say.

[9 : 09] They will shut you out and push you out. But our sense of identity is not shaped by this world. It is shaped by God. Remember, we are elect exiles.

Yes, we are strangers in this world, but chosen by God to live for him. And as we go, let us go with this great promise.

Look at the end of verse 2. Chapter 1, verse 2. Grace and peace be yours in abundance. As God's loved and treasured and chosen child, he will not leave you alone and isolated.

He is not about to give up on you and say, just live this life on your own and get on with it. God will give you his peace and his grace in abundance.

It's going to be like an overflowing fountain pouring down upon you on your life. What you need to live as a stranger in this world will be much more than you need.

[10 : 14] All the resources that you need to live for God will be poured out upon your life. In your weakness, you will have his grace. When you struggle to keep going as a Christian and the pressure seems too much and you just want to give in and give up and conform to everybody else, his grace will be sufficient for you.

in fear, you will have his peace. When you worry about what people think of you, when what you believe costs you your friends, his peace will be your comfort.

He will fill you. He will be with you. Do not let the world shape your identity. Live as the chosen people of God, loved by the Father in eternity past, set apart by the Holy Spirit to belong to him, belonging to Jesus, the one who died for you to give you meaning and purpose.

So let's go with confidence. Let's go as God's elect exiles to serve him and to live for him in this hostile world.

Let's pray together. Let's pray together. Father, we recognize that at times we do feel alone and we wonder where home actually is.

[12 : 05] We struggle