

1 Peter

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 14 April 2024

Preacher: Rev. Daniel Avitan

[0 : 00] Let us pray. Father, as with every week, we ask that you would help us to be people that submit to your word. We wouldn't be people that try to bend your word or get around it, but that it would confront us.

Lord, this morning, as we enter into 1 Peter, Lord, teach us what it means to be faithful citizens of heaven, but here on earth.

Lord, empower us. Help us not to just hear words and think it's pleasant and nice and then go on with our lives, Lord, by your Holy Spirit. Change us, we ask. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.

A huge question that I wrestle with, and many of you wrestle with, at least the ones that I've talked to, is how we ought to live as God's people in our city, in a culture that is on one hand tolerant, on one hand it's relatively free and just, it's full of opportunity.

Often quite pleasant people live around us, we work with, even the people that aren't super pleasant aren't terribly mean. Yet at the same time, we live in a culture that is somewhat incompatible with living as a faithful Christian in this life.

[1 : 25] We are trying, by God's strength, to live faithfully in Ottawa in 2024. Do you not feel this tension? Do you not feel the push and pull?

Sometimes you feel like you are a fish swimming along the current. You wonder, this is just what it looks like to be a Christian in this time.

Sometimes you look no different from your neighbor or co-worker. You dress the same, you eat the same, you look for the same deals, you celebrate when you get gas under \$1.60.

You share a lot of the same victories, so to speak, the same worldview. But, on the flip side, you feel the pressures as you try to live as a Christian, and you feel this incompatibility with what it means to be a Christian in Ottawa 2024.

And maybe you kick the tires around, well maybe we just move out of the city. And we just kind of pull away from, move out of the city in a figurative way, literally as well.

[2 : 38] But we're just pulling out. We don't want to be engaged. We want to be completely separate. It's too hard. We want to unplug in as many possible ways as we can, because it's just too hard to live as a Christian in our day.

Should we engage? Should we pull out? King Solomon says something wonderful in Ecclesiastes.

He says there's nothing new under the sun. Every generation of Christians, every generation of believers, all the way to the opening chapters of Genesis, God's people have had to wrestle with this question of how to live faithfully as his people in society.

How to thread the needle between conformity on one hand and resistance on the other. You feel this tension. You struggle with it. If you do, you're in good company.

If you don't, you might in the weeks to come. Fortunately for us, 1 Peter equips us and encourages us in this regard. Peter is writing to a number of different churches in what is modern-day Turkey.

- [3 : 56] He is writing in the time of Nero. If you know Nero, you know that he was a very cruel Caesar. He was not just a guy that you disagreed with.
- He would kill you. He would flay you. He would crucify you. And here, Peter is saying to the churches in this first century, in Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey, and to us today, there is a way forward.
- And it's not pulling out, and it's not assimilating fully. So, as we get into our text this morning, we're actually not going to be in 1 Peter 1, 1-12.
- We're actually just going to be in 1 Peter 1, verses 1-2. And a part of that is just the way Peter has written this epistle. If you ever get lost on, like, Wikipedia scrolling, you look up something, and then there's hyperlinks everywhere.
- You get excited about, oh, I want to learn about this. And you click it, and then you're like 12 clicks in, and you realize it's just an endless, bottomless hole of information.
- [5 : 13] But it's deep, and it's thick. Peter's kind of like that. He uses a lot of theological terms, a lot of Old Testament allusions, that you could double-click, and you're not going to understand the full meaning of what's happening until you know what Peter is getting at.
- And verses 1 and 2 set the table, so to speak, for the rest of the letter, and it is full of these allusions. Verse 1 and 2, it's thick, it's deep, and we're going to explore it this morning.
- And we're going to look at three different aspects of verses 1 and 2. And again, in mind, in the back of our minds, we have this question, how do we live as God's people in Ottawa in 2024 faithfully?
- The first is who we are. What's our identity? Peter will tell us that we're elect exiles. The second thing he will tell us is that, or the second question we'll have answered is, how we have come to be these elect exiles.
- And that is through the triune God and his salvation. And then finally, in light of who we are and how we came to be who we are, how are we then to live?
- [6 : 26] And we'll look at the last verse in verse 2. So if you have a Bible, turn with me to 1 Peter 1, starting in the first verse. There's still a couple more Bibles in the back. If you want to grab it at any time, don't worry about interrupting me.
- I'd be very pleased if you would follow along. I'll read verse 1. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ to those who are elect exiles of the dispersion, in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia, according to the fore...
- I'll just read... I'll stop there. So Peter is introducing himself. He's writing to a collection of churches in Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey. Almost certainly, they are predominantly Gentiles.
- That is non-Jewish. These are people that have come from all sorts of different religious backgrounds. Almost certainly, they have multiple gods that they are serving, one of whom would almost certainly be Caesar.
- They are non-Jewish. They're not a part of the biblical people of God that we read about in the Old Testament. They're not Israelites. And this is significant because what we see Peter do is that he calls them elect exiles of the dispersion or the diaspora.
- [7 : 49] These terms are full of meaning. Remember, this is like Wikipedia. We can double-click, double-click, double-click, and we're going to have a wealth of information. So we're not going to exhaust these terms, but we need to take a look at them.
- These terms are full of meaning. Specifically, the terms, again, elect exiles in the dispersion or diaspora. And they all allude back to the Old Testament people of God, the Israelite nation.

