

Elect According to Foreknowledge

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again for a little to the chapter we read in 1 Peter. 1 Peter chapter 1, and we'll read the first four verses.

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 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. May grace and peace be multiplied to you. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.

As you can see here, Peter wrote this letter to Christians who were suffering for the faith and Christians who were being scattered all over the place.

He writes to this dispersion. And this idea of the exiles here and those who have been dispersed, the exile, you could almost translate that word as a refugee.

[1 : 27] And as you know, a refugee is a displaced person, somebody really who has nothing, somebody who has lost their home and has lost many of the privileges and many of the things that we take for granted in life.

A refugee is living in a temporary residence. And I think to a certain extent we can catch something of the drift that we have of Peter's writing when he calls these people refugees.

Because the Christian, to a certain extent, is like a refugee. Because we are living in temporary residence.

This is ultimately not our home. We are only here for a wee while. And it is important that the Christian doesn't get the mentality that this world is our home.

Because sometimes we can begin to settle down a wee bit too comfortably. And the Lord will always see to it that his people don't remain like that. If we become too comfortable in this world, the Lord will do something.

[2 : 38] He will shake us in some way or another to remind us that, to a certain extent, spiritually speaking, we are like refugees. We're only here for a while.

We're in temporary residence. So we've always got to remember that. That while we enjoy much of this world, and while we do enjoy the safety and the blessings of our actual residents here, in our homes and families, we've always got to remember that it's only for a while.

And so that's part of the thinking that the Christian must have. And that in our temporary residence here, we are being prepared for a residence that is forever.

It's not that we're going to be forever and ever and ever in temporary residence. But the Lord is preparing us for that permanent residence in his kingdom and in his glory.

And I would ask, right at the very beginning, with regard to your own thinking, as to how you are viewing life, where you're at just now.

[3 : 52] I know we had a superb service yesterday, our New Year's Day service, and reminding us that about where Moses was asking us to number our days.

And the whole way that we're to assess and to think even and reflect on the past and in the future and so on. But where you are right now, is your mind taken up completely with this world?

As you're stretching out your mind ahead and you're planning for this year, and all that it involves and entails, are you just bogged down, as it were, in the things of this world?

Have all your plans centered around just this world? Or are your plans stretching heavenward? Are you involved in your plans with thinking, what does the Lord want me to do?

What is God's plan for me? Are we thinking like that? Are we thinking of where we're ultimately going? These are all very important questions to ask. Now Peter says, Peter who's an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles.

[5 : 07] Here's this word, elect. And this election that we have here is twofold. There's an election by God, elected by God, but also elected to be exiles.

You see, it's no accident to these people what is happening to them. I'm sure there were times these people would be saying to themselves, what's going on? Does God know?

Has God forgotten? You find that sometimes the psalmist would say, has the Lord forgotten to be gracious? No. There was a purpose in all that God was doing.

And there is still a purpose in all that God is doing. We've always got to remember, and that's sometimes difficult for ourselves, it's not just about ourselves.

God always has a big picture in view. We are part of that big picture. And sometimes we will be taken out of our comfort zone, and sometimes our own personal world will be rocked a little.

[6 : 14] But God always has a plan and a purpose. Yes, for you and for me. But he also has a big picture. And we're part of that. And so often we cannot see beyond our own little circle.

This is where I am. And sometimes we can't get beyond that to see that God has a purpose far, far bigger than you and me.

And so this was part of God's purpose, is that these people were going to be exiled. These people were going to be dispersed.

In fact, the word means, to a certain extent, scattered. And when we think of what God is doing, it's a very simple thing. Remember a description Jesus gives of the believer, that they are the salt of the earth.

They are the salt. Now at this time of the year, although this week and the last few days, it's been great to see the clear roads again. We were, for quite a while, we had thick ice, we had snow.

[7 : 21] And what happens there? Well, the gridders come along. They go and they fill up their lorries with all the salt. And then they scatter it all over the road.

There is, it will be of absolutely no benefit for us to know that there are huge piles of salt waiting to be put into gridders and spread.

It won't do us any good until the grit, until the salt is actually taken and scattered. And it's only when it is taken from its pile and scattered that it is then effective and our roads are cleared.

And you know, we have something of this idea here. Because the Lord is saying, right, here are all the people together. I've got to change that.

