

# Elect exiles

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[ 0 : 00 ] 1 Peter Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood.

Grace and peace be yours in abundance. 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, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.

This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, 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. In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith, of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire, may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Though you have not seen him, you love him, and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him, and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

[ 1 : 29 ] Concerning this salvation, the prophets who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow.

It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.

Even angels long to look into these things. Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.

As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance, but just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do, for it is written, Be holy because I am holy.

Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. For you know that it was not with perishable things, such as silver or gold, that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

[ 2 : 46 ] He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth, so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply from the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

For all people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the word that was preached to you.

Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.

Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

As you come to him, the living stone, rejected by humans, but chosen by God and precious to him, you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

[ 4 : 03 ] For in Scripture it says, See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who puts trust in him will never be put to shame.

Now to you who believe, this stone is precious, but to those who do not believe, the stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone, and a stone that causes people to stumble, and a rock that makes them fall.

They stumble because they disobey the message, which is also what they were destined for. But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Once you were not a people, but now you are a people of God. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires which wage war against your soul.

Live such good lives among the pagans that though they accuse you of doing well, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority, whether to the emperor as the supreme authority, or to governors who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.

[ 5 : 24 ] For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover up for evil. Live as God's slaves.

Show proper respect to everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God. Honor the emperor. Slaves in reverent fear of God, submit yourselves to your masters, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh.

For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing well and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps.

He committed no sin and no deceit was found in his mind. When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate. When he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

[ 6 : 30 ] He himself poured our sins and his body on the cross so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls.

Wives, in the same way, submit yourselves to your own husbands so that if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.

Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewellery or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great work in God's sight.

For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her Lord.

You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. Husbands, in the same way, be considerate as you live with your wives and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

[ 7 : 42 ] Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult.

On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech.

They must turn from evil and do good. They must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer.

But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed.

Do not fear their threats, do not be frightened. But in your hearts, revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

[ 8 : 39 ] But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

For it is better if it is God's will to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous to bring you to God.

He was put to death in the body but made alive in the spirit. After being made alive, he went and made proclamations to the imprisoned spirits, to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.

In it, only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water. And this water symbolises baptism that now saves you also, not the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge of a clear conscience towards God.

It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him. Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also to the same attitude because whoever suffers in the body is finished with sin.

[ 9 : 50 ] As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do, living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgy, carousing and testpot idolatry.

They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living and they heap abuse on you. But they all have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to human standards in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.

The end of all things is near. Therefore, be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. Above all, love each other deeply because love covers over a multitude of sins.

Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

[ 10 : 58 ] If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.

To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen. Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed for the spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed but praise God that you bear that name.

For it is time for judgment to begin with God's household and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And if it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?

[ 12 : 07 ] So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful creator and continue to do good. To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed.

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them, not because you must but because you are willing as God wants you to be, not pursuing dishonest gain but eager to serve, not lording it over those entrusted to you but being examples to the flock.

And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility towards one another because God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble.

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. Be alert and of sober mind.

Your enemy, the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

[13:27] And the God of all grace who called you to his eternal glory in Christ after you have suffered a little will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

To him be the power forever and ever. Amen. With the help of Silas whom I regard as a faithful brother I have written to you briefly encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it. She who is in Babylon chosen together with you sends you her greetings and so does my son Mark. Greet one another with a kiss of love.

Peace to all of you who are in Christ. Do you take your seats and we'll turn again to 1 Peter. So here we are at the start of this new series.

I hope that hearing the letter read through in one go has helped you to start to get a feel for the flow of the argument that Peter is making for what he intends us to understand, for what he wants to say to those churches that he was writing to then, those believers in those places and through them to say to us as well.

[14:37] It's easy, isn't it, when we come to consider God's word, it's easy to get kind of focused into a couple of verses and lose that sense of the big picture.

So as we start this new series, it's helpful to get our bearings to see where we stand. We ask those, you know, who, what, where, when, why questions so that we know where we're heading as we come into this series.

So, take a few minutes to talk about who wrote this letter and why. And the why is, of course, the more important of those two, isn't it? Why write this letter?

Indeed, why is this part of our Bibles? And for that matter, why study this letter right now rather than any other part of Scripture? My objective this morning is quite simple.