In fact, in chapter 2, so much will Peter identify these predominantly Gentile churches with Old Testament language that is specific to the nation of Israel that he will call these people a holy nation.

This is a term only for Israelites. It's remarkable what he is doing. And it's significant for three reasons. The first is Peter's a pious Jew. And if you know the story of Peter, especially from Acts 10, Peter isn't super jazzed about non-Jewish people.

I mean, I think the majority of the people here, if not everybody here, they're non-Jews. Peter, back in Acts 10, not super fond of you guys. Maybe he doesn't necessarily hate you, but he's skittish around you.

[9 : 07] He's skittish around non-Jews. He thinks like, listen, the Jewish Messiah has come for the Jewish people. Sucks to be you, Gentiles. I mean, it's, maybe we can include a Rahab here.

We can include a Ruth there. But overall, we're not going to, all of a sudden, destroy boundary markers. In Acts 10, it takes God three, it takes Peter three visions from God to even warm up to the idea of visiting Cornelius, if you know the story.

Cornelius being a non-Jewish Roman soldier who comes to faith, him and his family. Later on in Galatians, we see Paul talking about a situation where he had to confront Peter for treating non-Jewish believers as second-class citizens.

It was a problem. You see, things are kind of hard for us to understand in modern day times because, by and large, we say, can a Jew become a Christian?

But in the early church, it was, can a non-Jew become a Christian? The first church council in Acts 15 dealt with this very question.

[10 : 26] So it's remarkable that Peter, this Israelite nationalist, so to speak, the person who's skittish around non-Jews, treating non-Jewish believers as second-class citizens, he's not saying, hey, listen, you're okay now.

He is using the very language, this inclusive language, as if they are Jews just like him. This ought not to be lost on us.

What Peter is doing is remarkable, and what he is communicating is that God has done an incredible thing, that he has welcomed all people from all backgrounds, regardless of your ethnicity, into the family of God, if you have put your faith and trust in Christ.

The second significant bit about this is that Peter calls them exile. So going back to the first part, he calls them elect, chosen people, that is a term only used for the Jewish people.

Now he calls them elect, or foreigners. Peter is connecting this church, this group of churches in Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey, back to the father of the faith, Abraham himself.

[11 : 38] Abraham, he was the father of the Israelite nation, but he was a foreigner. He came from what is modern-day Iraq's, not exactly sure exactly where it is, but he was called out of a distant land and became a foreigner in the land of Canaan, where God would give him and his descendants the land that really points to heaven.

It's a covenantal term that's connected to Abraham, which means that God made a promise to Abraham and his descendants forever, and that was only understood to be for the Israelites, to the Jewish people.

And now Peter seems to be extending that again out to the non-Jewish people. It seems that through Christ something groundbreaking has happened.

There is one true faith, and it is now for all people, again, regardless of ethnicity. All who put their faith in Christ are now foreigners, pilgrims on the way.

They're meant for a future home. As Abraham went to Canaan and God promised him a future home, so too are we, promised a new heavenly city.