This gospel has to go into all the world. My people have to take my gospel into all the world. This was part of the Great Commission. And so they are being dispersed through persecution.

[8 : 31] Remember, the Lord is in control. He's in charge of everything that is taking place. So we've got to remember that. So this is part of what's happening. And it tells us here that this is all happening according to the foreknowledge of God.

Now this word foreknowledge in Greek is prognosen, which we get our prognosis from. Like you'll often hear it in the medical world. A doctor will examine you and he will make a prognosis according to what he knows and understands.

He has an idea what is wrong. And he'll prescribe a particular medicine. Or he'll suggest surgery. Or he'll suggest a form of treatment. This is he's making his prognosis by his own medical knowledge of your particular condition.

So to a certain extent we catch something of what is here. All that is involved in God's dispersing of his people, in the electing of his people, is according to his prognosis.

You see, God knew long before anything ever happened that this world was going to fall. Some people think that the gospel, that the coming of Jesus Christ into this world, was God's reaction to what happened at the fall.

[9 : 57] That the fall, as it were, to God and our wish. God had made this world altogether beautiful. He said over everything, it is very good. And then came the fall. And that the thinking then was, I will send Jesus into this world to be a saviour.

That this was God's response to, as it were, like a crisis. Not at all. From all eternity. God's foreknowledge. God knew.

He knew all things. He knows all things. And we've got to remember that. But again, the very word foreknowledge, it's deeper than simply knowing something.

It goes into the very deepest part of what we are and who he is. So that it is all wrapped up in who he is. And so God has chosen to establish for himself the closest possible relationship in this world with his own people.

And again, with regard to this foreknowledge and foreseeing, some people have the idea that the way salvation works is that God sees in certain people that they're likely to have faith.

[11 : 21] He sees in them that there's something about them that they're likely to trust in himself. And so those are the people, when we see this word, election or whatever, and foreknowledge and all these things, that God saw in people beforehand.

Not at all. There is nothing within you or within me that is capable of coming to faith in the Lord apart from himself.

And we've always got to remember that. We are utterly impotent. We are utterly unable to do that for ourselves. It's all of grace. And sometimes people will say, oh well, you shouldn't preach things like that.

You shouldn't say things like that. Because that means that there's no point in anything. Yes, my friend, there is every point in it. Because while that is God's great work, and every believer will thank the Lord with all their heart that He is the one.

I am so thankful that it wasn't because of me. It's nothing to do with what I was able to do. It's nothing to do with my own effort in reaching out with my own faith to lay hold upon the Lord.

[12 : 44] It's not me. You know the faith? It's even given to us by God. And you may say to yourself, well, if you're here today and you say, you know this, I don't have that faith.

You know, what I would say is, thank the Lord that you're here. Because in God's foreknowledge and in God's great plan, you're here.

Many, many people aren't. the majority of people aren't in God's house today, but you are. That would almost indicate that God has something for you.

He has certainly purposed that you will be under the gospel. And this is the place where God deals with souls. So you can see straight away, you are at a head start.

God. And the Bible makes it very clear to us that if we seek the Lord with all our heart, we will find the responsibility is put upon our shelves.

[13 : 51] God in his great purpose and plan for you has set you where the gospel is, where the gospel is preached. You have an open Bible in front of you. You have the word. And this word is the power of God.

This gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes. If up until now you have not believed, today is another opportunity for you to believe.

And you ask the Lord. You see, this is your responsibility. You go to the Lord today and say to him, Lord, Lord, open my heart. Right up till now there's been a barrier, there's been a block.

There are things I don't understand. Somehow, although I know the way of salvation, another part of it, I don't know. I need to get from here to there.

Lord, give me the faith to believe. will you ask him that? Or am I hearing anybody saying, oh, wait a minute, I'm not ready for that.

[15 : 00] You see, that shows straight away there's the responsibility, your responsibility. If you truly seek him, if you really ask him with all your heart and say, Lord, take away everything that is hindering me from coming to you, today, give me that faith where I will be able to believe savingly.

And you really pray that with all your heart. The Lord will answer that prayer. You will find him, we're told in the Scripture, when we seek him with all our heart.

God, so, Peter is then saying to us here, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, and again, we know that word sanctification is simply setting apart, and we can have it being made holy or holiness, and that's what God does.

