

Elect Exiles
1 Peter 1:1b-2

- Welcome to our Wednesday night Bible study.
- I have a few important items to share with you.
- The Covid-19 pandemic has brought challenges but also opportunities. Here are a few ways that Heritage is taking advantage of this platform.
- Johnson City has enacted a 'safer at home' policy. Heritage has contacted the city and verified that we can and will livestream our Sunday service again this weekend.
- Our elders are posting daily devotions on the Heritage FB page.
- Our deacons are checking in on our seniors. Thank you.
- Many CG leaders are hosting weekly gatherings and prayer meetings as well as instituting unique ministries to serve each other and the community.
- People are still maintaining the chronological reading of the Bible.

- We maintain our relationship with FEMA and are grateful to those who are willing to serve
- Some of our members are making masks for medical personnel. Contact Janel Burkner, and she will give you the information you need.
- Angela is reading to the children on the Heritage FB page, Wednesdays and Sundays at 4pm.
- The Stewart family will host our weekly prayer gathering on the Heritage FB page this Friday at 8:30pm.
- People are using the self-isolation cards to reach out to friends, neighbors & co-workers. They are available in the Manor, front-door mailbox.
- Your financial faithfulness is amazing. Some of our members are even giving extra and that is incredible.
 - Tithely
 - Text to tithe
 - Mail
 - By the Manor

Time is the truest test of reality. I look forward to time proving the reality of our love for Jesus.

- You are the church. You are being the church. People are saying that church services are postponed or cancelled. This isn't true. Heritage is proving that church services are ongoing, in fact, multiplied in the innumerable ways we are serving each other and the world.
- These are some of the reasons why our elders "*have this confidence in the Lord about you*" (2 Thess 3:4).

Book Study

1 Peter 1:1-2 - Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ² 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.

To understand the book of 1 Peter, it is absolutely essential to understand Peter. To know him is to know why God chose him to write this book.

Peter writes to exiles (1:1) who have been displaced and isolated from everything that is meaningful to them.

Peter understands their situation.

After denying Jesus, Peter lost every meaningful relationship and was exiled from those closest to him.

This is why the angel called Peter by name when he told Mary that Jesus would meet the disciples in Galilee (Mark 16:6-7).

Jesus had not forgotten about Peter. He now writes to others, “*elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia*” (1:1), faraway places from their native Jerusalem.

He understands their dilemma and he wants them to know that Jesus did not forget about him and has also not forgotten about them.

1:1 - “*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ...*”

Peter is a hope-filled man writing to a hope-deprived people, encouraging them to have hope.

1:3 - *he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...*

But before he addresses their hope, he wants them to know the source of and the reason for their hope. It lies in God. And so, in this text, we turn our attention from Peter to God.

First: Elect Exiles

Do you remember how God turned Egypt's prison into a womb and there took 70 people and birthed a nation of about 2 million people?

And do you remember that God told Moses

1 - *"I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, ⁸ and I have come down to deliver them..."* (Ex 3:7-8).

2 - In the same way, Jesus reminds us that God knows how much a sparrow costs and when it dies (Matt 10:29).

3 - It is estimated that there are 100 billion stars in our galaxy alone (the Milky Way. According David, *"He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names"* (Ps 147:4).

Every star is named. Every bird is valuable. How much more does God know you and care for you?

Psalm 8:3-4 - *When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, ⁴ what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?*

The Greek word *elektos* = *to be chosen*

Peter immediately reminds his readers that they are not exiles by chance or coincidence but by God. They are '*elect exiles*.' They are God's chosen people. This is also the life he has chosen for them.

- He will care for them just as he did Israel in Egypt.
- Like the stars, he knows each of their names and
- Like sparrows, each one is valuable to him.

This knowledge is intended to change the way they view and live in their exile.

Like others in Scripture, we too have been 'chosen' to live in this time (Esther 4:14).

Second: According to the foreknowledge of God the Father

Has it ever occurred to you that nothing occurs to God?

God oversees world's affairs like it is water in his hand (Prov 21:1).

God is sovereign. Nature is not sovereign. Satan is not sovereign. Sinful humanity is not sovereign. God rules everything sovereignly (Luke 8:25; Job 1:12, 2:6; Acts 4:27-28).

We know this, because the Bible teaches us that God “works all things according to the counsel of his will” (Eph 1:11).

In response, we confess with Job, “I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted” (Job 42:2)

Foreknowledge = prognosis = pro/before and gnosis/knowledge

God has “before knowledge,” the knowledge of everything that is going to happen before it happens.

The word is used only one other place in the Bible –

Acts 2:23 – “...this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.”