[12 : 57] And all of a sudden, we start to see that Peter is helping us to understand who we are in Jesus, which is critical if we are to live out this life faithfully here in Ottawa in 2024.

And the final bit of significance, it's connected to this term dispersion or diaspora. So in the biblical story, the Israelites became dispersed. Why? Because they were not faithful to God's covenant.

They worshipped other gods. They went after other things that displeased God, that were evil, sinful, broken, and bent. So God gave them up to their unfaithfulness, and they were scattered.

Assyria, Persia, or Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, across the known world. But God promised that he would not allow his people to remain forever dispersed.

They would be gathered once again through the might and sacrifice of a Savior, the Messiah. They would be given new hearts. A new covenant would be made with them.

[14 : 05] Their sins would be remembered no more. Their hope would be in the old, would not be in the old Jerusalem, but in the heavenly Jerusalem. These Gentiles who put their faith in the Messiah, Jesus, had completely new identities.

They were God's people enjoying the promises that God made to his elect Israelites, Israelites, but now it included elect Gentiles. Peter is telling us that if you are in Christ, you are no longer the same.

The feelings of being unsettled, not belonging, constantly wandering, and when I say wandering, not literally, but you're just unsettled. You can't figure life out.

This is no longer your identity. You have a home. You are a people. You have a father. You have a God. And this is a promise that is rooted, this new identity of yours, it is rooted not in the changing fads, the shifting values, but in the unchanging God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of creation.

And all of a sudden, you are no longer a second-class citizen. You are not far away. You have a new identity, and your identity is Christian. This is good news.

[15 : 30] And what is even better news about this is that the initiative was not yours, but it was the initiative of God. It's the God before the world began, he had in mind redemption, and it included you.

And this brings us to our second point. If that is our identity, how have we come to this identity? Look with me in verse 2. We'll read verse 1, actually, the second part of verse 1, and then we'll read verse 2.

To those who are the elect exiles of the dispersion, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ, and for sprinkling with his blood.

Your fundamental identity as a child of God was not some ad hoc decision by God. It wasn't some kind of plan B. God the Father has always known that you would be saved.

Always knew it. He always had in mind a plan of rescue, of redemption, and it included you. We read John 10 that Jesus knows his sheep.

[16 : 45] And what's implied there is that he knows them, every aspect of them, who they are, how they function, their fears, their sins, the secrets that they keep.

There was never a time that he did not know you and did not purpose to proclaim the gospel to you so that you could hear and respond and come to faith in Jesus.

He took the initiative. He made the first move. He knew that your wanderings were the undoing of you.

And what does he do? He saves you. He makes you a citizen of the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem, heaven. Friends, this is the doctrine of election.

There is much more to talk about, about this doctrine, and maybe I'll end up touching on it in our midweek sermon recap because it really is incredibly deep and big and thick.

[17 : 49] But the big takeaway is that we can be assured that God extends mercy and grace to us not because we have had a stellar week, not because we come from a great family or a great people group, or our parents did really well and we're reaping the benefits of their good living.

It was only by God's good pleasure that you are saved. The initiative is God's. He is the one who has done it all and often, in fact, in every case, it is in spite of the things you've done.

It's because of the things you've done that he saves you because you need saving. And this is good news because our salvation doesn't rise and fall by our own strength and efforts.

I am somebody who believes and then struggles with belief and then struggles with belief and then struggles with belief a bit more and then sometimes the belief kind of goes up maybe two, three, four levels.

I'm feeling pretty good about myself and then something happens and I struggle with belief. If my salvation was tied to that, I'd be in a pitiful state.

[19 : 03] It would be by the whims of how I felt or how hard I tried or the way I ate the night before. I don't know. The point is it would be on me.

God says something different. It is by his good pleasure and his alone that he saves us and this is a work, friends, of the Holy Spirit. So we see that God the Father has foreknown us in salvation and that the Holy Spirit then plays this critical and huge part in our salvation.

The Holy Spirit allows us to hear the Gospel, to see our need for the Gospel, to respond to the Gospel in a worthy manner and grow in the knowledge of the Gospel. In many ways, the Holy Spirit enlivens us.

He gives us the very impetus to even follow the Lord and therefore the Holy Spirit transforms us. first, our identity. We no longer are we citizens of this earth.