He sets his people apart. The moment you are born again, there is what people will term definitive sanctification, where there is an immediate setting apart, and then there's what we would term the progressive sanctification, where a person is growing more and more in the image of Christ.

And then he says, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with blood. And again, this whole idea of obedience, that's what happens.

[16 : 34] We're given a desire for obedience. we become obedient to the Lord. And then that sprinkling with his blood. And that's what we all need.

That's what we need today. Pardon. Pardon. Forgiveness. And that is done and comes to us by his blood. Now, as we said, Peter is writing here to Christians who are suffering.

They're refugees. They're dispersed. They're scattered. They're exiled all over the place. And Peter isn't, as he writes to them, he isn't talking in ways of sorrow and sadness.

He isn't saying to them, oh, do you know, I feel really sorry for you. And this letter is a letter of sympathy. And I want to really identify myself with you.

And I want to pour out my heart and I really feel for you in your brokenness, in your emptiness.

That's not the type of letter this is. Yes, Peter acknowledges their suffering.

[17 : 34] He acknowledges their trials and difficulties. But this is a letter of hope. It's a living letter. It's a letter that is pointing us away from ourselves to where our hope is.

Peter is, throughout this letter, he's saying to them, yes, things are tough. But let me point you to the one who is over all things. The one who is in you.

The one who is working in you for a great and glorious end. This is a letter of hope. Things might be difficult and confusing on earth. They're not like that in heaven.

In heaven, everything is secure. Everything is in control. The Lord is on his throne. The Lord is governing life. He's governing you. Remember that.

Things, as we say, might be chaotic here, but not in heaven. And so the Lord is still in control. And so Peter goes on to talk about this living hope.

[18 : 31] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

We have this living hope. Hope is one of the most important words in this world. Take away hope from a person and they've got nothing.

And that is part of what makes hell the fearful state it is. Because there's no hope in hell. An eternity without hope must be one of the worst conditions for any soul to be in.

But the Bible tells us that in Christ there is hope. It's a living hope. It's real. It's vital. It's alive. And that's the wonderful thing about it.

Peter uses this word living so often. It's so different to the empty hope of this world. The hope of this world has no basis. It has no security.

[19 : 38] It has all we have is the hope that it will materialize. The hope that one day I will. But we don't know.

Things can change. Things can alter in a moment. And our hopes are dashed. How often we hear that expression. Hopes dashed. Like taking a glass and just smashing it into a thousand pieces.

There's your hope gone. Shattered. It's never the case with this hope. Because this hope is found it is based upon Christ. And so this hope this hope is rooted it's rooted in the past in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It is rooted in the present because he is alive today on the throne and he's living through the spirit in me. And this hope is in the future because he's coming again.

You see this hope is all bound and rooted in Jesus Christ. and then we're told about something about the hope that is in the future.

[20 : 47] Verse 4 shows us that we have an inheritance. Now remember everything's linked. Here are the displaced people. No home.

No inheritance. Ah, they have. There is an inheritance because this word here, this inheritance is the same word that is used of the inheritance in the Old Testament that spoke of the promised land.

Remember when God was holding out to his people that he was taking them to an inheritance to the land that was flowing with milk and honey to Canaan. Here is, that was the, that was the Old Testament inheritance which spoke of our future inheritance, our more glorious inheritance.

And so these displaced people, these spiritual refugees in this world with no real place to call home are being assured that there is one.

And this is what we're told about it. Three things we're told about it. That it is imperishable, it is undefiled, and it is unfading. Imperishable means it can't corrupt.

[22 : 02] And when you think back to the Old Testament inheritance, that's exactly what happened. Remember God said to them, I'm giving you this lovely land. It's fertile, it's rich, it's full of natural resources, it is going to be the place where you will live and dwell, and I will be with you.

It was to be in God's plan and purpose the spiritual haven for them. And as long as they followed him, God would prosper them and bless them.

But God also warned them in the Old Testament, if you turn away from me and you begin to worship idols, then I will withdraw, as it were, my immediate presence from you.

Although he was never going to abandon them completely, but I will allow, I will open the doors and the enemy will come in. And this land which was so safe and secure, when you think under the Davidic rule and under the rule of Solomon, this land which was the nation there all around in the Middle East, not too long after, it was a land that was corrupted, a land that was trodden upon, Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple was destroyed, everything was flattened.

but here is an inheritance that will never, ever, ever be in any way corrupted.