I want to end up in a situation where you are excited about diving in to this book over the coming weeks. It was written nearly 2,000 years ago and yet, it is of vital importance for us today and I'm hoping that that excitement is going to come from answering that why question.

[15:45] Why we care about this book. And actually, the who question is going to give us some of the why. Why do we care about this book? Well, first, because of its author.

We ask who wrote this book and we have our answer there in the very first words, don't we? Peter. Specifically, Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ. We should listen to these words because they are the words of an apostle.

The words of an authorized representative of Jesus Christ himself. This is Peter who was first known as Simon. Simon the fisherman called to be one of Jesus' disciples.

This is the Peter who answered Jesus' question, who do you say I am with that affirmation? You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Peter, the first to declare Jesus' true identity.

This is the Simon who Peter, who was therefore named Peter at rock because, said Jesus, Peter is the rock on which the church was to be built.

[16:52] On the basis of Peter's declaration of Jesus' messianic identity, Jesus' mission, on the basis of that declaration, the church is established and built up.

Here he is, writing to the church, writing to build up the church. Of course, this is also the same Peter who denied Jesus, who heard the cock crow and said, no, I do not know this man.

This is the Peter who failed his Savior on numerous occasions. So this is Peter of the supreme highs and of the miserable lows.

Peter who was memorably redeemed and reinstated by Jesus after his resurrection. Peter, therefore, is a man just like us. Peter's relatable, I think, isn't he?

We want to listen to the words of a man who has failed just the same way as we do. A man who has let down his Lord just as we do. And a man who has been gloriously reinstated.

[18:01] Well, Peter's more than that, isn't he? He's more than a relatable friend because Peter here writes these words consciously. He is an apostle of Jesus Christ. A man sent on behalf of his master, sent with a unique authority to proclaim, to declare truth.

A man appointed by his Savior to go and define the doctrine of the church. This isn't just the opinion of a relatable friend, is it?

No, we have the authoritative word of one who speaks for the Lord of the church himself. When he comes to the close of his letter, Peter says that what he's written is the true grace of God.

And he calls his recipients to stand fast in that grace. So why do we care about this letter? Well, we care because of its source. We care because it is true grace.

We care because if we try and stand anywhere else, then we will surely fall. So we care because of who it's from. Why else do we care about this book?

[ 19 : 09 ] Well, we care because of who this letter is for. Maybe that seems an odd thing to say. After all, it was written for a whole bunch of different people who didn't look very much like you and me, who lived halfway around the world, who lived thousands of years ago.

Seems an odd reason to say we should care about it, but it's true. We care because it's written to God's elect. Exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through the sanctifying work of the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood.

Let's break that down, who Peter says he's writing to. The provinces, here they are. That's basically modern-day Turkey. So this is a large area, nearly 130,000 square miles, about one and a half times the size of the UK.

As you'd expect, therefore, there's a few cities scattered around, but lots of rural terrain in between. Various indigenous peoples in this area, plus a whole bunch who've been settled into the area by policies like the Babylonian Empire who conquered a nation and deliberately picked up those people and put them down somewhere else, distributed them across the empire so that they wouldn't be together to rebel.

That kind of policy means that peoples have been shifted around. So there's lots of different languages being spoken in this area. There's an uneasy relationship with this area to kind of Greco-Roman culture as a whole.

[ 20 : 46 ] In other words, the geography of the area that Peter is writing to is very diverse. This is not like the letters that Paul writes to a specific church in a specific city in one particular small area.

Now what Peter writes is deliberately intended for this wide audience, for this varied group of people scattered across the area. Sometimes people talk about these two letters that Peter writes and James and John's letters and Jude.

Sometimes these group of letters are called the Catholic epistles. That's Catholic in the sense of universal, intended for a wide, diverse group.

So these letters are written for a very broad audience. That means that they are perhaps more readily applicable. We don't have to quite so much read ourselves into one specific situation, but we can assume Peter is deliberately addressing a broad group.

But probably more interesting than where these people are is who they are. These people are elect exiles. There's a lot packed in there.

[ 22 : 00 ] Wayne Grudem, he says, this is a two-word sermon to Peter's readers, a reminder of their identity. And as we'll see, this is descriptive of our identity as well.

And in this idea of being elect exiles, there are at least two relationships being defined in those couple of words. Peter calls these recipients of his letter elect.