We are citizens of heaven and then by his strength he conforms us, he changes us, that we abide by and obey what God has called us to.

[20 : 14] Sin no longer has a hold on our lives. This is the doctrine of sanctification. It's at work with us through the Spirit of God. Again, sanctification, big word.

Think about a refining fire that God through the Holy Spirit is burning the bad parts away from us so that we would be a pure silver or pure gold.

Much more to talk about with sanctification. Again, that's a double click. That's a full day of double clicking right there. And this work of the Holy Spirit ultimately points us to Christ, the incarnate God, the Son of God.

So, we are foreknown by God the Father in the sanctification of the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for the sprinkling with His blood.

And again, we see this allusion back to the Old Testament and it goes back to Exodus 24 and the people of Israel are before God. They have been rescued from Egypt. They have been brought through the desert.

[21 : 11] They receive the law and God makes a covenant with them at Sinai, this big mountain where God shows Himself strong and mighty. And there's a sacrifice. Moses, who is the leader, he takes the blood that is sacrificed.

Stick with me because blood and sprinkling, it sounds weird, but he takes the blood and the people are before him and they promise to obey God and he sprinkles them with the blood.

It's a bizarre scene for us, but this is what happens in the Old Testament. The sprinkling of the blood alludes back to this scene and really what it connects us to is that God is, He has chosen a people of His own and He is consecrating them.

He is separating them. He is making them holy, not in what they do, but by their connection to Him so that they would then be obedient to the mission of God.

But there was a problem because the Israelites, they vowed to follow God and to obey Him. If you know the story, it is time after time after time again that they fail and they say, oh, we're sorry, we'll get back on the cart, we're going to keep going and obeying God and then there's this progressive evil and sin and brokenness that seeps into their very being.

[22 : 40] I mentioned the diaspora before. Ultimately, they get dispersed. And why? It's because ultimately their hearts were not transformed.

That the blood of bulls and goats could not transform their hearts. But what Peter is saying here is that by the sprinkling of Jesus' blood, those that have put their faith in Jesus and what He has done on the cross, this is what all of those sacrifices pointed to.

This is the once and for all sacrifice and that God, if He has sprinkled His blood upon you, Jesus, the Son of God, you are His. You are consecrated.

But He does something even greater. He gives you a new heart. He transforms you so that you are capable of obeying Him. He has atoned for your sins.

He has consecrated you as a holy people. He has given you the ability, a new heart, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, to then obey Him. This is the big takeaway.

[23 : 49] Our identity could only be transformed by the sacrificial, life-giving, life-saving death of Jesus upon a Roman cross so that He calls you and takes you for His own.

It took that and nothing less than that for you to have new life, a new identity, a new citizenship in the heavenly city. This is why all other forms of spirituality aren't just lesser forms of spirituality.

They are false forms of spirituality. This tells us that true spirituality can only be rooted in atonement. What do I mean by that? True spirituality can only happen when we are connected to the only and perfect God because He has taken away our sins, remembering them no more.

That we are no longer called by our old names, but we are called by our new names so that when God, the Father, looks at us, He doesn't see our brokenness and evil and our sin and the abuse that we have leveled at people and the nasty words we have said or the gossip we have engaged in, the promiscuity that we would like to hide.

He sees Christ Himself and we can know Him in a completely honest and vulnerable way and this is true spirituality.

[25 : 20] other forms of spirituality would have us try really hard to tip the scales back onto the good side to figure out a way to erase the red ledger, the red ink on the ledger.

It would find a way to pretend that what happened in the past didn't really happen or we can excuse it or find nuance but none of that will connect us to the one true God and therefore our spirituality is false.

We might feel grounded, we might have excellent breathing techniques, we might be feeling like we are at one with the universe but all of that are just feelings, that is not true spirituality.

What Peter is telling us is that true spirituality can only be rooted in the atonement of our sins by the blood of Christ. Friends, this is good news and yet this is our new identity, this is how we've got our new identity, we are not ours, no longer, we have been bought and consecrated by Christ and yet we still live in Ottawa, don't we?

We might be citizens of the new heavens but we live here we're paying rent, we're paying property tax, we're getting nabbed at the speed trap on Shea Road all too often.

