

Text: 1 Pt 1.1-2

Proposition: The chosen are those upon whom God, in all three persons, acted to bring about salvation. God's will for them is much grace and peace.

Tonight, we will start with 1 Peter. My plan is to work through both 1 and 2 Peter over the next months. It will probably take a year and a half to complete.

Two commentators give these introductory statements about 1 Peter 1.1-2:

"The opening greeting in 1 Peter is hardly a customary hello. It is theologically rich and densely packed with themes."¹

"Peter's salutation is one of the richest greetings to open a letter in the New Testament. ... Peter's salutation contains both a penetrating description of the audience and a theological explanation of how they became Christians."²

I am focusing tonight on the recipients. Peter describes himself simply as "an apostle of Jesus Christ." Some commentators note that Peter has no need to defend his apostleship as we sometimes see even in Paul's opening salutations.

I would like to add one comment about Peter taking up his pen at this time. From what little reading I've done on the subject, it seems Peter died before Paul, but that isn't certain. If so, however, 1 & 2 Peter would come out before Paul's last epistles, Titus and 2 Timothy.

The era of the apostles is coming to its end as Peter writes. The general audience of his epistles suggests that he wants to publish his views on how Christians should live in the face of persecution. The antagonism of Nero is rising. The likelihood of opposition is increasing. Believers need to know how to live in the face of that. That's what 1 Peter is especially about. (In 1991, I gave the theme as "testimony," but that is too simple. It is "testimony in the face of opposition.")

Tonight, though, we want to talk about Peter's audience. Who does he write to? As we answer this question, I think you can find personal application from 1 Peter for your own life.

¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary, v. 37 (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 49.

² Scot McKnight, *1 Peter*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 43.

Let's start by reading the text: **Read 1 Pt 1.1-2**

One comment on our English translations: to some degree, many English translations change the word order and some other aspects of these verses. They are trying to aid our understanding... but I wonder if they obscure the meaning instead.

I. The terms Peter uses to describe his audience

A. A literal translation of verse 1:

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the choice sojourners of the dispersion of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ^[YLT]

1. "choice" = "chosen, elect"
2. "sojourners" = "aliens, strangers"
3. "of the dispersion" = "scattered"
4. Note that KJV and NAU put "chosen/elect" at the end of the verse or beginning of next verse:

NAU 1 Pt 1.1 ¶ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen

KJV 1Pe 1:1 ¶ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ² Elect according to...

B. The reason for the adjustment

1. Most commentators (and our translators) think the three clauses of verse 2 describe "the chosen"
2. The ESV follows the word order more closely:

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

3. My view:

Each of the phrases in verse 2 describe what makes us "elect strangers scattered" in our world from verse 1.

C. The features of the distinct terms

1. The elect:

- a. The term describes believers in the NT; widely used
- b. Used of tribulation believers [largely Jews] for whose sake the Lord shortens the tribulation (Mt 24.22, Mk 13.20)

Mt 24.22 “Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.”

- c. The term describes God’s beloved people in the church (Col 3.12)

Col 3.12 ¶ So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;

- d. The term means chosen out of the world by God: God chooses his people

“The meaning here is, that they were *in fact* chosen. The word does not refer to the *purpose to choose*, but to the fact that they were chosen or selected by God as his people. It is a word commonly applied to the people of God as being *chosen* out of the world, and called to be his. The use of the word does not determine whether God had a previous eternal purpose to choose them or not. That must be determined by something else than the mere use of the term. This word has reference to the *act* of selecting them, without throwing any light on the question *why* it was done.”³

Note: Barnes is a Calvinist, but he doesn’t press the terms here.

2. The strangers:

- a. We could use the term “alien”

³ Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament: James to Jude*, ed. Robert Frew (London: Blackie & Son, 1884), 111.

“used ... in connection w. civil servants who distinguish themselves for exemplary conduct while on international duty”⁴

“Sim[ilarly] the author of 1 Pt makes an intimate connection between the status of the addressees (as virtual visitors in the world because of their special relation to God through Jesus Christ) and their moral responsibility.”⁵

b. People who are “displaced, out of their environment”

I remember reading Stan Mikita’s autobiography. He was an immigrant from Czechoslovakia, sent to live with his aunt and uncle in Canada. As a non-English speaker (to start) he doubtless suffered some taunts from other children. When he won the scoring title and MVP award, his opening remarks at the awards ceremony was something like this: “Not bad for a little DP from Czechoslovakia.” (DP = displaced person).

c. Something has happened to these people

- 1) They are chosen, beloved by God
- 2) But they are out of their proper environment, alienated in the world (where they formerly were at home)

“The word ‘strangers’ (*parepidēmois*) introduces a crucial idea in the letter, that is, that God’s people are pilgrims, sojourners, and exiles on Earth.”⁶

⁴ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

⁵ Bauer.

⁶ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 50.

3. The scattered:

- a. "Diaspora" (transliteration): "dia" = through; "spora" = seed
- b. Contains a word picture of a lot of seeds scattered over a wide area

These scattered are not only "displaced" but often in the minority, alone in the world, but "chosen," beloved of God — they are God's people

II. The geography of Peter's audience

A. The five regions comprise most of modern-day Turkey

1. If you traveled from one region to another you would travel in a rough circle around Turkey
2. The regions speak of the general character of the letter, sent to a group of Christians over a wide area (not one local church)

B. The five regions stand in for the whole world today

1. God's people are scattered all over the world
2. God's interest in them is not the less diminished

III. The salvation of Peter's audience

The three phrases describe the activities of the Holy Trinity with respect to the recipients of the letter.