{Are you ready for an antinomy? An antinomy is a paradox. In theological terms it means ‘two apparently contradictory but valid thoughts’

- a) You Jews killed Jesus
- b) God planned and foreknew Jesus’s death}

You may say, “I don’t understand.” Join the club. But know that nothing in the world happens that God doesn’t know it in advance. And if God knows something in advance, it has to

happen, or his knowledge would be wrong. If his knowledge is wrong, He is not God. What God sees, happens. It happens because God has seen it and deemed it best.

God's foreknowledge is history written before it happens.

ILL – Joseph's life is one of the best illustrations of this –

God's Perspective – Psalm 105:16-17 - *When he summoned a famine on the land and broke all supply of bread, ¹⁷ he had sent a man ahead of them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave.*

Human Perspective – Psalm 37:28 - *And they drew Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. They took Joseph to Egypt.*

Why is Peter drawing God's foreknowledge to the attention of his elect exiles? He wants them to know that God knows. God knows exactly where they are and what they are enduring

It seems like Covid-19 is its own master. But it is not. Before the world's began, God knew that the coronavirus would strike the world in 2020.

God is God, not Covid-19.

Nothing *just happens* in God's world. He not only comprehends this pandemic; he commands it.

Everything flows from the eternal, wise and purposeful counsel of God (Eph 1:11).

- For those who know and love Jesus Christ, it is all for goodness (Ro 8:28).
- For others, it is a merciful wake-up call (Rev 22:17)

We are “*elect exiles in...* [Johnson City, Jonesborough, Bristol, Kingsport, Sullivan, Washington and Carter counties] ... *according to the foreknowledge of God the Father...*”

This means at least four things for us –

- God knows
- He knew before
- He knows now
- He knows afterward also

All of time is simultaneously present for God.
Hallelujah!

But what is God doing in our exile? Why has he foreknown it for us?

Third: In the Sanctification of the Spirit

GR/*hagiasmos* = consecration, purification

A repeated phrase throughout this pandemic has been “*Don’t waste your quarantine.*”

God does not waste our ‘*various trials*’ but sees them as ‘*testing by fire*’ that proves that our faith is genuine (1 Peter 1:6-7).

That’s what sanctification does. It purifies your life. God has sent these elect people into exile for their sanctification.

Matt 4 – We live, not by bread but by God’s word. We are to worship (attention/affection) alone.

God is using your ‘safer at home’ for your sanctification also.

What do we need to make us whole? Happy? In a reduced world, what is your life reduced to? Everyone certainly has time to read Scripture. How you are filling your time is who you are.

Fourth: For Obedience to Jesus Christ

- *Elect Exiles* – we are not exiled by accident
- *The Father’s foreknowledge* – we are not exiled alone
- *The Spirit’s sanctification* – we are exiled for a purpose
- *Obedience to the Son* – our exile conforms us to Jesus

Do you see the Trinitarian connection here? Just as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit cannot be isolated from each other, you cannot be isolated from the Trinity.

- The Father has chosen you
- The Spirit sanctifies you
- The Son models obedience for you

Speaking of Jesus. Remember that he endured his own exile which we normally call the incarnation. This is what makes him the perfect high priest

Hebrews 4:15 – We have a high priest who is able to sympathize with our weaknesses because he was tempted like us in every respect, yet without sin.

Also, there is a sense in which you could hide in the sanctuary. You might remain anonymous. But in exile, you are in the spotlight. In isolation, there is only you to look at you.

1 Corinthians 12:27 – Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

Ephesians 4:16 – the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

This is why God has exiled you. This is why God has isolated you. Are you a Christian? Are you representing Jesus well?

You might never know the answers to those questions while you are singing in a crowd.

Fifth: And for sprinkling with his blood

Coming to Christ resolves our greatest problem but it creates a new one; relating to the world.

Covid-19 has built a Gospel bridge.

ILL – Christianity was illegal for the first 3 centuries of its existence. It was on the basis of the church's response to plagues that many Christians defended Christianity before mayors, governors, kings and Caesar. And it was that self-sacrifice of serving both Christians and pagans that grew the church exponentially in its first 3 centuries.

1 - The Plague of Cyprian (249–262 AD/13 years) was a lethal pandemic that, at its height, caused approximately 5,000 deaths a day in Rome.

Most of our brother Christians showed unbounded love and loyalty, never sparing themselves and thinking only of one another. Heedless of danger, they took charge of the sick, attending to their every need and ministering to them in Christ,

and with them departed this life serenely happy; for they were infected by others with the disease, drawing on themselves the sickness of their neighbors and cheerfully accepting their pains.