[26 : 51] We are living in Ottawa. So, how do we live faithfully? This is at the very end of verse 2. This is what it says.

By the way, that's me getting nabbed at the speed trap on Shea. Yeah, it's a problem. This is what it says.

How are we to live? May grace and peace be multiplied to you. It seems simple, it seems like it's the Christian thing to say at the end of a greeting, that's what Peter is saying.

But no, this is, may grace and peace be multiplied to you, this is the entirety of 1 Peter concentrated down to, to one sentence.

When I was a kid, we did a mission trip. Our church was connected to this other church in Belfast and Belfast has some really, really poor neighborhoods and we got to run a VBS and stuff like that.

[27 : 56] Anyways, we got there. I grew up just chugging juice a lot and we would buy it by the dozen in the frozen cans and we'd pour the frozen can and you'd mix it up.

You guys know what's up with the frozen can. Well, in Belfast, they just have a container that looks like juice but it is concentrate and you just pour a little bit in and you pour your water and you have juice.

It's actually a lot easier than cans of frozen juice. But when I got there, I'm used to chugging juice and I go out and buy a thing of concentrate. I just drink the whole thing.

I'm just like, man, they have really sweet drinks here in the UK. I had no idea what was happening until this lady had a laugh at my expense. That's just a stupid story just to say that all of 1 Peter and really all of the Christian faith is concentrated, concentrated into this one sentence.

May grace and peace be multiplied to you. It can be expanded. It can be stretched out. It can be explored. We can spend the rest of our life exploring what grace is and what peace is and what it means that God is multiplying it and what it means that he is giving it and what it means for it to be given to us.

[29 : 18] But this is it. This is what it means to be a Christian, that grace and peace will be multiplied to you and this is how we are to live in Ottawa here in 2024.

We are to live with the assurance that God will grant us grace and peace without measure. Grace to grow in holiness and obedience. Grace also to ask for forgiveness and know that we are receiving it.

peace when we feel the pain of that holiness and obedience as it grinds up against the cultural moment of our day. The whole of the Christian life is grace and peace.

It is a mark of those who enjoy divine blessing and goodness, who are sojourners, who are resident aliens, who have citizenship in heaven, yet they live here on earth.

grace and peace in abundance. Like I mentioned at the beginning that this letter was written in the time of Nero.

[30 : 23] Nero, wherever you fall politically, no politician that Canada has ever had hasn't held a candle to Nero, okay?

You might not like him or her, but they're not Nero. It was a very tumultuous time in the first century. In some ways, more difficult than it is now, although now it might be more difficult than it was then.

Either way, it's always been difficult to be a Christian. And yet, the message that Peter gives us is the same then as it is now.

It is grace and peace be multiplied to you. This will be the strength, friends, that you need to endure hardship and suffering. And hardship and suffering will come if you are being faithful to Christ.

This letter has strengthened Christians throughout the centuries to suffer well and in doing so proclaim the hope of salvation and eternal blessing. How? Because we imitate Christ who himself suffered perfectly.

[31 : 32] In fact, he suffered so perfectly that he exposed and destroyed evil, sin, and death through his suffering. He turned it all on its head. The resurrection was this huge declaration to the world that no longer will evil prevail.

No longer will sin win the day. No longer will our flesh be masters over us. And he says that we who are in him get to partake in that.

We are now his. We are now holy. We are now citizens of heaven. And over the next few weeks let us learn together about what it looks like to live as people that are enjoying and needing and receiving grace and peace abounding.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, we thank you for the great wisdom of your word. Lord, we thank you for the Holy Spirit that spoke through the Apostle Peter.

Lord, our time is much different than it was in the first century. And yet, we are still feeling the tension of what it means to participate in the world, the city, the neighborhoods, the workplaces that we live in and not be on the flip side assimilated to it.

[33 : 02] Lord, we need your help. We need your strength. We want to grow in holiness. We want to proclaim your goodness and your gospel. And Lord, we just need your help. So Lord, this week and for the weeks to come, Lord, may grace and peace abound to us.

May we be ever asking that. May those two things be the things that we pray about day in and day out. And that trust that by faith we will receive because you are willing to give.

We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.