[23 : 39] It is imperishable, just like when we were talking to the young folk this morning. All these things that we get in this world, and these things which enhance our life, these things which enrich our time here, they're good, we enjoy them, and we're right to acknowledge them, but they don't last.

It's just like the bubbles, you know these bubbles you get in a wee jar and you get a wee hoop and you blow them, and they look lovely, but they burst and they're gone.

Children love playing with them, but they can only play with them for a wee while, because then they run out. And even if they say, you know, I'd like to gather up all these bubbles again, they're gone. That's kind of what life is like.

And if that's where our treasure is, that's why Jesus said, don't lay up treasure for yourselves on earth, where the moth and rust and thieves, things that will ruin and destroy and take away, lay up for yourself treasure in heaven.

Nothing can destroy there. That's what Peter is saying. This is where you're going, to an inheritance that is imperishable forever and ever and ever.

[25 : 04] No enemy can ever get in to destroy. But not only is it imperishable, we're told, but it is undefiled. That means pure, clean, unstained.

See, everything in this world has been affected by sin. Sin, it's like a fog. It's like a mist that clings around you.

Sin is within us and it's around us. And we breathe sin, almost. The very atmosphere of this world is sin.

We can't get rid of it. It's right there. It's deep-rooted within us. It affects even our worship. It affects everything. and we cannot envisage what this world will be like where there will be no defilement. Everything will be completely pure and holy and unblemished. It's a wonderful concept, a wonderful thought.

[26 : 11] And it's, we're also told that it's unfading just in the way that a flower fades. The glory of Emmanuel's land will never fade, ever, ever.

Sometimes you can see the most beautiful flowers and you say to yourself, oh, well, maybe even you've been given a present or a bouquet of flowers and they're out there and you say, that is so beautiful.

But it doesn't last. You'll come and look at it maybe a while down and if you left them there, they would just fade and wither and you'd say to yourself, oh, it's not a shame.

But nothing fades, it's eternal glory. The glory of the first moment and the glory of the next moment and the glory of the next moment, it's an ending in all its fullness.

Nothing in glory will fade. Later on, Peter, talking about the crown of glory, he terms it an unfading crown of glory. And he tells us that all this is kept in heaven for you.

[27 : 23] Isn't that wonderful? You may be saying to yourself, oh, what if I don't get there? My believing friend, my friend in Christ, your name is in heaven.

Your seat, your place, it's like at a wedding, you know, you go to a wedding and your name there is at the table. That's your place. place. And even if somebody came along and went to one table, took your name and put it at another table, and you came and your place wasn't there, and you say, well, I was told it was here.

There's still a list outside with all the tables and you find, oh, there is my name. And in heaven your name is, your place is, because it's Christ who has won that.

Wasn't you, as we said, it's Christ who won it. And he's going to take you there. He's watching over you just now. That's what it tells us, it goes on to tell us that we are being, that not only is a place

kept for us in heaven, but we are being kept here for that place.

It's all done by him. My friend, this is the great news, and the greatest news that this world can ever hear or ever know of.

[28 : 45] Let me ask you, are you journeying to that inheritance? Or are you today spiritually bankrupt? And you're saying to yourself, you know, I'm hearing all this, but right now, it's passing me by.

Well, I really pray and hope that you will seek the Lord. You know, I find it the most encouraging thing that you'd hear today.

And I don't believe there is anybody in this church today who does not have at least a passing interest in the gospel.

I don't think you'd be here. If you had no interest whatever, I don't think you would be here. The very fact that you are here indicates that you have at least some interest in the gospel.

My prayer is that if that is where you are today, that this will become a growing interest. And as we said earlier, that you will seek the Lord who is to be found, that you will not turn away from him, but that you will hear his voice, and you will discover that living hope for yourself.

[30 : 11] Let's pray. Lord, our God, we ask to bless us and enrich us in Christ. We give thanks for this word, and we pray that this word will go down deep within our heart, that it will change our lives for good.

We give thanks for the power of God that is able to do in us and for us, far and beyond anything that we could ask or think. Lord, bless us and keep us, prosper us spiritually and temporally, guide our feet as we walk throughout this world, help us in that walking to follow the Lord.

Take away from us our sin, in Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.