Many, in nursing and curing others, transferred their death to themselves and died in their stead.... But with the heathen everything was quite otherwise. They deserted those who began to be sick, and fled from their dearest friends. They shunned any participation or fellowship with death; which yet, with all their precautions, it was not easy for them to escape. (Eusebius, Eccl. Hist. 7.22.7-10)

- Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria

How suitable, how necessary it is that this plague and pestilence, which seems horrible and deadly, searches out the justice of each and every one and examines the mind of the human race; whether the [healthy] care for the sick, whether relatives dutifully love kinsmen as they should . . . whether physicians do not desert the afflicted.

- Cyprian, bishop of Carthage / AD 251

In an AD 362 letter, the Roman emperor Julian complained that the Greeks needed to match the Christians in virtue, blaming the recent growth of Christianity on their “benevolence to strangers, their care for the graves of the dead, and the pretended holiness of their lives.” Elsewhere he wrote, “For it is a disgrace that . . . the impious Galilaeans [Christians] support not only their own poor but ours as well.”

The impact was at least 2-fold:

- The unbelieving world witnessed Christian love
- Non-Christian survivors converted to the faith

2 – The Black Plague hit Wittenberg, Germany in August of 1527. It annihilated half of Europe's population

[N]o one should dare leave his neighbor unless there are others who will take care of the sick in their stead and nurse them.... we are bound to each other in such a way that no one may forsake the other in his distress but is obliged to assist and help him as he himself would like to be helped....We must respect the word of Christ, "I was sick and you did not visit me" (Matt 25:41-46). According to this passage we are bound to each other in such a way that no one may forsake the other in his distress but is obliged to assist and help him as he himself would like to be helped.

"I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance inflict and pollute others and so cause their death as a result of my negligence. If God should wish to take me, he will surely find me and I have done what he has expected of me and so I am not responsible for either my own death or the death of others. If my neighbor needs me however I shall not avoid place or person

but will go freely as stated above. See this is such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy and does not tempt God.”

- Martin Luther

3 – In the 1850’s, London was one of the largest and wealthiest cities in the world with a population of more than 2 million. A cholera outbreak occurred in 1854.

If there ever be a time when the mind is sensitive, it is when death is abroad. I recollect, when first I came to London, how anxiously people listened to the gospel, for the cholera was raging terribly. There was little scoffing then.

That man, in his lifetime, had been wont to jeer at me. In strong language, he had often denounced me as a hypocrite. Yet he was no sooner smitten by the darts of death than he sought my presence and counsel, no doubt feeling in his heart that I was a servant of God, though he did not care to own it with his lips.

- Charles Spurgeon

Christian death rates were significantly lower than those of the general population (perhaps only 10 percent, though the word “only” is a fearful qualifier). The mutual love of brothers and sisters in Christ meant that, on the one hand, those who provided care were at a higher risk of infection, but on the other, those who were infected had better survival rates. As these Christians made themselves vulnerable to death, they

actually found life. Once the plague had swept through, Christians were stronger. They were stronger as a proportion of society, since more of them survived. They had more resilience because they had a robust hope in the face of death. And they were stronger as communities, forging even closer bonds through the sufferings they'd faced.

- **Glen Scrivener**

Peter wants every exile to become an ambassador

Until we get there, God uses every circumstance of life to sanctify us, to conform us to the image of Jesus because, biblically speaking, the more heavenly minded you are, the more earthly good you are.

This exile status and isolation helps us rediscover our 'sentness' into the world. We are each responsible for the gospel and its telling.

Two illustrations:

1 - Even the early church so prized fellowship that they minimized Great Commission obedience.

Acts 1:8 – But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Acts 8:1 & 4 – *And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.... Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.*

2 - Exodus 24:7-8 - *Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.”⁸ And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.”*

People think they can get to heaven by their works. But you know better. And so, you share the gospel, i.e., sprinkle the blood.

Think wisely.

Act boldly.

Trust Jesus.

Conclusion:

It is in these truths:

- God’s foreknowledge
- The Spirit’s sanctification
- Obedience to the Son
- For sprinkling with his blood

that *'grace and peace are multiplied to us'* (2)

How can I not waste this pandemic?

Why has God allowed Covid-19 to make us exiles?

- So that you might have rest in God's foreknowledge
- So that you might be sanctified by the Spirit
- So that you might become obedient to Jesus Christ
- So that you might share the gospel

These are not all the reasons. But these are the reasons Peter provides his readers. And doing so, fills them with hope as they turn their isolation into mission and become ambassadors for Jesus who are exiled from their home country.

Amazingly, Peter's introduction serves also as a meaningful benediction.

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