Now that defines their relationship with Almighty God, doesn't it? Sometimes, sometimes we're in danger of kind of sliding, drifting into imagining that our relationship with God is actually a relationship kind of between two peers.

As if it were somehow equal parties involved in this relationship. But Peter's very clear even in these opening verses and throughout his letter, very clear that the initiative is all from God.

It's God's choice that we have a relationship with Him. It's implicit in the word elect and elaborated further on. It's clear here in this opening address.

[ 23 : 10 ] And this theme of being chosen by God is a theme that Peter's going to return to at several points over the course of his letter. Again and again, he talks about his recipients as God's chosen people.

Here it is at the start. It's there again at the end, chapter 5, verse 10, called to the eternal glory of God in Christ. And here in these opening couple of verses, we see this relationship of being God's elect.

We see it defined in Trinitarian terms, don't we? It is initiated by the three persons of God. Do you see them there? Father, Son, and Spirit all there in verse 2.

So it's according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. According to that foreknowledge, they have been chosen. Even before the recipients of Peter's letter knew about it, God was at work.

God's initiative is operative in their lives. This foreknowledge, this isn't just an abstract, theoretical knowing what's going to happen. No, we have here the language of choosing, don't we?

[ 24 : 21 ] Clear here and throughout the letter that God is actively at work. God's fatherly care at work in their lives even before the world was made.

Think about that. God has chosen deliberately people for his own possession. And not just the father at work, this is through the sanctifying work of the Spirit.

Sanctifying, this is another word for making holy, setting something apart for special use, consecration. We use these variety of different words, they all mean essentially the same thing. But when theologians, when preachers, perhaps when we as Christians, when we talk about sanctification, sanctification, often what we mean when we talk about sanctification is we mean the process.

We mean kind of what happens between coming to faith and death or Christ's return, that process by which we become more holy as it were. We are increasingly set apart for God, our lives are gradually conformed more and more to the way that he calls us to live.

[ 25 : 34 ] Those years and decades being conformed into line with God's will, that's usually what we mean when we talk about sanctification, that process. And there certainly is ongoing work to be done, isn't there?

But here in verse 2, here when Peter writes about the sanctifying work of the Spirit, what he seems to mean is part of the calling of the believer.

That's what he's talking about here, isn't it? The choosing, the process that's at work here is that initial call. So this sanctifying work of the Spirit here where Peter talks about sanctification, this is what takes place in them when they first heard and responded to the word of God.

In other words, the recipients of Peter's letter are already holy. Sometimes we imagine there's this kind of declaration of official righteousness, as it were.

We're declared to be forgiven, but then we gradually become more and more real, as it were, more and more actual in our lives. And there is something to that, but we can't lose sight of the fact that from the moment that they are called, they are holy.

[ 26 : 51 ] They are set apart for that which God intends. That is true of you and me as well. If you have received new birth, if the Holy Spirit has worked within you, then that means you are holy.

You are holy people. And God's call then is to live that out, to act as if it were true, to increasingly behave in a holy way because that is the reality of who you are.

Not just that you will one day be holy, but right now, today, you are holy people. God's love. It is the foreknowledge of the Father, the sanctification of the Spirit, and then finally, the third person of the Trinity, obedient to Jesus Christ, sprinkled with his blood.

Behind this phrase of obedience and sprinkling, behind this, is the ceremony of Exodus chapter 24. Okay, in Exodus 24, Moses tells the people God's laws.

And when Moses tells people how God expects them to behave, they respond, everything the Lord has said, we will do. They pledge obedience.

[ 28 : 09 ] And then Moses responds by sacrificing the animals and sprinkling the people with the blood of the bulls that he's just sacrificed. They declare obedience and they are sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice.

And here, these same two elements are related to the person of Jesus, given new life in Jesus, the same obedience and the same sprinkling, but rather than the blood of a bull that cannot take away sins, instead, the blood of the perfect sacrifice, the blood of Jesus that truly takes away sin.

And so here, Peter says, Christians enter this new covenant relationship, sealed again with blood, and called again to obedience.

Therefore, the recipients of this letter are elect, chosen of God and sealed into a new covenant made holy by the Holy Spirit.

They are elect. They are also exiles. So they've, Peter's defined, as it were, the relationship with God in the word elect and then he takes another relationship, the relationship of the recipients of his letter, their relationship to the world that they live in.