A. We are the "chosen, alien, scattered" people of God **according to** the foreknowledge of the Father

1. Calvinists believe that since God foreknows the saints, he determined their salvation (and not the salvation of others)

"But if *foreknown*, must it not be *certain*? How could a thing which is foreknown be contingent or doubtful?"⁷

⁷ Barnes, 111.

2. The problem is, God foreknows everything, not just salvation

“Furthermore, does God foreknow the free choices of men, including their sins? Yes, else He is not God. Are the events God foreknows *certain* to happen thus? Yes, or else He wouldn't know them. Are they *necessary*? No, or else they would not be free. An event can be certain to happen, but happen freely and thus not made necessary. In other words, what *will* be certainly *will* be but does not *have* to be. Knowledge is not causal, even if it is God's 'advance knowledge' (TDNT 1:716). Certainty is a matter of factuality. Necessity is a matter of cause.”⁸

3. We will not solve the divergence here, but I side with the second view:

- a. If foreknowledge means foreordination, then God inspired a redundancy in Romans 8:

Rm 8.29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

“those he chose (foreknew), He also chose (predestined)”

- b. If foreknowledge means foreordination, then God ordained our sinful choices as well
- c. If foreknowledge means foreordination, then God ordained our mundane choices as well

[Such as our wardrobe choices today...]

B. We are the “chosen, alien, scattered” people of God **in** the sanctifying of the Spirit

1. Preposition here is “in” – can be causal, but also can be spatial, *i.e.* refer to the “sphere” of the thing
2. It is a synonym with “sanctification” – a more widely used word

⁸ Picirilli, *1 and 2 Peter*, 108.

3. It emphasizes the operation of the Spirit that sets apart (the sanctifying work) so that we are the “chosen, alien, scattered” people
4. That is, rather than
 - a. the long process of sanctification (the life-long experience of the Christian)
 - b. or, the ultimate perfection of sanctification (the saints made perfect in heaven)
 - c. what is in view is the moment at which the saint is chosen by God, made a stranger in the world, and found scattered among an alien people

“Peter is referring here, then, almost exclusively to the first dimension of our sanctification: God’s gracious act of turning sinners into his people.”⁹

C. We are the “chosen, alien, scattered” people of God **by** the obedience and sprinkling of Jesus Christ

1. Wait a minute...
 - a. NAU: to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood
 - b. KJV: unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ
 - c. ESV: for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood

The translations and most commentators take this as a “purpose” clause (grammatically, that is most likely).

The purpose of our being chosen, made strangers, scattered, is our obedience. [Majority view]

2. However:
 - a. Clause 1, foreknowledge of the Father, refers to the moment of salvation
 - b. Clause 2, sanctifying of the Spirit, refers to the moment of salvation
 - c. Wouldn’t clause 3 be similar?

⁹ McKnight, *1 Peter*, 53–54.

3. Literal word order:

to obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ [YLT]

- a. Both obedience and sprinkling are nouns, not verbs
 - b. Both nouns are joined by the “and” making them parallel ideas
 - c. Both nouns are modified by genitives: “of the blood of Jesus Christ”
 - 1) To obedience of the blood of Jesus Christ
 - 2) To sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ
4. I found two commentaries that suggested that instead of purpose or result, the phrase be causal, with “blood of Jesus Christ” the subject acting on the chosen
- a. Back to the way I stated this point
 - b. We are the “chosen, alien, scattered” people of God **by** the obedience and sprinkling of Jesus Christ

Each of the phrases describe what makes us “elect strangers scattered” in our world.

“We should also note in the verse the reference to the Father, Spirit, and the Son. The Father foreknows, the Spirit sanctifies, and the Son cleanses.”¹⁰

- c. The Son cleanses by his obedience and his blood

(Note: Schreiner isn’t saying this)

IV. Peter’s wish for his audience:

- A. Much grace
- B. Much peace

¹⁰ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 57.

“This greeting is ultimately a prayer. The verb ‘be multiplied’ is in the mode (Greek optative) used for the expression of wishes, including those expressed in prayer. Peter wants his readers to increase in their experience of these two graces and in the variety of fruits they produce.”¹¹

Spurgeon: “We not only need grace, but we need much grace, and also peace; and we need a greatly increased measure of both those blessings. Do not be satisfied with the grace that you already have. Be thankful for it, but ask for the divine multiplication of it. Regard the grace that you have already received as being like the boy’s loaves and fishes. Expect that Christ will continue to multiply it for you and for thousands of others round about you.”¹²

Conclusion:

What a grand opening: Peter writes to us, describing us as we are...

- Chosen
- Strangers
- Scattered

Peter rejoices in our God, who did these things for us...

- The Father foreknew us, loved us, chose us, transformed us, picked out his scattered people
- The Spirit sanctified us, set us apart, made us different, all over the world
- The Son, by his obedient life and sacrificial death, called us into his family, made us new in him, and cherishes us wherever we are

To this people of God, much grace, and much peace, around the world, until Jesus comes.

Proposition: The chosen are those upon whom God, in all three persons, acted to bring about salvation. God’s will for them is much grace and peace.

¹¹ Picirilli, *1 and 2 Peter*, 110.

¹² Charles H Spurgeon, *Spurgeon Commentary: 1 Peter*, ed. Elliot Ritzema and Jessi Strong, Spurgeon Commentary Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 1 Pt 1.2.