[ 29 : 27 ] So we've gone from the vertical to the horizontal. Now, the word exiles has some issues, doesn't it? Don't get confused.

When we hear the word exiles, certainly, if you're like me, we think about a punishment, don't we? You know, banishment from the kingdom, those kind of medieval, you know, you can choose death

or exile, banished to another place.

But that isn't quite what the word Peter uses means. Yes, it's true, some of the people to whom this word applies, some of them were kind of involuntary exiles, as it were, but not all of them.

This applies, too, to anyone living in a country that is not their own. So the older NIV, some of you may well be looking at that, it uses the word strangers rather than exiles.

That has the advantage of not sounding like a punishment, but then sounds like they don't really know the people who they're living among, don't really know their neighbors or care about them. Peter's not trying to say that.

[ 30 : 30 ] You could use the word foreigners, but then you have to ask, well, foreign to what? On a technical level, the best word is probably the word sojourners, which means exactly this sort of temporary but long-term resident without citizenship.

The trouble is, none of you have any idea what the word sojourners means unless I come and define it for you. So we have this kind of awkward situation, but the key point here is the country where they live is not their home.

They are not citizens, where they live. It is not their forever home, as it were. They may well be there for some time. They don't have any immediate plans to move.

They're not just tourists passing through. It is their home in some meaningful way, and yet it is not their home. And commentators debate to what extent that's true on a kind of physical level.

Some suggest Peter's writing primarily to displaced Jews. You know, I talked about the Babylonian Empire's policy of taking people and scattering them across the diaspora left over from those days of exile and indeed a few movements since people living in a country not their own.

[ 31 : 47 ] That may well be true of some of the recipients of the letter, but I don't think that's the majority because some of the language in this letter applies much more naturally to non-Jews than to Jews.

So don't get too hung up on a kind of physical sense of them being exiles. What's certainly true, what all of the commentators agree on, is that there is definitely a metaphorical sense to this language.

The recipients of Peter's letter are exiles wherever they live. This would be true of a Jew living in Jerusalem that Peter could call him an exile. This is true however they got there because nowhere in this world is truly their home.

A guy called Ed Clowney, he says Peter is writing a traveler's guide for Christian pilgrims, people passing through. He reminds them their hope is kind of anchored back home.

They're called to endure alienation as strangers, but to do so having a heavenly citizenship and identity. their identity isn't based on where they live.

[ 32 : 59 ] Their identity isn't based on who their friends and family might be. Their identity, your identity, my identity, it is based on who we are in God's family.

In fact, precisely because we are elect, because we are chosen into God's family, because of that, we are exiles on this earth.

because we are chosen into God's family, this world is no longer our home. We are exiles on the earth. Now, as we'll see as we work our way through the letter, that doesn't mean for a moment that we should be withdrawing from the world, that we don't care about what happens here, that it's somehow irrelevant to us.

It doesn't mean that we disdain and dismiss the world, but what it does mean is we are secure in our election by God the Father, not threatened by the suffering that is surely going to come.

Peter's going to talk quite a bit about that. Verse 6 talks about suffering grief in all kinds of trials, but Peter's clear. Choose suffering as preferable to sin.

[ 34 : 10 ] Follow in the footsteps of a suffering Savior. Believe that God uses suffering in the believer's life for good. It would be natural, wouldn't it, when our faith is mocked and criticized, natural that we might waver, that we might think, hmm, maybe this isn't quite so true as once I thought, but this letter calls us to stand firm, to stand firm in this extraordinary good news of the gospel of grace because our citizenship is in heaven, because this world is not our home.

Verse 3 tells us we have a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. So we may well be far from home. We are, in many ways, passing through because this world is not our home.

And yet, even though that is true, we have this living hope. hope. So my prayer is that that hope will be renewed, reinvigorated, maybe even kindled for the first time as we study this letter together in

the coming weeks.

Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, thank you for Peter. Thank you for his life lived alongside you for those years, for what he learned, more importantly, for what he received from you.

Thank you for this letter that he wrote. Thank you for its impact upon the church long ago. And thank you for the impact that it can have on our lives. We pray that you would indeed use these words even this morning and in the weeks ahead to kindle that hope within us that we might rejoice in the resurrection of our Savior.

[ 36 : 00 ] Amen. So, our closing song this morning recognizes that reality of suffering that the verses talk about, that this letter recognizes suffering comes, and the letter is